

CUT MARK PATTERN DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN THE LOWER PALEOLITHIC
AND THE HOLOCENE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Stiner et al. (2009, 2011) propose that a large MDAA (mean difference in adjacent angles [of butchering cut marks]) is evidence for less meat-sharing (and more self-provisioning) during the Lower Paleolithic than in the later (Middle and Upper) Paleolithic when the MDAA is less. The MDAA of Holocene-age Helmreich Shelter faunal remains documented here fits the predictions of Stiner et al.'s hypothesis, and also suggests other factors influence variation in MDAA. While sample size of cut marked specimens, skill or experience of a butcher, and transport decisions likely influence the MDAA of a faunal assemblage created after 500 – 250 thousand years ago, I suggest that encephalization is the key determinant in the switch from the high MDAA value of the Lower Paleolithic to the low MDAA values of the Middle and Upper Paleolithic and Holocene. Although the late-Holocene Helmreich Shelter (Missouri) faunal remains suggest that there may have been more butchers involved in the butchery of a carcass during the Lower Paleolithic than were involved in more recent times, this does not necessarily have any influence on meat-sharing behaviors. More research must be done on the precise nature of the relationship between MDAA and the number of butchers (experienced and inexperienced), and how meat is distributed among group members (sharing), before more can be said about Lower Paleolithic meat-sharing behaviors.