



**Santoro, D. A., & Cain, L. (Eds.). (2018). *Principled resistance: How teachers resolve ethical dilemmas*. Harvard Education Press.**

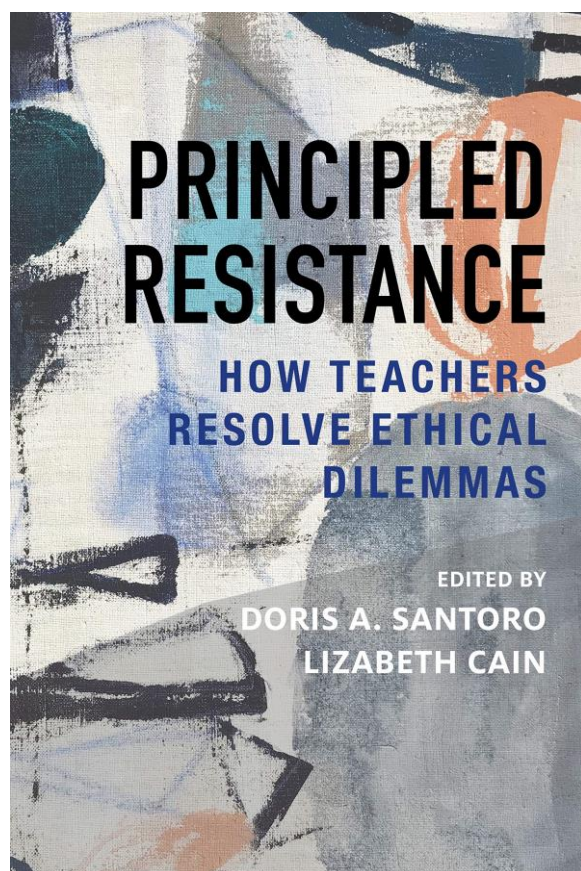
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At present, the relentless spread of COVID-19 has unleashed a “triple pandemic,” as the economic fallout of the global coronavirus health crisis has both exposed and exacerbated existing racial inequalities (Cornelissen & Hermann, 2020). Immersed in all of these conflicts, educators worldwide have expressed varying degrees of dread, displeasure, and dissent with inadequate and unjust plans for reopening schools (Charles, 2020; Gibson, 2020; O’Brien & Whitcomb, 2020; Tadros & Reals, 2020). In this contentious and chaotic climate, Doris Santoro and Lizabeth Cain’s (2018) *Principled Resistance: How Teachers Resolve Ethical Dilemmas* is an ideal guide for teachers, teacher educators, and other allies striving to meet the moment.

Part of what makes the edited collection so ideal is the editors’ explicit focus *on* ideals – the principles referenced in the title and constituting the backbone of the book. Santoro and Cain openly aim to reframe teacher resistance in ethical terms, lest it be misinterpreted, minimized, or maligned. As contributors to the collection, Clive Beck,



Clare Kosnik, Judy Caulfield, and Yiola Cleovoulou elaborate on and embrace the editors' intentional choice of *resistance* rather than meeker terms like cooperation or accommodation, calling on fellow educators "to be more assertive" rather than maintain the passive status quo (p. 37). *Principled Resistance*, as an eclectic mix of efforts to do just that, is a widely applicable and evocative how-to.

To that end, Santoro and Cain thoroughly explain their framework in the volume's introduction, defining "ethical dilemmas" as "pedagogical, professional, and democratic" tensions between teachers' internal beliefs about their work and external expectations imposed upon them (p. 2). The editors take great pains to insist all three categories of principled resistance are equivalent in stature and the borders between them are purposefully porous. While the overlap is certainly evident throughout the collection, so, too, is the undeniable hierarchy, reflected in the definition of each principle, as well as the crescendo of quality in their illustrations. In other words, I strongly suspect the order of pedagogical, professional, and democratic is deliberate, reflecting ever-larger concentric circles radiating from classroom to calling to society at large. Rather than undermining the totality of the framework, acknowledging this gradation could have enabled the editors to present principled resistance as a career-long prospect and ever-worthy aim.

The first type – resistance stemming from pedagogical principles – derives from "teachers' responsibility to support students' well-being, academic engagement, and positive outcomes" (p. 3), as illustrated by Alisun Thompson and Lucinda Pease-Alvarez's depiction of a teacher collective opposed to standardization. This and other examples of pedagogical principles in action address familiar frictions and speak of principled resistance in largely matter-of-fact terms. As such, they come across as Principled

Resistance 101, a sort of basic course for beginners, yet thus of use for teacher educators hoping to cultivate principled resistance in their students.

Indeed, Thompson and Pease-Alvarez's contribution stands out from the others, perhaps because as teacher educators, they adopt the structure of a typical study, replete with a sophisticated understanding of their role as researchers. This commitment to "self-interrogation and reflection" (p. 75) is missing from the other examples of pedagogical resistance, such as when Randy Miller silently sidesteps an unjust dress code policy while still enforcing it, thus missing the opportunity for a broader critique of the charter school context. In contrast, Thompson and Pease-Alvarez conjure a more expansive "democratic and transformative vision of schooling" (p. 84). Consequently, readers may wonder whether focusing solely on pedagogical principles is somewhat limiting. Had the editors openly addressed this as the first type, they could have contextualized this limitation as a necessary foundational step for novice resisters.

The editors attempt to differentiate between pedagogical and professional principles by centering the latter in teachers' unique "power, knowledge, and judgment" (p. 3), yet given the collection's overarching aim to underscore teaching as a true *profession*, this distinction could be much sharper. Jocelyn Weeda's contribution, for instance, situates principled resistance "at the intersections of identity, professionalism, and democracy" (p. 143), already anticipating the third category of democratic resistance and thus muddying the conceptual waters. Nevertheless, the illustrations of resistance driven by professional principles are much stronger than those exemplifying pedagogically motivated resistance. Tom Meyer, Christine McCartney, and Jacqueline Hesse, for example, emphasize the need for "personal and collective work" (p. 123), while Emma Long's chapter recounts teachers' "solidarity with paraprofessionals and

clerical workers” in 1990 New Orleans (p. 87). Unlike the chapters focused on pedagogical principles, then, those focused on professional principles, by addressing how collective action can reinforce and broaden the successful outcomes of resistance, align more readily with the book’s larger themes.

These themes are even more apparent in the section devoted to democratic principles, which, I maintain, is intentionally placed at the end. Just as the contributions related to professional principles take readers outside of individual classrooms to consider teachers’ efforts to counter attacks on the profession writ large, the chapters on democratic resistance are even larger in scope, extending to “claims about how teachers and public schools should function in a democratic society” (p. 4). Again, despite the editors’ assurance that all three categories are on equal footing, there is an unmistakable air of saving the best – or noblest – for last. The editors’ own contributions tellingly appear in this section, wherein each author is a professor of some sort, which is somewhat disappointing even as the contributors point to the danger of democratic resistance as a potential rationale. Though the risk of principled resistance is palpable throughout the collection, such as when Beck et al. suggest it may need to be recorded “by those less vulnerable than teachers” (p. 52), as well as when Margaret Smith Crocco cites teacher educators’ “relative power and freedom” (p. 119), the risk is especially acute when juxtaposed against the existential high stakes of democratic principles.

For example, Karen Graves and Margaret Nash offer the gripping narrative of Marjorie Rowland, a bisexual guidance counselor and “accidental activist” (p. 179) whose response to her unjust termination in the 1970s ultimately “advanced both the LGBT movement and the democratic principles that define American schooling at its best” (p. 183). Like other educators featured in the collection,

Rowland paid a significant price for progress, and like other exemplary contributors, Graves and Nash display a strong understanding of the interplay among pedagogical, professional, and democratic principles.

Though the editors’ introduction concedes that “pedagogical principles and professional principles [may] be intertwined with democratic principles” (p. 4), the book’s higher-quality contributions unapologetically embrace this integration as the ideal – resistance informed and catalyzed by all three principles. Of course, Santoro and Cain encourage us to see each principle as simply a way to shape our understanding of the motivations for teachers’ resistance, leaving a great deal of room for how that resistance plays out. This is precisely the purpose of the book: “to demystify why and how teachers engage in principled resistance” (p. 9). On these grounds, the collection undoubtedly succeeds.

Because Santoro and Cain explicitly invite their audience to read, react, and reflect on the examples – “to hear and heed the concerns of teachers” (p. 15), this review is not intended as an exhaustive description of the contents. Rather, I echo the editors’ acknowledgement of the diverse contributors and contexts, which lend themselves to diverse audiences. As a teacher educator, I am primed to see the potential applications in my own work, such as Cain and Santoro’s direct appeal to incorporate principled resistance in teacher preparation.

Thus, I wonder why the collection stops short of promoting action research or teacher inquiry as conducive to principled resistance. Aside from Beck et al.’s passing – albeit dated – reference to the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) and Meyer et al.’s discussion of action research, this is otherwise a missed opportunity but one I challenge readers to seize. As Weeda convincingly argues, we must refashion teacher resistance “from an act of

deviance and defiance to one of authorship and professionalism” (p. 143). Cultivating principled resisters who see themselves as scholarly practitioners is a viable means to that

end, and as educators continue to forge an unprecedented path through the coronavirus pandemic, *Principled Resistance* is an exceedingly useful guide.

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## About the Reviewer

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