

(Re)Thinking the Little Ancestor:  
New Perspectives on the  
Archaeology of Infancy and  
Childhood

Edited by

Mike Lally  
Alison Moore

BAR International Series 2271  
2011

Published by

Archaeopress  
Publishers of British Archaeological Reports  
Gordon House  
276 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 7ED  
England  
bar@archaeopress.com  
www.archaeopress.com

BAR S2271

*(Re)Thinking the Little Ancestor: New Perspectives on the Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood*

© Archaeopress and the individual authors 2011

ISBN 978 1 4073 0845 6

Printed in England by Blenheim Colour

All BAR titles are available from:

Hadrian Books Ltd  
122 Banbury Road  
Oxford  
OX2 7BP  
England  
www.hadrianbooks.co.uk

The current BAR catalogue with details of all titles in print, prices and means of payment is available free from Hadrian Books or may be downloaded from [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)

## Subadult or subaltern? Children as serial categories

Fredrik Fahlander

Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University

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 and Scott 1997; Johnsen and Welinder 1995; Andersson 1999, Scott 1999, Alt and Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2002, Gustavsson and 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 ditto. 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.

### Who are the children?

It is nowadays generally recognized that the category of children and the concept of childhood are culturally constructed concepts (e.g. Sofaer Derevenski 2000, Baxter 2005). Indeed, the social position and status of an individual of young age are likely to vary a lot in (pre)history and there can only be few, if any, general aspects of children and childhood valid for all time periods. Nonetheless, are there many ideas of what it is to be a child, or rather, what it ought to be? In contemporary discourse we find ideas and images of certain 'natural' properties that children supposedly share. Children are sometimes regarded naïve and innocent, physically and mentally vulnerable, or on the other hand, evil or savage. We can, however, quite easily reject the any universal property of children only by looking at the great

variability in contemporary societies. Of this follows that is difficult for us to find any child or concept of childhood to define in static terms. Rather, children's experiences are many and they are likely to have been treated very differently in diverse social and material situations. Any category of age also needs to be analysed in relation to other social variables such as sex, class and ethnicity, etc (Heywood 2001, 4f, cf. Jordanova 1990, Alexandre-Bidon and Lett 1999, 138). We cannot thus aspire to find *the* situation or *the* world-view of children in the past or present, their stories and life-courses are many and heterogeneous.

So, the image of the 'child' is dissolving and slipping through our fingers. We cannot acknowledge social ambiguity and diversity and at the same time continue to hold on to a vague distinction between children, adults and elderly. That would simplify social complexity and variation too far. From a social point of view, however, we can approach the subject by discussing the corporeality of individual bodies rather than of social subjects. If we can discern some more or less general corporeal and mental stages in children's development that potentially may be socially significant. From such a basis, we may continue and discuss their potential social roles and identities at a given time and place. To do this, we first need to penetrate the problematic issues of social identity and social aspects of the body.

### Social identity, corporeality and social categorisation

The issue of social identity is perhaps one of the most complex concepts in social analysis which far transcends, or crosses, simple notions of sex, gender, status and ethnicity. Many archaeologists have pointed out the inconsistencies in viewing social subjects as homogeneous, equivalent and socially able (e.g. Berggren 2000, Gero 2000, Fahlander 2003). Instead we rather find that individuals in most societies differ in many respects when it comes to power, abilities and knowledgeability, etc. As a starting point, however, the social subject is perhaps best viewed as a corporeal being, or rather, an embodied being with body and mind in conjunction. The literature on the body and the corporeality of the body has grown vast in recent decades and embraces various strands of thought (e.g. Davis 1997; Welton 1998; Burkitt 1999, Meskell 1999, Hamilakis *et al.* 2002, Rautman 2002, Sweeney and Hodder 2002). Some projects depart from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, stressing that all sensory input is transmitted through the physical body and hence is affected by its corporeal constitution (e.g. Bigwood 1991). Others follow strands within post-structuralism, such as Foucault's theories of the disciplined body, the body as imprisoned by the soul, exposed to (and exposing) subjectivation and power (e.g.

Foucault 1980; Butler 1997). In archaeology, the corporeal dimension of the body can be discussed in two general ways. One facet is that our corporeality is often related to the way we are able to act in the world. For instance, Joanna Brück (1998, 28) has argued that pregnant women or disabled individuals may (but do not necessarily) have different ways of negotiating with monuments like the Dorset cursus. In a similar way, the general abilities and means of children of different stages will, by and large, affect their agencies in other ways than adults. To acknowledge such variability in agency and ability is crucial for discussing categories of children because of their different corporeal constitution in relation to adults.

The other facet of corporeal characteristics is found in their potential as imperatives for social subjectivation and categorization. The body can be seen as a material node subjected to social and ideological processes. The body is on constant display and thus works as a social actant like any other material object. Corporeal attributes are generally active social signifiers that work consciously or unconsciously in the social process of arranging and subjectivating individuals into social categories or groups. For instance, phenotypic aspects of individual corporeality such as sex, age, skin colour, etc. are (today) conventional bases for the construction of social categories and identity (Moore 1994, 13; Fahlander 2001, 78ff). We may also consider less attentive, physical differences in weight and length, as well as aesthetic aspects such as 'beautiful' and 'ugly' and normal and deviant body forms as potentially important social factors (cf. Higate 1998, 191f). We can add several other, less striking, phenotypic characteristics (hair colour, facial attributes, etc.) that may or may not be socially significant in a given case. Of course, many corporeal traits can be purposely hidden or rearranged for different purposes (e.g. bodily manipulations and mutilations). There are also corporeal aspects which are invisible 'inside the body' (e.g. menopause, genetic abnormalities, deafness, diseases, etc.). Such internal variations may, despite their invisibility, nevertheless be exposed by their effects or lack of effects.

From anthropology we have 'learnt' that kin, sex, age and ethnicity are the prime variables around which social identity and categorisations is based, but when discussing aspects of prehistoric social structures, we probably need to attend to a wider array of corporeal aspects than the usual. The variability, ambiguity, complexity and heterogeneity of the traditional social and biological categories have been pointed out by a great number of post-structuralists and third-wave feminists (e.g. Irigaray 1985, Butler 1993; Moore 1994). Not only gender as a concept is dissolving as a social construction without essence, but also the duality of biological sex has been questioned (e.g. Laqueur 1990; Foucault 1984, 98; Nordbladh and Yates 1990; Moore 1994, 23; Žižek 2005, 59-86). This critique is not only valid for gender and sex, but applies to age and age-related phases as well. We cannot assume that there is any quintessence to the concept of childhood, teens or old age that is valid for all

time and place. It is perhaps obvious that our present day ideas and experiences of the different aspects of social identity and social categorisation do not need to have relevance in our analysis of the past. Many such 'natural' aspects and categorisations have been refuted by social scientists. Haraway (1991) has pointed out that many 'objects of knowledge', such as race, class and homosexuality, have rather short histories. Homi Bhabha (1994, 1) has, from a post-colonial perspective, stressed that the focus on sex and ethnicity are rather narrow-minded and that other aspects probably are more important in certain social situations (e.g. generation, institutional affinity, geopolitical place and sexual preferences). It seems that whenever we try to define an object of study in detail, we find that any category becomes fluid and heterogeneous (Butler 1993, 168). Indeed, it would be pretty simplistic or even self-fulfilling to stick with our present-day categories in our analysis of the past. Social subjects are multifaceted and changeable actants with varying means of agency and exposed to different subjectivation processes related to performative acts and appearance. We need to recognise the fact that individual subjects are not alike, with identical properties and (dis)advantages. We also need to dismiss the idea of the 'sameness' of a person, as bodies go through corporeal alterations over time, through childhood, maturity, old age and death (Turner 1996, 30; Gilchrist 1999, 54-78; Stoodley 2000). Which of the varying social and corporeal attributes that lay behind social categorisation in various pasts is certainly a prime objective for social analysis in archaeology. The outline and applicability of such a corporeal approach is, however, not evident. The critical discussion about social identity and social categories leaves us rather helpless, since few authors provide any new methods or ways to discuss fluid entities such as 'children'. We can, however, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, find one promising perspective in Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of serial collectives.

### **Series, groups and materialities**

Sartre has produced some interesting thoughts on how individuals often act 'together as solitudes'. Especially his concept of series is helpful in analysing diffuse collectives based on individual agency (1991, 256-69; 1977). Sartre has frequently, but perhaps somewhat unfairly, been labelled an idealist or subjectivist, advocating an individual-oriented perspective. This simplified view of the works of Sartre emanates from his more popular writings, but in his later works we find a more complex and interesting perspective. In his magnum opus, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, (1991) he seeks to merge existential philosophy with Marxist theory. He aims to sketch an image of a social totality, the structural elements, without excluding individual intentions and perspectives. The multiplicity of sociality is not simply described as constituted by atomised and autonomous subjects, but as a totalising process, whereas the social multiplicity is interiorised. This process is not that unlike Giddens' notion of the duality of structure or Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Fahlander 2003). Sartre argues that a

larger social collective (a practico-inert ensemble) “makes of everyone both a polyvalent isolation (with millions of facets) and an integrated member” (Sartre 1991, 257; 1977). Sartre argues that many socially constituted collectives are better seen as series (the inert effect of individual activities) than as social categories or groups. To be a member of a group, in Sartre’s terms, one has to enter consciously, as in a fraternity, and join in a common cause (Sartre uses the example of the Resistance to the German occupation, 1940-44). Most of what are normally considered social groups or categories do not qualify for this definition. Instead, many social collectives are better seen as combinations of momentary series, constituted by the common circumstances of situated individuals (1991, 258).

As a simple but illustrative example, Sartre discusses a group of people waiting for a bus. These individuals may be of different sex and age, have different body postures, belonging to different fraternities, religions, etc. and are not integrated as a group in the strict sense but are united by their intention of riding in the same bus. The individuals in the queue would probably neither recognise themselves as a group, nor do they need to share a common social origin (*habitus*) or individual, discriminating attributes. This particular series is defined by a ‘fluid homogeneity’. Sartre’s example may seem naive and his distinctions less meaningful, but this perspective may prove to be very helpful in finding interesting clusters in the social plurality. It is interesting to note that the serial perspective does not necessarily depart from what the agents think of the materialities that surround them (like the city, the bus, etc.). Individuals may in many situations act and think as solitaires, but they nevertheless reproduce patterns according to general, social and material conditions. Of course, individuals understand materials in various ways; some they find ugly, others are practical, some we like, some we don’t, and in everyday life we do not think about most of them in particular. For instance, it is obvious that some people do not like buses and seek other ways of transportation; these we probably found in other series such as cyclists and car commuters. Sartre mentions, in addition to serial praxis, the existence of serial feelings and serial thoughts: hence, “a series is a mode of being for individuals both in relation to one another and in relation to their common being and this mode of being transform all their structures” (1991, 266).

Marion Young (1997) has successfully employed Sartre’s serial perspective in her struggle to define women as a subjectivated category (*cf.* Fahlander 2006, see also Johannesen 2004 on seriality and ethnicity). Feminist theory is troubled in defining a valid category of women since the individual situation of women of different social contexts is varied and many do not share the same goals or problems (Mohanty 1984, Butler 1990a, 324f, Braidotti 1991, 158; Moore 1994, 10f). The differing experiences of women make them more of a heterogeneous collective or, in Braidotti’s terms, a collective singularity (Braidotti 1991, 132). But still, despite the differences in power, physical and mental

abilities and material resources, statistics remind us that women in general suffer from structural inequality in relation to the average man. Young’s solution to the problem is to see ‘women’ and the notion of ‘gender’ as series rather than as social categories. This particular type of series is not defined by biological sex or ‘femininity’, but rather by the unequal situations that many women face and by the practices that they perform in a patriarchal social order. It would, for instance, not be surprising to find many women in the queue waiting for the bus while their husbands have the family car at their disposal. In this particular case, we find a direct relationship between a superstructure (patriarchal ideology) with individual agency and materialities.

It is important to recognise that the series are not necessarily defined by the intentions of the subjects, but by their actions. The people in the queue have acted in different ways and of various reasons to situate themselves at that same particular point in time and space. Marion Young’s argument is thus partly sustained by Butler’s definition of gender as ‘stylized repetition of acts’ (1990b, 140). Sartre’s concept of series seems hence very fit to describe social categories as the result of both individual bodily constitution and motives, as far as social subjection/subjectivation processes and other structural force are concerned. To make Sartre’s concept of serial action even more useful, we may add a notion of serial categories. Such categories are defined from a number of repetitive serial actions, instead of single, momentary series, as in the bus-queue example (Fahlander 2003, 34). Most individuals participate in a number of serial collectives during their day-to-day activities. After the bus queue, some individuals may join another type of series at their workplace and so forth. All the serial memberships that a person is involved in do not necessarily constitute a part of social identity. The line of profession can mean very much to some, while others base their identity on other grounds, but very few define themselves as ‘public transporters’. We may thus speak of individual, momentary, serial situations in favour of subject positions or status-roles, and serial categories, instead of social categories (Fahlander 2003; 2007). The interesting aspect of Sartre’s concept of series is that it allows for some degree of heterogeneity and fluidity, but is still operational. As previously hinted, the serial perspective suits the fuzzy category of children and juveniles as hand in glove. Children in different stages of corporeal and social development certainly form various serial collectives according to the possibilities and constraint of their bodily constitutions. The agency of a two year old is likely to differ (but not in all respects) from the one of a seven year old and they may thus be found in different series of day to day life. The kinds of series we can expect to find certainly vary by ideologies and material circumstances, but the physical and social development of a child does, however, follow certain general courses. Some of these aspects are nearly universal, while others depend more on the situation of the whole society (sufficient food, no major conflicts, etc.) and social norms and ideologies. To be able to construct relevant series based on stages of development

it is in place to discuss some corporeal, mental and social variables related to age with potential of being socially significant.

### What's my age again? Corporeal and social aspects of childhood

In archaeological analysis we normally employ osteological and/or dental evidence for age estimation in chronological years. We should, however, rather use the terms osteological age and dental age, as such age estimates normally are calculated in reference to a given normality and are thus not always sensitive enough to account for individual variation. There are also a number of methodological problems in case of incomplete or highly degraded skeletons and sex determinations are generally difficult to establish before the individual have reached sexual maturity (Manchester 1989, 11, Sheuer and Black 2000, 12). The main problem is, however, that estimations of chronological age from osteological and dental evidence may differ from phenotypic age and indeed from social age. Archaeologists are in general not interested in the long and incomprehensible tables of measurements that sometimes are offered by the osteologists but are normally satisfied by the single column of summarized age (Table 1). Detailed osteological reports are, however, very valuable in social analysis because we relate and compare actual measurements before that are recalculated according to sex and other bell curves. We need more data than general estimations of statue, sex and gender to be able to discuss social aspects of embodiment and the social significance of bodily appearance. Another implication is found in the age-groups of osteologists and odontologists whose thresholds are based upon normal development of certain bones and teeth. They are thus not always sensitive enough for social thresholds that may occur within or in between two osteologically visible traits.

	Martin & Saller 1957	Sjøvold 1978	Sellevoid et al 1984	Arcini 1999
Fetus	–	–	–	0?
Infant	–	0 – 1 year	–	0 – 9 months
Infans I	0 – 6/7 years	0 – 7 years	0 – 6 years	1 – 6 years
Infans II	6/7 – 14/15 years	5 – 14 years	6 – 12/14 years	7 – 14 years
Juvenilis	14/15 – 18-20 years	10 – 24 years	12/14 – 17/19 years	15 – 19 years
Adultus	18/20 – 35/40 years	18 – 44 years	20 – 35 years	20 – 39 years
Maturus	35/40 – 50/60 years	35 – 64 years	35 – 55 years	40 – 59 years
Senilis	–	50 – 79 years	>60 years	>60 years

Table 1. Different categories of age according to a number of osteological manuals. (After Gustafsson and Lundin 2004:81).

There are a number of ways in which we can discuss individual age. Bodily aspects can be defined as, i.e. corporeal age, which refers to bodily statue, bodily skills, level of growth, sexual maturity or generally the appearance of age. The bodily aspects are not simple visual; we can also assume that the ability to move increases by age as well as development of fine motor coordination and general bodily skills. Most children are hampered by their corporeal constitution which decreases their possibilities to reach, climb, swim, and affect the speed in which they do things (of course, this can be an advantage in some situations, for instance, when work needs to be done in small and narrow places). Children are also generally limited in bodily knowledge, that is, how to do things properly, and certain tasks need a level of fine motor skills that younger children do not normally possess. Linked to this biological category, we may also add mental age, which include IQ and EQ in a general sense, but more specifically the level of social capabilities, rate of communicative abilities, and problem-solving skills. In psychology, some general steps in mental development are recognized, for instance, the mirror-stage (Lacan 1977; cf. Alcorn 1994) or Freud's (1962) five stages of psychological development (oral, anal, phallic, latency, genital). These distinctions may be helpful in describing the child's psychological development, but their social implications are not necessarily that important. A more interesting concern, however, is the development of a 'theory of mind'; a socio-psychological threshold that most children pass at the age of four (Cox 1991, 177ff). To possess a theory of mind means that one can differ between real circumstances and how other people may react to delusions. In short, to understand that other people may have different beliefs than yourself. A popular test to determine if one has acquired a theory of mind is the Sally-Ann test (Cox 1991, 167ff). The child is presented to two dolls, Sally and Anne. While all three are present in a room a small bag of candy is placed under a pillow. Then one of the dolls, Sally, 'leaves' the room and the candy is moved to the pocket of the remaining doll Anne. The child is now asked where Sally, when she enters the room again, would believe the candy is hidden. Children under the age of four generally answers 'in Ann's pocket', while children above four correctly answers 'under the pillow' often with the addition; 'but they are not', delivered with a conspiratorial smile.

Other similar studies suggest that children under the age of three have difficulties in masking their feelings, a social skill that is gradually developed and normally handled at the age of six. This is, of course, connected to the ability to understand and read other peoples feelings which normally begins at the age of two, but is generally more developed at the age of six-seven (Cox 1991, 187, 191). Another crucial parameter is the development of language. This is a process that accelerates rapidly at the age of c.30 months and culminates at the age of six-seven when the child normally has acquired basic communicative and grammatical knowledge. To conquer a language does not simply mean that one can

communicate better with others. The grammatical skills also give rise to a greater ability to understand the surrounding world and to grasp an idea of self in future stages. This self-awareness is often both a pain and a blessing, but carry important implications both for the individual itself as to its primary others.

The mental age is, of course, very much tied to what we may call social age. To possess language, self awareness and theory of mind is crucial in social life. It is important to recognise that other people can have other beliefs than oneself in order to cooperate and negotiate with others. It may also be useful to take advantage of a situation and even manipulate others (as well as avoiding being manipulated and abused). A theory of mind is also socially important as it enables the child to make sense of stories and thus be able to comprehend cultural knowledge (i.e. ethnic narratives). Social age also concerns some aspects that lie outside the corporeal and mental characteristics. A few such practical examples are the level of self-sufficiency and ability to manage without help, passing the stage of weaning, and the rate of mobility. Communication is often of essential social importance. To function as a group in everyday life one need to be able to express taboos, rights and duties, negotiate and express emotions and plan collaborative work to some extent. These skills are normally something that takes time to learn and interiorize.

To summarise so far, children are able to participate socially in various ways according to their specific corporeal and mental aspects as well as by acquiring physical and social skills. In most societies an individual can reach different socially highlighted thresholds, i.e. achieved age. Such thresholds can be reached by passing tests or by completing certain tasks or perhaps ‘automatically’ by reaching sexual maturity (or menopause), marriage, deaths of significant others, adoption and divorce, etc. Common for all these examples is that they tend to vary between individuals, and between societies, and we cannot assume any natural or logical stages that separate individuals from one phase of the life-cycle from another. We can, however, point out some general aspects related to chronological age that may have social importance (Table 2).

Corporeal	Mental	Social
Low stature	Mirror stage	Social thresholds
Ability to move	Verbalism	Tacit ‘bodily’ knowledge
Fine motor co-ordination	Theory of mind	Cultural knowledge
Strength	Knowledge	Ability to propagate
Sexual maturity	IQ/EQ	Self-sufficiency
	Dispositions	Trustworthiness

Table 2. Suggested corporeal, mental and social variables related to the development of children.

Table 2 outlines some corporeal, mental and social aspects that may be important properties in the ways different people categorise an individual as a kind of

child or juvenile in contrast to adults. By analysing the importance of these variables in a given case we can actually find several different categories of children instead of only one fuzzy and diffuse category. Based upon the aspects discussed above we can quite easily discern at least four different series that ought to have social significance (Table 3). Although, these are important steps in any child’s corporeal and social development, we cannot assume that they are always significant in any given case. In order to validate their respective social importance we need to discuss them in relation to archaeological data. The series may, however, prove helpful to us as a starting point when we arrange and construct our fictions and models of the past.

<p><b>Series I</b>  <b>(Suggested chronological age-span: c.0-2years)</b>                      Low rate of communication                      Need of care                      Minimal mobility                      Minimal agency                      Low self-awareness</p>
<p><b>Series II</b>  <b>(Suggested chronological age-span: c.2-4 years)</b>                      Communicative (language and grammar)                      Beginning to cooperate (play) with others                      Limited mobility                      Low social skills (no theory of mind)                      Self-awareness                      Need of guidance and help (but normally weaned)</p>
<p><b>Series III</b>  <b>(Suggested chronological age-span: c.4-6/7 years)</b>                      Communicative (language and grammar)                      Developed fine motor coordination                      Increased mobility                      Theory of mind                      Greater strength                      Developed social skills and knowledge</p>
<p><b>Series IV</b>  <b>(Suggested chronological age-span: c.7-10/12 years)</b>                      Fully communicative                      Basic social skills and cultural knowledge                      Full mobility                      Ability of fine motor coordination                      ‘Fit for work’</p>

Table 3. Examples of series based on corporeal, mental and social properties of young children.

The suggested chronological time-spans of the series in Table 3 are attached with some hesitation; perhaps we would be better off without any reference to chronological age at all? Our prime focus of interest is aspects of corporeality, such as appearance and socially significant abilities. Reference to age does, however, serve a purpose of clarifying the level of the properties of the series. But when it comes to actual case studies, archaeologists are generally confined to estimates of osteological age. The suggested series are thus only

tentative and needs to be apprehended in a polythetic manner since children do not develop physically and mentally simultaneously and at a constant speed. Just to pick one example, a socially important variable is weaning. Here we have little means to establish a breaking point. Children can be breast-fed up to quite an advanced age or can manage without almost from birth (*cf.* Alexandre-Bidon and Lett 1999, 33). We therefore need to view the variables of the series like fibres of a thread. A thread is made up of separate fibres of different lengths wrapped over each other, and each of them does not necessarily extend all through the thread. Of course, we probably need to adjust our series according to varying social and material conditions. There are probably (but not necessarily) differences in which variables that prove socially and practically significant between, let's say, a hunter-gatherer group and life in a medieval village.

### Series in action?

There is unfortunately no room here for an extensive case-study that would have put the serial perspective in practice (but see Fahlander 2003, 87-120). I assume, however, that the reader can very well imagine a number of ways in which it can be applied to e.g. material, iconographic, and written evidence (*cf.* Scott 1999; Baxter 2005). I will nonetheless finish off by discussing the possibilities of a serial perspective in analysing burial evidence. Interpreting graves and grave interments are perhaps one of the most complicated and ambiguous analytical problems in archaeology. The main problem in burial analysis is to determine in which sense the construction of the grave and its interments are related to the buried individual (Fahlander 2003). To simply follow the Saxe-Binford approach and state that the burial reflects the buried individuals status or social persona is clearly not sufficient (or not even very likely). The graves of children highlights this problematic when we find tools and weapons in children's graves that they cannot have been using during life. Buried children are often not assumed to have high social status or importance of their own. Instead, such elaborated burials are assumed to reflect the status of their families (e.g. Pader 1982, 57; Baxter 2005, 94). One example is a child grave of the Neolithic site at Ajvide, Sweden where a newborn child was buried with a large harpoon which it never could have been able to use in life. The excavators interpret this instant as evidence for a social structure based on inherited prestige (Burenhult 1997, 62, but see Strassburg 2000:200). It could, of course, also simply represent a burial gift of one of the participating adults with little or no relation to the dead child. In singular cases, we can never reach a satisfactory interpretation. We need some kind of patterning or structure to make more generalising statements. The problem is how to establish such patterning without making simple correlations between grave and individual. One way of bypassing that tricky question is by employing a corporeal perspective as discussed above. Instead of searching for patterns related to age and sex, we can relate attributes of the grave to various aspects of osteology and thus establish corporeal

relationships between bodily attributes and elements of the grave. What kind of bodies (i.e. not individuals) are buried with certain kinds of material, at certain places and in certain constructions? Such corporeal relationships can in turn hint at social categorisation and subjectivation of the living population. In this manner, we may end up with more relevant and even unexpected series of individuals and stages of the life-course than by the 'normal' way of procedure.

It is most peculiar how negligent burials of children have been treated in archaeology, when it is quite evident that studies of children's burials have great potential. A common feature in many periods and places is that children generally are treated differently than the older population (Watts 1989; Lee 1994; Molin 1999). Generally, the burials of small children are not as 'rich' and elaborated as the graves of adults (but there are of course many exceptions).<sup>1</sup> They are often buried at liminal places or sometimes even in profane domestic contexts. When adults are inhumated, children are often cremated or vice versa, etc (Rash 1991, 31, Alexandre-Bidon and Lett 1999, 30, Morris 2000, 287; Houby-Nielsen 2000; Svedin 2005). These instances, the seemingly subaltern status of the dead children, are generally associated with an ambiguous identity in life (e.g. Jonsson 1999). Indeed, the young child is in a social sense often displaced, or lost, somewhere in between a 'proper' gender, sex, identity, citizenship, wild-domestic, animal-human, etc. Instead of simply dismiss the treatment of children as deviant and anomalies in 'normal ritual practice' we may instead explore these relations in order to better understand larger issues of e.g. social identity, agency, gender, corporeality, social categorisation (subjectivation) and ideology.

To exemplify such an approach, we may briefly consider one case where different bodies (young – old, male – female, human – animal) seem to have required different burial practices. At the Mesolithic burial complex of Skateholm in southern Sweden (Larsson 2000; 2004; *cf.* Strassburg 2000; Nilsson-Stutz 2003, Fahlander 2008) the individually buried children under the age of five are placed marginally at the borders of the two main burial areas. The same spatial aspects are also valid for the eight individually buried dogs of the site. For some reason the dead bodies of children and dogs been separated from the adults in a similar manner. This spatial arrangement is quite obvious, but there are nonetheless interesting differences between the younger and the older phase of Skateholm. At the younger burial area of Skateholm I, we

<sup>1</sup> One striking example is the huge Bronze Age burial cairn of Kivik in southern Sweden. Due to its exceptional size and monumental appearance it has even since the 19th century been believed to be the grave of a powerful chief. The recent performed osteologically analysis and C14 determinations do however, prove that theory wrong. It turned out that the chamber of the cairn hosted four to five different individuals, all in their early teens except for one adult. The carbon determinations also reveal that the individuals were deposited in at least three different occasions (c. 1400-1200, 1200-1000 and 900-800 BCE). Interestingly is the adult individual the only one buried during the last phase and hence has little to do with the construction of the monument (Goldhahn 2005, 224-54).

find the children and the dogs in the southern, western and eastern borders. At the slightly older burial area of Skateholm II, however, we find the dogs at the eastern and western borders while the children limit the area in the north and the south (Fahlander 2011). There can be little doubt that the marginal placement of children and dogs are significant and meaningful. Generally, such marginal placement of burials been interpreted as an indication of low status, but that hypothesis makes little sense for Skateholm. Several of the children's graves are, on the contrary, rich in interments and of high energy expenditure and the 'richest' grave of the Skateholm site was actually one of the dogs! The dead bodies of small children and dogs are clearly out of the ordinary and seem to have needed special requirements during the burial. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that children and dogs were exceptional (or alike) in life. But nonetheless these patterns between children, adults and non-humans (dogs) do provide a very interesting platform in discussing how social identity and status may be related to burial evidence. The example of bodily metaphors at Skateholm does indeed suggest that there are great possibilities in detailed studies of children's graves; especially if we employ a serial perspective based on corporealities and social practice.

### Summary

It has been argued that simply discussing 'children' as a single category won't get us very far in social analysis of the past; we need to open up the category into socially significant sub-categories (series). In this paper, I have suggested that Jean-Paul Sartre's distinction between series and groups is helpful in discerning such sub-categories of children. Children in different stages of corporeal, mental and social development are likely to be involved in different tasks, spaces and social spheres not only in relation to adults, but also to each other. I have proposed four such series of pre-pubertal individuals here, but, of course, such schemes can as well be extended in detail or range according to available data and questions.

It is probably true that children and juveniles seldom are the great producers, leaders or innovators of prehistoric societies, but they do make up a large part of the populations and must thus directly or indirectly been involved in the formation of the archaeological record. The fact that the category is diffuse and heterogeneous is no arguments for them being less interesting to study and discuss. On the contrary, it rather seems that extensive and detailed analyses of children and other age-related aspects have a great potential in archaeology. There is a large empirical material consisting of texts, iconography and burial data ready at hand and there is a whole world of children to discover by discussing the constitution and social effects of different series of children. The brief example of the Mesolithic site of Skateholm indicates that social categorisation and identity are issues that can be very different from what we normally assume them to be. Research on children and social aspects of early age would surely benefit if we did not strictly employed

traditional social categories but rather tried to explore an archaeology that would embrace and, to a greater extent, use traces of social complexity and heterogeneity of different periods and places. From such a perspective, analysis of children and related practices can prove to be a rewarding platform. Not only to increase our knowledge of 'the small ones', but such studies can also help us to understand larger issues of e.g. gender, corporeality and ideology.

### References

- Alcorn Jr, M. W. 1994. The subject of discourse: Reading Lacan through (and beyond) poststructuralist context. In M. Bracher (ed.) *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, structure, and society*. New York: New York Univ. Press, cop, 19-45.
- Alexandre-Bidon, D. and Lett, D. 1999. *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth-fifteenth centuries*. Translation by J. Gladding. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Alt, K. W. and Kemkes-Groententhaler, A. (eds.) 2002. *Kinderwelten: Anthropologie, Geschichte, Kulturvergleich*. Köln: Böhlau Verlag.
- Andersson, K. 1999. De dolda könen – om barn, ungdomar, vuxna och åldringar i romartidens Uppland och Västermanland. In K. Andersson, A. Lagerlöf & A. Åkerlund (eds.) *Forskaren i fält – en vänbok till Kristina Lamm*. Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 77-86.
- Arcini, C. 1999. *Health and Disease in early Lund: Osteo-pathologic studies of 3,305 individuals buried in the first cemetery area of Lund 990-1536*. Lund: Lunds Universitet
- Baxter, J. E. 2005. *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, gender, and material culture*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Beaumont, L. A. 1994. Constructing a Methodology for the Interpretation of Childhood Age in Classical Athenian Iconography. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 13(2), 81-96.
- Berggren, K. 2000. The knowledge-able agent? On the paradoxes of power. In C. Holtorf and H. Karlsson (eds.) *Philosophy and Archaeological Practice. Perspectives for the 21st Century*. Göteborg: Bricoleur Press, 39-46.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bigwood, C. 1991. Renaturalizing the Body (with the Help of Merleau-Ponty). *Hypatia* 6(3) (Fall 1991), 54-73.
- Braidotti, R. 1991. *Patterns of Dissonance. A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Brück, J. 1998. In the footsteps of the ancestors: a review of Christopher Tilley's *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, paths and monuments*. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 15, 23-36.
- Burenhult, G. 1997. Gravarnas vittnesbörd. In G. Burenhult (ed.) *Ajvide och den moderna arkeologin*, ed: Göran Burenhult. Stockholm: Natur & kultur, 52-70.
- Burkitt, I. 1999. *Bodies of Thought*. London: Sage.
- Butler, J. 1993. *Bodies that Matter. On the discursive limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. 1990a. Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse, In L. J. Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 324-340.
- Butler, J. 1990b. *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Cox, M. V. 1991. *The Child's Point of View: The development of cognition and language*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Davis, K. 1997. Embodiment Theory: Beyond Modernist and Postmodernist Readings of the Body. In K. Davis (ed.) *Embodied Practices: Feminist perspectives on the body*. London: Sage, 1-23.
- Fahlander, F. 2001. *Archaeology as Science-Fiction. A Microarchaeology of the Unknown*. Gotarc serie C, no 43, Göteborg: Institutionen för arkeologi.
- Fahlander, F. 2003. *The Materiality of Serial Practice. A Microarchaeology of Burial*. Gotarc serie B, no 23, Göteborg: Institutionen för arkeologi.
- Fahlander, F. 2006. Kön & Gender som seriekollektiv: sociala aspekter på korporealitet & handling, *Det arkeologiske kjønn*, Ed: I. Fuglestad and L. Skogstrand, OAS (7), Oslo: University, 27-42.
- Fahlander, F. 2007. Third space encounters. Hybridity, mimicry and interstitial practice, Encounters-Materialities-Confrontations. *Archaeologies of Social Space and Interaction*. In P. Cornell and F. Fahlander (eds.) Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 15-43.
- Fahlander, F. 2008. A piece of the Mesolithic. Horizontal stratigraphy and bodily manipulations at Skateholm, *The Materiality of Death. Bodies, burials, beliefs*. In Fredrik Fahlander and Terje Oestigaard (eds), BAR International Series 1768, Oxford: Archaeopress, 29-45.
- Fahlander, F. 2011. Bland barn och hundar på Skateholm, *Spåren av de små. Arkeologiska perspektiv på barn och barndom*, In: Fredrik Fahlander (ed.), Stockholm studies in archaeology 54, Stockholm: Univ., 181-196.
- Foucault, M. 1984. *The Birth of the Clinic. An archaeology of medical perception*. Transl. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Vintage Book.
- Foucault, M. 1980. *Power, Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Ed. and transl. by Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon cop.
- Freud, S. 1962. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Gero, J. 2000. Troubled Travels in Agency and Feminism. In M-A Dobres and J. E. Robb (eds.) *Agency in Archaeology*. London & New York: Routledge, 34-39.
- Gilchrist, R. 1999. *Gender and Archaeology: Contesting the past*. London: Routledge.
- Goldhahn, Joakim 2005. *Från Sagaholm till Bredarör - hällbildsstudier 2000-2004*. GOTARC series C, No 62, Göteborg: Arkeologiska institutionen.
- Gräslund, A-S. 1973. *Barn i Birka*. In Tor, 1972-1973, 161-179.
- Gustafsson, A. & Lundin, I. 2005. Och så var det barnen. Barn- och ungdomsgravar i Svarteberg och Kville Socknar. In P. Claesson and B-A Munkeberg (eds.) *Projekt Gläborg - Rabbalshede. Bygden innanför fjordarna: 3 Gravvar och ritualer*. Kulturhistoriska dokumentationer nr 15. Uddevalla: Bohusläns museum, 71-106.
- Hamilakis, Y., Pluciennik, M. and Tarlow, S. 2002. *Thinking through the Body: Archaeologies of Corporeality*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Haraway, D. J. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The reinvention of nature*. London: Free Association Books.
- Heywood, C. 2001. *A History of Childhood: Children and childhood in the West from medieval to modern times*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Higate, P. 1998. The body resists. Everyday clerking and unmilitary practice. In S. Nettleton and J. Watson (eds.) *The Body in Everyday Life*. London & New York: Routledge, 180-98.
- Houby-Nielsen, S. 2000. Child burials in ancient Athens, In J. Sofaer Devereński (ed.) *Children and Material Culture*. London: Routledge, 151-66.
- Irigaray, L. 1985. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- James, A., Jenks, C. and Prout, A. 1998. *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Johannesen, J. M. 2004. Operational Ethnicity. Serial Practice and Materiality. In F. Fahlander and T. Oestigaard (eds.) *Material Culture and Other Things*. Gotarc series C, No 61, Göteborg, 161-184.
- Johnsen, B. and Welinder, S. (eds.) 1995. *Arkeologi om barn*. Uppsala: Societas archaeologica Upsaliensis.
- Jonsson, K. 1999. Bland barnaföderskor, spädbarn och ”vuxna barn” – social och religiös kontroll speglad i gravmaterialet från Västerhus. *META* No 4, 12-35.
- Jordanova, L. 1990. New Worlds for children in the eighteenth century. Problems of historical interpretation. *History of the Human Sciences* 3, 69-83.
- Lacan, J. 1977. *Écrits. A selection*. Trans: Alan Sheridan, London: Tavistock Publications.
- Laqueur, T. 1990. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Larsson, L. 2000. Cemeteries and mortuary practice in the Late Mesolithic of southern Scandinavia. In V. Lang (ed.) *De temporibus antiquissimis ad honorem Lembit Jaanits*. Tallinn: Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus, 81-102.
- Larsson, L. 2004. The Mesolithic period in Southern Scandinavia: with special reference to burials and cemeteries. In A. Saville (ed.) *Mesolithic Scotland and its Neighbors: The early Holocene prehistory of Scotland, its British and Irish context, and some Northern European perspectives*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.
- Lee, K. A. 1994. Attitudes and Prejudices Towards Infanticide: Carthage, Rome and Today. *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 13(2), 65-79.
- Lillehammer, G. 1986. Barna i Nordens forhistorie. Drøft metodegrunnlaget og kildernes bærekraft. *KAN* No2, 3-21.
- Lillehammer, G. 1989. A Child is Born. The Child's World in an Archaeological Perspective. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 22(2), 89-105.
- Manchester, K. 1989. Burial Archaeology: the state of the art past, present and future, In C. A. Roberts, F. Lee and J. Bintliff (eds.) *Burial Archaeology Current Research, Methods and Developments*. Oxford: BAR 211, 5-14.
- Martin, R. and Saller, K. 1957-1966. *Lehrbuch der Anthropologie: in systematischer Darstellung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der anthropologischen Methoden*. Stuttgart.
- Meskill, L. 1999. *The Archaeology of Social Life. Age, Sex, Class et cetera in Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mohanty, C. T. 1984. Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Boundary 2* 12(3), (Spring-Autumn, 1984), 333-358.
- Molin, A. 1999. Barngravfältet i Hulje. In A. Kaliff (ed.) *Olika perspektiv på en arkeologisk undersökning i västra Östergötland*. Skrifter Nr. 28. Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 42-56.
- Moore, H. 1994. *A Passion for Difference: Essays in anthropology and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morris, I. 2000. *Archaeology as Cultural History. Words and things in Iron Age Greece*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Nilsson Stutz, L. 2003. *Embodied Rituals & Ritualized Bodies: Tracing ritual practices in Late Mesolithic burials*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.
- Nordblad, J. & Yates, T. 1990. This perfect body, this virgin text: Between sex and gender in archaeology. In I. Bapty and T. Yates (eds.) *Archaeology after Structuralism: Post-structuralism and the Practice of Archaeology*. London: Routledge, 222-237.
- Rasch, M. 1991. Öland - en regional översikt, In A. Lagerlöf (ed.) *Gravmaterialet som källa för kunskap om människans livsvillkor, religiösa och sociala värderingar*. Stockholm: RAÄ, 28-36.
- Rautman A. (ed.) 2000. *Reading the Body: Representations and remains in the archaeological record*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sartre, J-P. 1991. *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. London: Verso.
- Sartre, J-P. 1977. *Life/Situations: Essays Written and Spoken*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Scheuer, L. and Black, S. 2000. Development and ageing of the juvenile skeleton, In M. Cox and S. Mays (eds.) *Osteology in Archaeology and Forensic Science*. London: GMM, 9-21.
- Scott, E. 1999. *The Archaeology of Infancy and Infant Death*. Oxford: Archaeopress: BAR International Series 819.
- Sellevoid, B. J. 1984. Prehistoric man in Denmark: a study in physical anthropology. In B. J. Sellevoid, U. L. Hansen and J. B. Jørgensen (eds.) *Iron Age Man in Denmark: Vol. 3*. København: Munksgaard.
- Sjøvold, T. 1977. *Non-Metrical Divergence between Skeletal Populations: The theoretical foundation and biological importance of C. A. B. Smith's mean measure of divergence*. Solna, Univ.: Osteological research laboratory.
- Sofaer-Derevenski, J. 1997. Engendering children, engendering archaeology. In J. Moore and E. Scott (eds.)

*Invisible People and Processes Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*. London: Leicester University Press, 192-202.

Sofaer Deverenski, J. 2000a. Material culture shock: confronting expectations in the material culture of children, In J. Sofaer Deverenski (ed.) *Children and Material Culture*. London: Routledge, 3-16.

Sofaer Deverenski, J. (ed.) 2000b. *Children and Material Culture*. London: Routledge.

Stoodley, N. 2000. From the cradle to the grave: age organization in the early Anglo-Saxon burial rite. *World Archaeology* 131(3), 456-72.

Strassburg, J. 2000. *Shamanic Shadows. One Hundred Generations of Undead Subversions in Southern Scandinavia 7,000–4,000 BC*. Surte: Department of Archaeology, Stockholm University.

Svedin, M. 2005. The Significance of the children in life and in death. Styrmansberget on Gotland, Sweden. A place for Communications, fertility, gender and kin relations during the Roman Iron Age and the Migration period. In T. Hjørungdal (ed.) *Gender Locales and Local Genders in Archaeology*. BAR International Series.

Sweeney, S. & Hodder, I. (eds.) 2002. *The Body*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, B. 1996. *The Body and Society: Explorations in social theory*. London: Sage.

Watts, D. J. 1989. Infant burials and Romano-British Christianity. *The Archaeological Journal* 146, 372–383.

Welton, D. 1998. Introduction: Situating the Body. In D. Welton (ed.) *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1-8.

Wheelan, M. 1995. Gender and Historical Archaeology: Eastern Dakota Patterns in the 19th Century. *Historical Archaeology* 25, 17-32.

Young, I. M. 1997. *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Žižek, S. 2005. Connections of the Freudian Field to Philosophy and Popular Culture. In R. Butler and S. Stephens (eds.) *Interrogating the Real*. London & New York: Continuum, 59-86.