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## Letters

### Just like us?

Bruce Bower's review of the current debates concerning Upper Paleolithic humans ("When the Human Spirit Soared," SN: 12/13/86, p.378) repeats the widely asserted but curious admonition to "Make no mistake; the people who brushed or blew pigment around their hands on the cave wall were just like us in body and brain." The assumption that all brains are alike even today is a dubious proposition, but to claim that the contemporary brain organization occurred with the appearance of the modern skull type is to advance a brainless model of human evolution. I wonder if anthropologists select shoe styles or ice cream flavors on the basis of the container size?

Thomas A. Gentry  
Professor of Psychology  
California State University, Stanislaus  
Turlock, Calif.

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Cover: Some epidemiologists suspect that extremely low-frequency radiation from power lines and other sources may be hazardous to our health. Increased risks of spontaneous abortion and of childhood cancer have been cited by recent studies as possible effects of such exposure. (Photo: Daniel Brody, courtesy of Environmental Action Foundation)



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Bruce Bower's article about the cultural revolution of the late Ice Age included the intriguing observation that a majority of handprints on a cave wall had missing fingers. He cited several possible but not particularly plausible reasons for this.

It would seem that a very likely explanation could be severe frostbite. A culture that was native to a relatively warm climate but attempting to subsist as hunters in a near-arctic climate would surely have to learn the hard way to cope with the elements. Fingers are very vulnerable as they must be exposed to carry out manual tasks effectively.

Toes also are susceptible to frost. Are there any footprints in these particular sands of time?

Dean R. Freitag  
Cookeville, Tenn.

Human footprints from the Ice Age have been discovered in France with no evidence of missing toes, says anthropologist Randall White of New York University. The majority of the

handprints in question, he adds, have fingers missing that are relatively easy to hold down. For example, many show only a raised thumb, while none shows only a raised third finger. The frequencies of specific finger patterns support the notion that a code was used, possibly to designate various animals in a manner similar to later cave paintings. — B. Bower

### Cancer data defended

It should be obvious to reporters who receive copies of the annual statistical report provided by the National Cancer Institute to the National Cancer Advisory Board ("Cancer stats: Gains and losses," SN: 12/13/86, p.372) that they receive the equivalent of a book on cancer statistics each year and that we provide all the available data without selection. I am surprised, then, that Dr. Bailor's

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