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CROSS PURPOSES: CATHOLIC DISUNITY AND THE DECLINE OF
YOUNGSTOWN'S PAROCHIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, 1964-2006 (471
PP.)

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This foundational study was designed to track the decline of urban Catholic parochial elementary schools in the former steel-production center of Youngstown, Ohio—a situation that I examine from historical, sociological, and philosophical perspectives. While my study employs standard historical research methods, it also features a strong theoretical dimension that draws on literature pertaining to American Catholic identity. The study will argue that Catholic disunity—a product of both sociological trends and religious reforms—played a significant role in the decline of urban parish schools.

While the fragmentation of U.S. Catholic identity has often been addressed in general studies of American Catholicism, it has been discussed less frequently in research concerning the decline of one of the Catholic community's most iconic institutions: the urban parochial school. Hence, this study of Youngstown's parochial schools draws upon two distinct bodies of literature—dealing with American Catholic identity and American Catholic education, respectively—in an effort to identify and interpret factors contributing to the decline of a once robust system of parochial education.

Key words: Urban education, private religious schools, Catholic schools, nonpublic schools, minority groups and education.