

Bladelets, Bones and Socially Constructed Gender Identities: Understanding Division of Labor Among Ohio Hopewell Populations Based on Sex Through the Analysis of Osteological Evidence

Anthropologists agree that gender is a social construct, affecting world view. My project explores gender bias in Ohio Hopewell archaeology through examination of musculoskeletal stress markers (MSMs) and the application of experimental techniques. MSMs occur at muscles attachments and are caused by increased blood flow due to chronic, consistent use of particular muscles, reflecting patterns related to the activities performed during a person's lifetime. A previous study by Rodrigues (2005) examining MSM patterns in Ohio Hopewell populations indicate current assumptions about the gender based division of labor may be misleading. Females exhibited MSM patterns consistent with flintknapping stone tools; an activity traditionally considered a male task. This project is focused on the accuracy of identifying the MSM patterns associated with flintknapping, as well as increasing the available data on MSMs in Ohio Hopewell remains. After practicing flintknapping for two consecutive months in the summer, I combined my experience of muscle pain and physical strain with interviews of other flintknappers. These actualistic studies were followed by examining MSM patterning in Ohio Hopewell remains curated at the Ohio History Connection. Here I report on a statistical analysis of the collected data, hopefully clarifying the role of gender in the division of labor in Ohio Hopewell communities.

Key words: Archaeology, Osteology, Gender