In his guest editorial, Wihite argues that "given the centrality of energy in daily life one would expect it to be an important emerging subject for anthropology." While he is correct that few anthropologists are working on energy issues, we will only be reinventing the wheel if we fail to take note of the times when energy research has been important in anthropology. One might begin an overview with Leslie White (1959), who held that culture advances as a consequence of the ability to harness more energy, or with Richard N. Adams' (1982) work on the story of Britain and the use of coal as a central energy source. Assertions that anthropologists have failed to address the issue need to be grounded in an extensive survey of the literature.

In the same issue of At Annette Henning's article 'Climate change and energy use' lays out the key question as to how we might position ourselves within energy-related research. Henning stresses the need to study the experts rather than the customers, and addresses the frustration of anthropologists drafted in as 'people experts' and finding themselves in the role of a simple helper in research environments dominated by engineers, physicists and economists. She rightly argues for an active repositioning so that anthropological research can be performed in its own right.

Henning's remarks resonated with me, as I spent 10 years from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s working on issues related to 'energy, culture and society', the title of a course I taught for Energy and Resources Group (ERG) students at UC Berkeley. I produced a volume, *Energy choices in a democratic society* (1980), for what was probably the largest and most prestigious energy study ever conducted for the National Academy of Sciences. There were over 200 specialists, mostly physicists, engineers, economists and a scattering of social scientists, but one anthropologist. The CONAES study, as it was called, resulted in a report 12 feet thick. CONAES (the Committee on Nuclear and Alternative Energy Systems) was organized into four panels examining energy demand and conservation, energy supply and delivery systems, risks and impacts of energy supply and use, and syntheses of diverse models of future energy economics. I summarized my experience of working as an anthropologist studying physicists, economists and engineers analysing energy problems in 'Barriers to thinking new about energy'; this 1981 article was first published in *Physics Today*, almost immediately reprinted in *Chem Tech* (1981), and most recently reprinted in a slightly abridged form in *Industrial Physics* (2002). The responses from physicists were overwhelmingly supportive, from engineers overwhelmingly damning, and different versions of my findings were published elsewhere (see Nader 1978), none in anthropology journals — although my book *Naked science* (1996) contained some materials on energy — until *Anthropological Quarterly* published 'The harder path-shifting gears' in 2004.

At the start of my research the chair of my department suggested I get off this energy stuff because it would not help my promotion. A more serious problem than lack of interest in energy as a topic is that anthropologists do not read what anthropologists write for other professionals. That we are seen as 'helpers' or social welfare workers may be due to a lack of knowledge of what is really going on in our discipline which generates a lack of disciplinary pride in our accomplishments. Henning is on the right track.

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