

# BOOK REVIEW

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Selection of books for review is based on the editor's opinions regarding possible reader interest and on the availability of the book to the editor. Occasional selections may include books on topics somewhat peripheral to the subject matter ordinarily considered acceptable.



## Public Reactions to Nuclear Power—Are There Critical Masses?

<i>Editors</i>	William R. Freudenberg and Eugene A. Rosa
<i>Publisher</i>	Westview Press, Inc., Boulder, Colorado (1984)
<i>Pages</i>	370
<i>Price</i>	\$36.00
<i>Reviewer</i>	Gerald A. Schlapper

This publication, which one must admit has a rather “catchy” title, is based on a symposium held at the 1982 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The editors have managed to include articles by persons involved in the nuclear debate from one of the best known critics (Barry Commoner) to individuals supportive of the nuclear industry (W. Kenneth Davis and Robert Szalay). However, the majority of the materials is presented by “independent” social scientists, as illustrated by an author breakdown that includes one research scientist, one biologist, two engineers, five psychologists, and ten sociologists. The overall objective of the book is to detail the attitudes toward nuclear power, the interpretation of these attitudes by the parties involved in the debate, and the influence of public opinion on the growth of nuclear power. In general, this text is very readable, containing only a limited amount of sociological and psychological jargon.

Those of us involved with the nuclear industry will find articles to our liking and articles that “go against the grain.” The editors point out that their goal is to illuminate the fact that study of the social and political acceptability of nuclear

technology has been neglected. They emphasize that funding for research in social science aspects of nuclear power remains “remarkably small” in comparison with funding for research on technical issues. The articles address, in general, problem areas like the overall direction of energy policy and also areas very specific in nature like decisions related to plant and waste repository locations. There are examples of “independent” views that those of us with a bias may have some trouble accepting. For example, the editors note that all presidents since the dawn of the nuclear age have been strong supporters of nuclear power development, including President Carter, who they clearly note is “a former nuclear engineer.” The editors also refer to the Union of Concerned Scientists as “an expert group of MIT scientists.”

In spite of comments like those noted, a review of this text shows that it does contain a wealth of data, obtained in a systematic manner, on public opinion related to nuclear power. There are numerous suggestions, which, if followed, would improve the status of the nuclear power community in the eyes of the public. The data presented also show that the nuclear industry is learning from its past mistakes. From a “learning from history” standpoint, this book should be read by anyone who is charged with interacting with the public on behalf of the nuclear industry, including licensees, regulators, researchers, and educators.

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