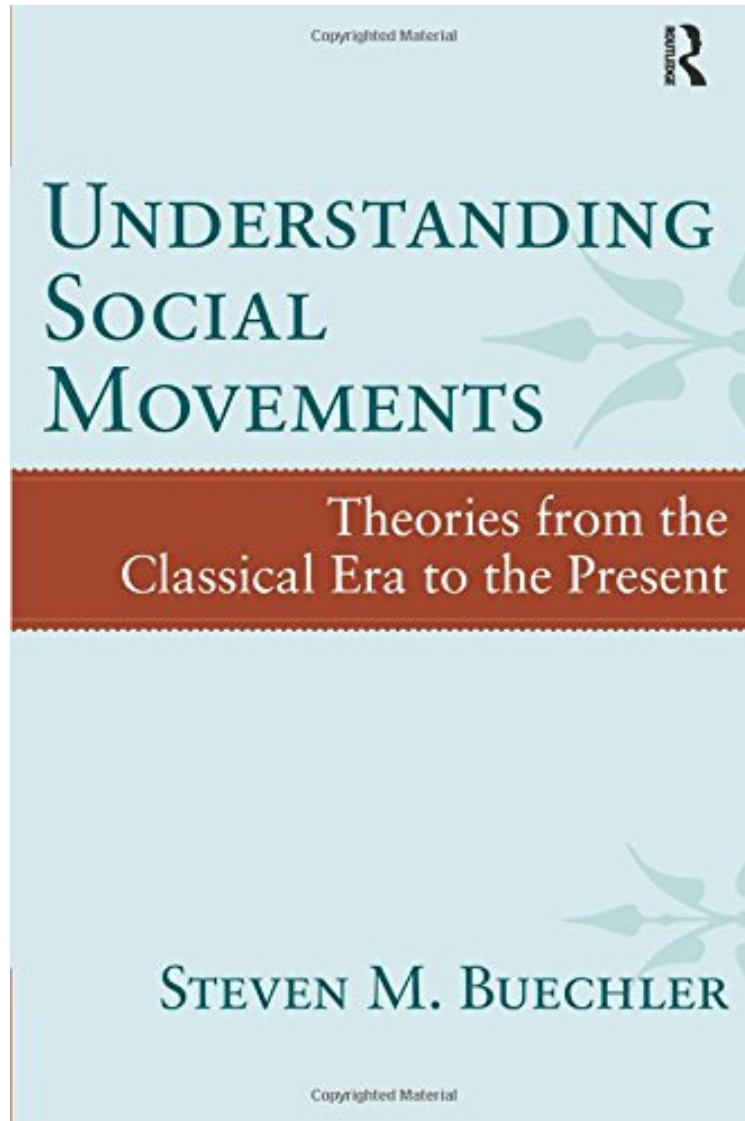


Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the Present

Steven M. Buechler

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place for comparison. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is an excellent overview of social scientific theories of how and why ...By Christopher Gunderson This is an excellent overview of social scientific theories of how and why social movements occur and what their characteristic dynamics are. Buechler does an excellent job of rooting competing currents in contemporary social movement theory in longer-running divisions within the social sciences and giving greater attention to relevant earlier work that many contemporary scholars ignore. After laying these foundations he gives a straightforward but thorough account of the development of social movement theory from early theories of Collective Behavior, through the rise of the Resource Mobilization/Political Process school to the present, paying attention to dissenting currents all along the way. All that is missing is a chapter on Buechler's own important (if underappreciated) contribution to this literature, "Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism: The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism" and another on the recent emergence of an explicitly Marxist body of social movement theory represented by Cox and Nilsen's "We Make Our Own History." (The last is an unfair criticism of course since that work has appeared almost entirely since the publication of "Understanding Social Movements.")

In thirteen succinct chapters, Buechler traces movement theories from the classical era of sociology to the most recent examples of transnational activism. He identifies the socio-historical context, central concepts, and guiding logic of diverse movement theories, with emphasis on: Comparisons of Marx and Lenin; Weber and Michels; and Durkheim and LeBon The Chicago School of the inter-war period The political-sociological approaches of the 1950s The varieties of strain and breakdown theories at the dawn of the 1960s Major paradigm shifts caused by the cascade of 1960s social movements Vivid examples of movements worldwide and coverage of all major theorists Critiques, debates, and proposed syntheses dominating the turn of the 21st century Recent trends (such as cyberactivism and transnational movements) and their theoretical implications"

"Buechler's volume stands out for its comprehensive, balanced, and unbiased presentations. Excellent for students, the book, with its historical and macro perspective, is also a valuable tool for researched looking for the big picture...Highly recommended." --CHOICE March 2012 "I was well-rewarded as a reader of this book by the thoroughness of the coverage and the good historical perspective that put developments in context. This book should work well in upper division undergraduate classes, and will be a good starting point for those building prelim reading lists." --Rhys H. Williams, Loyola University Chicago, in Mobilization: An International Quarterly About the Author Steven M. Buechler is Professor of Sociology at Minnesota State University, Mankato. His recent books include the critically acclaimed Understanding Social Movements: Theories from the Classical Era to the Present (Paradigm 2011).