CHILDREN, MIGRATION, AND MORTUARY REPRESENTATION IN THE LATE PREHISTORIC CENTRAL ILLINOIS RIVER VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

Morton Village and the associated Norris Farms #36 cemetery site in Fulton County, Illinois, provide an opportunity to synthesize community and mortuary perspectives on life among Mississippian and Oneota inhabitants of the late prehistoric Central Illinois River Valley. Among research directions to develop from new Michigan State University-Dickson Mounds Museum excavations are questions regarding the role that the 143 subadults interred in the cemetery can play in the analysis of community social relations. In this article, we focus on the lives and deaths of Morton's youngest residents, particularly as they relate to broader patterns of migration and identity (trans)formation. We specifically seek to understand whether some of these children were born into families with blended Oneota and Mississippian identities, potentially signaling multiethnic identity in their mortuary signatures. To this end, a particular subset of juveniles is compared to other burials in the cemetery, and is discussed within a larger context of migration and multiethnic social interactions. We argue that the mortuary disposition of certain children might be viewed as an avenue for the symbolic expression of novel identity processes borne of unique Oneota and Mississippian interactions in the region, particularly when interpreted with reference to childrens's roles in that process and through a lens of liminality, hybridity, and communitas.

KEYWORDS: Communitas, Identity, Liminality, Migration, Mississippian, Oneota

Introduction: Children and Migration in Anthropology and Archaeology

Both the sociocultural and archaeological literatures on children and childhood have become increasingly

well developed over the last several decades. Although classic early twentieth century ethnographers (i.e.

Mead and Malinowski) conspicuously featured children as part of developmental and psychological

approaches to culture, it was the post 1960s environment that ushered in a diversification of

anthropological approaches to childhood (LeVine, 2007; Montgomery, 2008). Recognition that concepts

and categories of childhood are cross culturally variable, socially constructed, and discursively fluid

seems to be an important development in contemporary anthropological research (Heywood, 2001; James,

2007; James and James, 2008; James and Prout, 1990). Still, Hirschfield (2002) points out a persistent

and puzzling situation in which childhood studies fail to be meaningfully integrated into general

anthropological theory development despite an overwhelming consensus that culture is transmitted via

learning, presumably starting in very early childhood, and thus making this stage in the life course

particularly important for understanding culture transmission and change. Although the effectiveness of contemporary sociocultural anthropology as a discipline at addressing this shortcoming is debatable, surveys of the more recent literature suggests that the role of children and childhood is being increasingly recognized and problematized, particularly from the perspectives of agency, identity, and policy-making (Attard, 2008; Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007; Hart, 2006; Society for Medical Anthropology, 2007), although these pursuits do overlap (Ensor and Goździak, 2010).

In keeping with broader patterns seen in the sociocultural literature, ethnographies of migration often emphasize adult experiences, but an increasingly significant component of this literature focuses specifically on the role that children play as facilitators of culture change and integration in the context of migration (Boehm *et al*, 2010; Dobson, 2009; and Knorr, 2012, for example). It is recognized that children in these situations are not simply passive recipients of novel cultural ideas, but rather play a dialectically active role of simultaneously adapting to *and* changing the cultures into which they were born (Ensor, 2010; Knorr, 2012). In fact, Knorr (2012) cites Erny's (2003) observation that in circumstances of rapid cultural change – perhaps such as those novel circumstances instigated by migration – it is often the case that children are the ones transmitting new cultural knowledge to adults, rather than the conventionally conceived inverse situation. Greenfield (2000) addresses the material correlates of similar child-centered processes among the contemporary Maya, observing that, as they grow and learn, children reproduce and recombine weaving themes and techniques in a way that is simultaneously historically-rooted and nested within their own experiences in a modern, rapidly changing economy. Child-driven cultural transformations such as these can be explored at multiple socio-spatial levels of analysis – from households, to neighborhoods, to larger communities (Boehm *et al,* 2010). However, although children's agency is an important consideration when attempting to understand the process of culture change in migrational contexts, Boehm et al (2010) recognize that it is not only the roles that children *choose* to play, but also those they are *expected* (by adults) to play that are important to understanding their place in the social construction of identity. This phenomenon comes quite obviously to the forefront within a particular subset of the anthropological linguistics literature, as studies focused

on the children of non-English speaking migrant parents in the contemporary United States and other places demonstrate that these children often play economically and socially important roles as translators between their parents and members of the host culture (Parra-Cardona *et al,* 2006). These children are ascribed by their families – and ascribe to themselves – a bicultural identity that is somewhere in between the cultures of their parents and that of the host society (Smokowski *et al*, 2008).

Perhaps mirroring the history of gender research in archaeology, integrating children and childhood into accounts of the archaeological past has lagged somewhat behind analogous work being undertaken in sociocultural anthropology. Works such as Lillehammer (1989; 2010), Sofaer-Derevenski (1994; 2000), Kamp (2001) and Baxter (2008; 2013) represent seminal summary works and calls to action in the recognition, problematization, and theoretical development of children and childhood from an archaeological perspective (see also Spencer-Wood, 2014 for a thorough summary and bibliography). Rather than being ignored or only casually mentioned, an emerging body of literature highlights the active and archaeologically visible roles that children play in situations as diverse as the disposition of household space (i.e. De Lucia, 2010); as producers of material culture (i.e Kamp et al, 1999; Carey, 2006); as meaningful members of kin groups (i.e. Lillehammer, 2009); and as avenues for the mortuary/symbolic expression of ideas about community, kinship, and ideology (i.e. Gardela and Duma, 2013; Brereton, 2013). Migration as a distinct and legitimate subject of archaeological inquiry has also become increasingly well developed, with important works such as Anthony (1990, 1992), Chapman and Dolukhonov (1992), Härke (1998), Burmiester (2000), and Hackenbeck (2008), providing historical and theoretical baselines from which this important issue can be explored. However, what these works do not address in any significant way is that migration is a process influenced by adults *and* children within both the 'migrant' and 'host' communities, as is occasionally recognized and fruitfully explored in archaeological case studies (see Hadley and Hemer, 2011, for example).

Furthermore, archaeological analyses that specifically address mortuary practices provide intriguing clues to a range of social phenomena that, similar to the research directions outlined above, can only stand to benefit from the explicit incorporation of a child-centered approach. An historical review of

the increasingly broad mortuary literature in anthropology and archaeology shows that it has progressed from generalist religious perspectives on mortuary practice in traditional cultures (Hertz, 1960); to systematic analyses of social organization and representations of power relations in the past (Binford, 1971; Saxe, 1970); to mortuary practice reflecting history and ritual action (Hodder, 1984; Parker Pearson, 1982); to more recent and nuanced perspectives on a broad array of anthropological phenomena, including gender, kinship, agency, and ancesterhood (Parker Pearson, 1999; Rakita *et al*, 2005). Some of this literature even addresses topics such migration (Burmeister, 2000; Knudson *et al*, 2004) and ethnogenesis (Emerson and Hargrave, 2000), which have direct implications for the current research. Although most of these works do not incorporate children's interments with any depth or detail, works such as Baxter's (2013) analysis of status and sentimentality and De Lucia's (2010) perspective on children's spaces demonstrate that studies focused specifically on children's interments can meaningfully contribute to the range of sociocultural phenomena that mortuary archaeologists are apt to study. However, despite the diversity of archaeological approaches to – and levels of analysis at which – the topics of children, mortuary patterning, and migration have been separately and independently situated in the archaeological past, it seems that very few archaeological studies explicitly integrate all three.

In their work on childhood and migration in contemporary global perspective, Boehm and colleagues observe that the new social configurations instigated by migration and facilitated (at least in part) through children's roles, identities, and actions can allude to established cultural norms, giving 'new forms old meanings', or 'old forms new meaning.' (Boehm *et al*, 2010: 12). If these 'forms' can be assumed to have material expression in a given case, then such a phenomenon should be amenable to archaeological exploration. Through an analytical lens framed by a materialist perspective on this general notion, we consider how social identities ascribed to children (by themselves and/or by adults in the community) in a particular instance of migration in the late prehistoric Central Illinois River Valley (CIRV) may have been expressed through novel – yet historically-rooted – mortuary treatments.

Background: Mississippian and Oneota in the Central Illinois River Valley

During the early fourteenth century AD, groups of Native Americans identified by archaeologists as Oneota were migrating across the vast riverine landscape of the midcontinent. Groups settled into localized areas primarily in ecologically-rich environments with easy access to rivers, lakes, wetlands, and upland resources where they could continue intensive pursuit of an extremely diverse subsistence economy (Henning, 1998; Hollinger, 2005; Tubbs and O'Gorman, 2005). In some areas, Oneota communities would continue and grow; in other places and situations the occupations were relatively short-lived.

The Oneota were not the only inhabitants of the late prehistoric midcontinental landscape. A separate tradition known as Middle Mississippian (referred to here simply as Mississippian) is well established in the archaeological literature. Historical links indicate Oneota are associated with the more northern Siouan speaking groups, while it can be assumed that Mississippians were more linguistically related to more southern and southeastern groups of the midcontinent. During the fourteenth century AD, an Oneota group (or groups) chose to migrate into the CIRV, an area already occupied for hundreds of years by Middle Mississippian groups. This is archaeologically visible because there are important cultural distinctions between the two traditions (table 1), and geographically, the Oneota tradition is primarily located well north of the Middle Mississippian heartland. Known from only five sites in the CIRV, the result of this migration was a unique blending of Oneota and Middle Mississippian cultural traits, primarily identified via pottery, that archaeologically define mid-fourteenth century Oneota in this region. Referred to as Bold Counselor phase Oneota (Esarey and Conrad, 1998), the diagnostic material culture is generally understood to be ethnically Oneota, with some borrowing of typical Mississippian pottery forms and decorative motifs (see table 1) reflecting what was early on described as 'cultural fusion' (Smith, 1951).

The presence of Oneota and Mississippian groups in the CIRV and the Oneota pottery evidence have been understood as representing some form of 'social integration' that in some cases involves varying degrees or types of cohabitation (Conrad, 1963, 1991; Esarey and Conrad, 1998; Esarey and

Santure, 1990; Sank, 1993; Conner and O'Gorman, 2012). Architecture and pottery are good indicators of cultural affiliation at Morton Village and their analysis allows researchers to explore various hypotheses regarding the spatial and symbolic structure of the village; for example, whether Oneota and Mississippian peoples negotiated a community where pluralism, separatism, or assimilation was the dominant social structuring force. In this and other ways, use of structural characteristics of house walls (i.e., single-post indicating Oneota and wall trenches indicating Mississippian) or pottery decoration and form as normative cultural markers are useful, although not the end goal of analyses. These and other material goods were manipulated and used in the everyday negotiation of identity and social life by the inhabitants of Morton Village, whose ethnic and community identity is at the heart of ongoing research.

While there is clear evidence of some degree of cohabitation and peaceful interaction between the two groups, the Oneota migrants entered the CIRV at a time when increased warfare between resident Mississippians and other polities had occurred (Steadman, 2008) and were themselves subject to remarkable levels of prolonged intermittent violence (Emerson, 2007; Hollinger, 2005). Adding to the narrative of violence are analyses of the Norris Farms #36 cemetery in Fulton County, Illinois (Figures 1a and 1b). A thorough report by Santure et al (1990) documents the details of this mounded mortuary site, which was completely excavated in the 1980s and found to contain the remains of 264 individuals traditionally identified as Oneota based on distinctive material culture (see tables 2 and 3 for basic demographic information pertinent to the current study, but see Santure et al 1990 for exhaustive tabulations). Undeniable bioarchaeological data identifying high rates of violence at the Norris Farms #36 cemetery have been the subject of extensive bioarchaeological research (Milner and Smith 1990; Milner et al. 1991a, 1991b). Of the 264 Oneota individuals represented by well-preserved skeletal remains, forty-three (forty-one adults and two children) exhibited evidence of violent death in the form of unhealed traumatic lesions such as fractures, embedded projectile points, and cut marks indicative of scalping, decapitation, and trophy taking. Others showed evidence of healed traumatic lesions indicating survival for some period of time after an attack. In total, thirty-four percent of Norris Farms #36 individuals over

the age of fifteen sustained traumatic injuries manifested in skeletal remains. Carnivore gnawing suggests that some bodies were exposed to the elements away from the main village for extended periods prior to recovery, and poor community health may have been exacerbated by the social stress endemic in the village. Furthermore, data from limited excavation in the 1980s at the associated village site, in conjunction with the bioarchaeological analysis, led to the suggestion of possible circumscription of the Oneota population in their subsistence pursuits and other activities due to the threat of violence (Styles and King, 1990).

Since 2008, the cemetery's associated village site, known as the Morton Village, has been under excavation with the express goal of understanding the greater social context for the violence and warfare evident for the region (figures 1 and 2). Data gathered by a collaborative field program of Michigan State University and Dickson Mounds Museum from 2008-2014 indicates that the Morton Village community included a substantial occupation of Oneota and Mississippian peoples. The process of migration, and peoples' agency in their engagement with that process, sets the historically-informed stage for understanding the social context of migration, interaction, and violence. Migration is not viewed simply as an act that marks arrival; rather, the experience of migration is seen as an underlying, inextricable factor shaping the social fabric of village life. Migration did not simply result in the threat of violence from outsiders, but colored the active negotiation of relationships between the Oneota and Mississippian people that occupied the site. Current research is focused on parsing out the nature of these social interactions and is informed by, and seeks to inform, migration studies.

While there remains much to be done at the site, several patterns have emerged that are relevant to understanding the larger social context children participated in: 1) Some of the house structures appear to be a mix of Oneota and Mississippian architecture. These, and exclusively wall trench houses (Mississippian) tend to cluster near the middle of the site. 2) Geophysical survey indicates that there is no plaza and accompanying house layout associated with large Mississippian sites of this general time period. 3) Oneota foodways change as evidenced in the addition of a Mississippian plate form and use of

bowls signaling a shift at least in the presentation of foodstuffs and perhaps consumption patterns. 4) There is a large, unique, ritual structure primarily associated with Oneota in the community. 5) There is a series of large public structures rebuilt several times in one area associated with Mississippian activity. Taken together, the evidence points to a multi-ethnic community characterized by cohabitation and close interaction, perhaps even intermarrying, of the migrant and traditional groups at the site (Conner and O'Gorman, 2012). Emulation of aspects of Mississippian culture by the Oneota is evident, but adoption of Oneota traits by Mississippians cannot be ruled out. A picture of post-migration ethnogenesis is emerging.

Descriptions of Child-Associated Mortuary

The cemetery, mortuary activities, and mortuary material culture collectively form another avenue for exploring the active negotiation of social interactions within the context of the migration process. Of particular importance here is the use of artifacts interred with the Oneota dead. Although the vast majority of the artifacts found in the cemetery might easily be considered 'typically' Oneota, others are produced and/or decorated in a distinctively Mississippian style (see table 1). This is not particularly surprising; Bold Counselor phase Oneota by definition incorporates Mississippian influence. However, when one looks at the distribution of explicitly Mississippian style artifacts in the cemetery, patterns emerge that force us to critically reexamine the role that children and childhood should play in our interpretations of the nature of social life at this site.

Most of the grave goods interred with the 121 adults and 143 children at Norris Farms #36 are typical of Oneota mortuary assemblages. But even a cursory consideration of the relationship between grave inclusion and age distribution suggests an association between Mississippian and Mississippian-style artifacts and children's burials. Extending this exploration beyond superficial typologies, other grave inclusion associations related to hand and bird symbolism further differentiate a small subset of children's burials from the typical Norris Farms #36 pattern. These patterns are discussed below. Information

regarding other burials at the site is provided in summary form where appropriate for comparative purposes. For an exhaustive tabulation/description of burial patterns, see Santure *et al* (1990).

Distinctively Mississippian-Style Artifacts in Children's Burials

Forty-five individuals representing 17% of the Norris Farms #36 burial population were interred with ceramic vessels; of these, twenty-four were adults and twenty-one were children. The overwhelming majority (thirty-five out of forty-six, or 76%) of these vessels have been interpreted as traditional Oneota styles (figure 3). There are several exceptions, however, in the form of eleven Mississippian and Mississippian-style ceramic vessels, and the crux of the research presented here is that a sizeable proportion (54.5%) of these are associated with subadult burials (table 4). While most of these eleven distinctive vessels were considered to be Oneota copies of Mississippian forms or incorporations of Mississippian traits into Oneota forms, two of these vessels were interpreted as trade items (i.e. 'genuine' Mississippian vessels made by Mississippian potters), and both of these were interred with children. Of the four water bottles (a distinctively Mississippian style not known from traditional Oneota contexts) at the site, all were interred with children (figure 4t). One clearly Mississippian-style bird effigy bowl (figure 5) was also interred with a child, as was a 'conjoined' Mississippian trade jar. Additionally, the only Mississippian discoidal found at the site was interred with a subadult. Discoidals are round, flat gaming stones known widely from Mississippian contexts, but typically not from Oneota contexts.

Other overtly Mississippian-style artifacts were interred with adults, including some ceramics. A shell gorget with a spider motif interred with an adult female is similar to others found at Mississippian sites. One Oneota copy of a beaker (a common Mississippian style) was interred with an adult male, and other vessels that combined Oneota decorations with typical Mississippian forms were found with four other adults. But when one considers the distribution of the most overtly Mississippian ceramic and artifact forms, it seems that these comparatively rare burial accompaniments were at least as likely, if not more likely, to be interred with children as with adults.

Hand Symbolism

Another example of potential Mississippian influence in the cemetery comes from infant burial 197, which notably contained a pair of adult human hands placed upon the infant's chest. This is highly unusual of Oneota and Mississippian burials. However, what *is* encountered in the Mississippian literature is a generalized pattern of hand-focused symbolism. For example, a set of male burials at Cahokia's famous Mound 72 noticeably had their hands (and heads) removed (Fowler *et al*, 1999). Mississippian ceramics from various contexts are decorated with hand motifs, and in fact, Lankford (2004) suggests that the constellation we refer to as Orion may have been interpreted as a hand by Mississippian peoples, representing a portal through which souls traveled to an afterlife. In this way, it might be suggested that the explicit use of hand symbolism in a mortuary context dominated by Oneota styles may again be an example of borrowing from the ideological repertoire of resident Mississippian groups, and its association with a child's interment is noteworthy.

Bird Symbolism

At Norris Farms #36, there are several examples of bird bones modified into tools and interred with adults, but occurrences of bird remains prepared in a way that explicitly preserves their visible avian attributes and suggestive of ritual importance are typically associated with children. Specifically, two burials at this site were associated with bird regalia or bundles, and both of these were infants. Burial 192 was interred with the beak and wing bones of a common crow, along with the beaks of several ducks and grebes and the wing of one additional crow. The previously mentioned infant burial 197 was interred not only with the set of adult human hands, but with the remains of a Northern Goshawk. The disposition of these remains suggests the presence of feathered skins that may have been components of bird regalia and/or bundles (Santure and Esarey, 1990).

Other representations of birds are uncommon at the site, but are also worth mentioning. Simple mussel shell spoons are known from both Mississippian and Oneota sites throughout the midcontinent.

Over thirty unmodified or minimally modified shell spoons were recovered from the cemetery, and these were interred with individuals of all ages and sexes. However, five distinctively modified spoons displayed unique notching and, in some cases, perforation (figure 6). These have been interpreted as 'bird effigy' spoons (Santure and Esarey, 1990). Of the five bird effigy spoons recovered, four were recovered from children's graves, while the remaining spoon was from a disturbed context and could not be associated with any individual (table 5).

To our knowledge, such spoons are uncommon in other contexts and where similar spoons have been excavated, provenience information is lacking. For example, several similar spoons (see Smith, 1951: plate XIIa) were recovered at the nearby Crable site, which (like Morton Village/Norris Farms #36) has a Bold Counselor phase component and hence demonstrates significant Mississippian interactions (Conrad, 1991). Smith (1951) refers to these as typical of cut shell spoons from Middle Mississippian contexts in Fulton County. Unfortunately, we have as yet been unable to find any specific provenience information for these Crable spoons. Other cut shell spoons – with similar notching that perhaps indicate a bird motif – were documented during excavations at the nearby Dickson Mounds site. A preliminary analysis based on site report burial inventories and line drawings indicates that they were interred with adults (both males and females) and children at Dickson Mounds, which is traditionally interpreted as an exclusively Mississippian context (Harn, 1971). These spoons will be the subject of future, more specific analysis and interpretation.

Discussion: Ethnicity, Migration, and Childhood

When one considers the overall migrational context at this time and place, we suggest that an age-based perspective on the distribution of Mississippian forms and symbols in a mortuary situation dominated by Oneota styles highlights the potentially important role of children as bearers or conduits of a novel and integrative social identity at this unique temporal and cultural juncture. The ceramics and the chunkey stone in particular specifically suggest Mississippian influence or interaction, and the most visually explicit examples of these are interred with children. If we also consider hand symbolism to be a

Mississippian trait, the presence of hand-centered ceremonialism and symbolism within a predominantly Oneota context might be another example of the expression of unique, blended social role or identity associated with a child at Morton village. Finally, although birds certainly played a central role in both Mississippian and Oneota ideologies, the particular association between bird symbolism/ceremonialism and children at Norris Farms may, in fact, be unique to this particular mortuary context. Considering the symbolic implications of both the bird spoons and the bird regalia, we suggest that the association between birds and childhood at Norris Farms #36 may represent a unique mortuary expression that grew out of cultural integration at this site, rather than being specifically rooted in either Mississippian or Oneota mortuary traditions.

Of course, none of this is to say that adults were unimportant in the process of community integration and identity negotiation at this site – there are examples of Mississippian-style items included in their graves as well, and the associated performance of mortuary ceremony was likely managed by adults. However, the fact that at least half of the Mississippian-style items – in addition to the hand and bird symbols – were associated with young children highlights the important role that this under-investigated demographic should play in the our interpretations. A fairly uncomplicated view of this situation might be that the burials described in this research simply represent a few ethnically Mississippian individuals interred within an otherwise Oneota mortuary context. However, the comparatively minor Mississippian presence in the cemetery does not seem to correlate well with evidence for a significant Mississippian presence in Morton Village. Even if we should, for one reason or another, consider these individuals to simply be Mississippian people who lived in Morton Village, the other Mississippians must be interred elsewhere, and there must be a reason these individuals were spatially and materially differentiated. There are numerous documented Mississippian burial mounds and cemeteries in the immediate region, and it may be the case that most of the Morton Village individuals who identified more strongly with the Mississippian cultural tradition are interred elsewhere. This leaves us to deeply and specifically consider the meaning of these few burials which seem so different from the others at Norris Farms #36 in a way that incorporates new interpretations of Morton Village as a multi-

ethnic community occupied simultaneously by individuals of both Oneota and Mississippian descent, while also highlighting the fact that so many of the distinctive graves in the cemetery are those of children.

It is also important to integrate the high level of violence observed in the skeletal remains from the cemetery into our interpretation. Santure (1990) points out that the act of interring subadults with elaborate or wealth-associated grave offerings (which the atypical items discussed above may qualify as) might be a result of the stressful social situation suggested by the observed levels of violence. We certainly do not discount this interpretation, but here we will focus on several alternate or perhaps complementary explanations that consider children's mortuary treatment at Norris Farms #36 within a broader range of phenomena. Kamp (2009) suggests that life within a violent landscape can lead to consolidation of villages, impacting work patterns such that children might stay closer to the village doing more and new kinds of work. With her work as a starting point, we seek to explore how such a circumstance might affect children's social roles vis à vis their role in facilitating the development of a shared social identity between previously separate groups of people? In the following tripartite discussion, we frame our interpretation of Norris Farms #36 patterns as attempts to answer a series of related questions: 1) How does a deliberate consideration of the role of children enhance our understanding of the process of ethnogenesis as part of day-to-day experience?; 2) What might an analysis of childhood mortuary symbolism at Norris Farms #36 contribute to our understanding of the active processes of community and worldview among survivors?; and 3) How might a consideration of liminality, hybridity, and communitas productively complicate our understanding of childhood and migration within in the larger process of community building at Morton Village?

Children in Everyday Life: Bicultural Fluency, Migrant/Native Intermarriage, and their Material Correlates

It is well established in the literature on acculturation that children adapt and acculturate more easily and more readily than their adult counterparts in modern cases of migration and culture contact (Borenstein

and Cote, 2006), and there is no reason to think that this was not the case in the past. If Mississippian and Oneota peoples were living together at Morton Village, it would make sense that they were producing (a new social-material context) and reproducing (children) together. At the very least, we can easily envision both adults and children from Oneota and Mississippian families growing up together, participating in ethnogenesis together, and constructing/navigating a new sense of community integration together on a daily basis. Although sorting out the details of this process archaeologically is challenging, it is a good start to consider children as active participants rather than passive recipients of the redefinition of community at this time and place. A deep ethnographic framework of children, migration, and acculturation in contemporary contexts is emergent (see Boehm *et al*, 2011; Dobson, 2009; Eksner and Orellana, 2005; and Knorr, 2005, for example) and we rely on some of this literature in order to begin to model the archaeological correlates of these scenarios.

Here, we seek out theoretical treatments that link children, migration, and mortuary treatment together as a unified topic worthy of anthropological consideration. For example, Burmeister (2000: 546) references Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* in his discussion of immigrants, natives, and ethnic identity. Within his discussion of the relationship between tradition and assimilation in the anthropology of migration, he suggests that the, 'native-immigrant relationship has a structuring impact on the employment of material culture'. We expect this to be visible archaeologically. Commenting on the relative importance of subadult burials (compared to adults) in migration studies, Burmeister (2000:542) notably suggests that the 'socially marginal status' of children provides a relatively flexible mortuary venue for the expression of new ideas initiated by migration and cultural interactions. In other words, there are fewer social rules governing childrens' interments, thus the immigrant community has more leeway for including artifacts from native groups (see Hadley and Hemer, 2011 for a similar perspective demonstrated through a Viking case study). Although we do not wish to portray Morton Village children as 'marginal' citizens *per se*, we concur that the potential for a mortuary archaeology of childhood to inform studies of native-immigrant interactions is great, particularly in the case of Morton Village where close living arrangements or even intermarriage between Oneota ('immigrants') and Mississippians

('natives') was likely to produce children of blended sociocultural identity. Children of migrants are in a unique social role in which they are between cultures, particularly if the children are born in the new location, and possibly to parents of differing ethnicities (Bornstein and Cote, 2006). An obvious interpretation of Norris Farms #36 in this vein would be that the children interred with atypical burial accoutrements in particular, and perhaps even those who were not, may have been the product of the close interactions and intermarriages that likely occurred between Oneota and Mississippian people. In this sense, their blended social identity may be reflected in blended mortuary assemblages.

Expanding our anthropological purview, some important observations might also be gleaned from the linguistics literature on children born into or raised in multiethnic/multilingual contexts. Bickerton (1984) has famously proposed that children play a critical role in the regularization of insipient pidgin languages as well as their transformation into fully fledged creole languages within the context of cross-cultural contact – specifically trade, forced migration, and colonization. The details of this process are controversial among linguistic anthropologists (see Lefebvre, 1999, for example). But the fact that researchers in other fields are incorporating children as innovators and facilitators of ethno-linguistic change should not be lost on archaeologists, who are in a position to contribute temporal depth and material culture as components of this discussion. Furthermore, studies of children of non-English speaking migrant parents in the contemporary United States and other places demonstrate that these children often play economically and socially important roles as translators between their parents and members of the host culture (Orellana, 2001). These children are ascribed – and ascribe to themselves – a novel sociocultural identity that is somewhere in between the culture of their parents and that of the host society. The same might also be said of children born into multiethnic families, who are ascribed, and ascribe to themselves a multiethnic or bicultural social identity (Phinney and Devich-Navarro, 1997). None of the literature we have reviewed thus far has addressed the material correlates of the child-centered ethnolinguistic processes described here, and it is not our intention to delve into the specifics of the languages spoken by the Oneota and Mississippian inhabitants of Morton Village. However, we suggest here that the patterns of material culture associated with some of the children at Norris Farms #36

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might reflect their recognized and perhaps celebrated social roles as facilitators of cultural integration, being 'fluent' in two cultural perspectives (whether acquired from two parents in a multiethnic household *or* acquired from separate Oneota and Mississippian households within a multiethnic village) in a similar vein as the children in multiethnic/multilingual communities today. At Morton Village/Norris Farms #36, this facilitation was made perhaps even more important in a contentious social situation such as that proposed for the region during this time period.

Signaling via the Dead: Mortuary Performance as Representation and Contestation

Extending our analysis beyond mortuary representation of the deceased as direct reflections of their lived experiences, we also want to consider the *actualization*, *practice*, and *experience* of mortuary ceremonialism as a living, symbolic, and communicative process. In other words, we can seek to envision the actions of the community of survivors (both adults and juveniles) who meaningfully perform the mortuary rituals of which we are seeing the end result. Joyce (2005) discusses Rissman (1988) to make an important point that much historical mortuary analysis is built on an assumption that mortuary disposition is a direct *representation* of lived social identity of the dead, while in reality the mortuary situation may have been part of an active *contestation* of the social positions of the individuals or the groups to which the dead belonged. Mortuary rituals are performed and interpreted by living communities. This simple truism brings us to an inherently complicated consideration of the multitude of representations that might have taken place through the mortuary programs inferred at Norris Farms #36. The act of performing this unique variant of mortuary practice at this time and place could have been an act of contestation on the part of community members – whether they identified as Mississippian, Oneota, or something else – generating or legitimizing their own sociocultural niche within a dynamic (perhaps even dangerous) social landscape.

Further on this theme, Robb (1998) points out that interpretations which treat the symbolic meaning of artifacts simply as fixed tokens of power relations or as transmitters of a fixed set of information about the deceased often fail to recognize that it is *performance* (by the living) and *context*

(as understood by the living) that often imbue meaning. He contends that meaning can come from novel

human acts involving pre-existing symbols, without necessarily adhering to any prior meaning of the

symbols themselves. These acts may not only be intended to produce (or *re*produce) referential meaning

for particular symbols, but also to organize (or *re*organize) symbols already laden with meaning. As much

agency as this gives people to create and recreate new meanings through the manipulation of symbols,

Robb (1998) also recognizes that symbols and their meanings can persist unchanged or minimally

changed in many circumstances. This challenges archaeologists to look for new patterns in the

deployment of old symbols to arrive at a nuanced perspective on stability and change. In the case of

Norris Farms #36, we have described a set of symbols – historically-rooted in a previously distinct

Mississippian cultural tradition – that seems to be employed in new ways, which may give us a window

into understanding Norris Farms #36 mortuary process and performance as an attempt to (re)define a

dynamic and uncertain social situation. It further encourages us to consider at a fundamental level the

meaning of 'ethnicized' artifacts – such as Mississippian or Mississippian style artifacts – as temporally

nested within particular instances of burial ceremonialism/performance. Whether or not the specifics can

be ascertained, we recognize at the very least that some process of structural change was experienced in

this community, and this change was likely represented and negotiated through the use of historically-

rooted symbols. Because Mississippian goods in children's graves represent an investment in, and

recognition of, children as an important part of this process *at least* on par with their adult

contemporaries, it is incumbent upon us to give them equal consideration. To that end, we contend that a

perspective incorporating Turner's concepts of liminality and communitas can be fruitfully

operationalized in this archaeological context.

Complicating the Social Context: Children and the Archaeological Visibility of Liminality, Hybridity,

and Communitas

The concept of liminality has a long history in anthropology, stretching back to Van Gennep's (1960)

perspective on the universality of rites of passage. He originally defined three stages in rites of passage:

the first stage characterized by separation, a second stage characterized by liminality, and a third stage characterized by re-integration into the community. Turner (1969) famously expanded upon Van Gennup's (1969: 95) work on liminality, defining it as a transitional state, being 'neither here nor there… betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony.' While it seems almost intuitive that such a concept, with its focus on transition, might be easily applied to Morton Village – a community that is practically defined by its *betwixt and between-ness* within a process of migration and ethnogenesis – it is helpful to go beyond classic treatments and seek out an appropriate ethnographic analogy to more specifically serve our research agenda, i.e. one that explicitly integrates the concept of liminality into studies of children and migration.

In their ethnographic assessment of immigrant children's experiences in Germany and the United States, Ecksner and Orellana (2005) show how a consideration of these children as liminal actors might clarify the process of new identity formation. The children in their study use novel linguistic practices to mediate power-laden interactions between their parents and members of the host society, as well as to contest and manipulate the stereotypes held about them by the dominant culture. As liminal personae, these children use language – an inherently symbolic endeavor – as a means of navigating and recreating their worlds in a way that would be, in Turner's (1969) conceptualization, socially unclassifiable and contradictory to normative social structure. Although temporally and culturally distant from the Oneota community explored in this paper, Eksner and Orellana's (2005) perspective integrates the experience of liminality into the context of childhood and migration in a way that pushes us toward a deeper consideration of Norris Farms #36 mortuary patterns as potentially capturing a loosely bounded stage within a larger process of transition – an unusual symbolic expression of a transitory identity within the context of a radical sociocultural shift for both Oneota immigrants and Mississippian natives, realized to some extent through children's social roles, and perhaps part of a liminal or transitional stage before the emergence of a revised sense of identity. It seems plausible that, in this same vein as the children in Eksner and Orellana's (2005) work, the children of Morton Village may have played a role in mediating and contesting social relations between migrant and host community constituents, and although language

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does not preserve archaeologically, similarly symbolically-imbued material correlates (such as grave accompaniments) are certainly available for study.

Although we focused specifically on a subset of children's burials, perhaps the mortuary-related celebration of a blended social identity at this site transcended the *individual* and provided a venue for the expression of a transitional or liminal *community* identity experienced at this time and place. Liminality is often conceptualized as a stage through which individuals pass, but Turner (1969) also describes a notion he calls communitas, a group of people experiencing liminality together. Ecksner and Orellana (2005) point out that although communitas is inherently spontaneous, immediate, juxtaposed to, and/or hybridized with established structures of a society, it is also part of a dialectical process which makes structure possible in the first place. 'The opposite,' they state, 'is part of that which it opposes' (Eksner and Orellana 2005: 177). Through this lens, what we may be seeing is a group of people (the Oneota) experiencing a sort of communitas in the sense that they are in the process of contesting and transforming their identity relative to their new position within an overtly Mississippian social landscape, and one that involves children as active players and as the recipients (in death) of its ritual expression. The mortuary disposition of certain children in the community might reflect the fact that they died while individually experiencing cultural and biological liminality in their status as infants and children in the process of transforming (both socially and ontogenetically). We might expect their mortuary disposition to reflect their multiple liminalities while perhaps simultaneously incorporating material expressions of communitas. Added to the already relatively flexible mortuary venue for children's burials in migrant contexts suggested by Burmiester (2000), it seems reasonable to suggest that both individual-level liminality and group-level communitas might be made archaeologically visible via Mississippian-influenced mortuary symbolism at Norris Farms #36 in a way that prominently featured children as major players in the involved social processes.

However, Eksner and Orellana (2005: 197) also caution us to recognize a distinction between *liminality* – a state which, by definition, is temporary and will lead to reintegration into a structured group that one had previously been part of, and *hybridity* – a state that is novel, blended, and structurally

different from the preceding state, and which might be characterized as ethnogenic or resulting in the development of 'new cultural forms'. In this sense, taking the long view and understanding 'what happened next' for Morton Village residents would help us distinguish between a case of liminality (where the Oneota experience a temporary, transitory state before essentially reasserting their identity in this new place), and a case of hybridity (where the community experiences a temporary, transitory state as a step in the process of establishing a new, blended ethnic identity). However, the currently available chronological evidence is insufficient for addressing this issue in detail, due in part to multiple intercepts of the calibration curve during this time period. Extensive AMS dating of short-lived taxa from village contexts and bone collagen from the cemetery, together with the lack of overlap or extensive rebuilding episodes suggests both contexts may represent snapshots of perhaps only one or two generations (i.e., probably less than 100 years). If this is the case, whatever processes we might glean from mortuary practices might be on the short term rather than long term. Where the residents went, under what circumstances, with what sense of social identity, and how that should be integrated into our interpretations is unclear at this time, and the issue will need to be revisited when more information is available.

Conclusions and Future Research

In a mortuary situation dominated by Oneota styles, the residents of Morton Village chose to actively integrate certain Mississippian symbols in the graves of a small subset of the community, the majority of whom were infants and children. Furthermore, ritual and symbolic representations of birds were concentrated specifically on children. The distribution of distinctive grave items was not focused exclusively on adult community members, and neither should our interpretations of related social processes. These patterns clearly indicate a situation in which the lives and deaths of children were understood and commemorated as an important part of larger social processes in the community. Because Morton Village also provides a unique context for exploring prehistoric migration and multi-ethnic interaction and community building, an opportunity to construct a case study that explicitly situates

children within migration and ethnogenesis is clearly presented. We suggest here that children were active participants in the processes of migration and ethnogenesis at Morton Village and, as such, were represented via distinctive forms of mortuary celebration at least as often as their adult counterparts. The social setting within which the associated mortuary decisions were made and performed might be considered liminal or hybrid in nature, as both Oneota and Mississippian residents sought to (re)negotiate a sense community in relation to one another as well as in relation to a larger, dynamic, and perhaps contentious social landscape. Children were most certainly present, and not just as passive observers or recipients of adult-generated ideas. Much like in multiethnic and migrant communities today, Morton Village children born into a dynamic situation were likely to inherently, actively, and meaningfully meld the worldviews of their Mississippian and Oneota friends, families, and neighbors as they experienced their worlds. We would expect this to be recognized socially and expressed symbolically and materially in various ways that are at least occasionally visible in the archaeological record, including in mortuary ritual.

There are, of course, many alternate explanations and approaches one might explore to understand the particular mortuary system explored here, and we consider the current study to be preliminary in nature. In particular, we plan to delve deeper into communitas, liminality, and hybridity as conceptual frameworks for understanding social processes at Morton Village and Norris Farms #36. A detailed analysis situating the noted mortuary associations more securely within the ethnohistoric and archaeological literature is a necessary component of a more in-depth theoretical treatment. We specifically intend to research bird and hand symbolism in traditional belief systems (with an eye towards possible links with ideologies of childhood) to further interpret the particular subset of children's burials described here.

We are also considering how various bioarchaeological approaches might inform an analysis of childhood that considers ethnicity and immigration patterns. For example, strontium and oxygen isotope analysis has been successfully used to examine the role of children in migrations in the past (Hadley and Hemer, 2011), and a similar approach could certainly complement the current study. However, studies of

this sort are contingent upon first understanding the culturally/temporally specific social context of childhood at Morton Village. Following Baxter (2006), we must ask ourselves: Who was identified as a child? What roles/behaviors were expected of children? What was the physical/material environment of childhood (i.e. architecture, space, items)? What was the social environment of childhood (family size/structure, ethnicity, class)? While recognizing the importance of osteological analysis, we must frame our answers to these questions within village focused archaeology, as well as ethnohistory and further mortuary analysis.

Despite the preliminary nature of the interpretations suggested here, one thing seems to be clear: a rigorous attempt to find children in the archaeological record is crucial for developing informed anthropological interpretations in a general sense and, more particularly, for clarifying the social process of ethnogenesis in situations of prehistoric migration. Children's inherent ability to adapt and acculturate more readily than their adult contemporaries may in fact qualify them as 'prime-movers' of ethnogenic change. With respect to his support for migration as an important subject of archaeological inquiry, we agree with Anthony (1990) that archaeologists should not throw out the 'baby with the bathwater.' Though not his specific intention with his use of metaphor, we suggest that actual infants – and other subadults – can quite literally and uniquely contribute to an archaeology of migration and identity formation in new cultural circumstances at Morton Village.

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