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## Russ Smith and Zach Blizard: Incorporation and segregation Russ Smith and Zach Blizard Guest columnists Dec 18, 2020 🔍 0

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Lately, it seems like the one thing Americans can agree on is that we are deeply divided. The reasons for that divide are myriad, as are the areas where the

division is found, including politics, socioeconomics and race. A positive trend is that racial segregation is declining throughout the United States by many standard measures. That finding may seem counter-intuitive

these days, and rates of decline do differ across the country, with multiple factors playing key roles in the differences. Research finds that one key variable to consider is the preponderance of distinct municipalities within metro areas across the country, which is related to increases in segregation. Our research models suggest that for every community that gets incorporated, segregation, measured by the widely used dissimilarity index, tends to increase.

The index measures whether a particular group is distributed across census tracts within a larger area in the same way as another group. It ranges from 0 to 100, with higher values suggesting more segregation. In the Winston-Salem Metropolitan Statistical Area from 1990 to 2000, the number of municipalities increased from 15 to 19 (+4), while the dissimilarity index decreased from 62.39 to 59.71 (-2.7). Then, from 2000 to 2010, the

number of municipalities deceased from 19 to 18 (-1), while the index decreased

from 59.71 to 56.07 (-3.6). Hence, the rate of decline in segregation increased

when the number of municipalities decreased. More research will be needed to understand the full effect of increasing municipalities on segregation in our county. Newly incorporated municipalities (NIMs) are often viewed as an expression of grassroots democracy, as local residents incorporate to better control local affairs. However, these new

municipalities contribute to increasingly politically fragmented metropolitan regions, which may have unintended socio-economic consequences. Our previous research has shown that East Winston, an area that is primarily Black and was once an economic bedrock, now lags behind most other areas of the county in economic development. Residential and industrial development has moved out of the city toward the suburbs. Inner-city residents often lack the money to move to these outlying areas. They lack reliable transportation options

A similar phenomenon may be at play regarding political fragmentation, which

incorporate, offering differences in taxes and services, people may tend to move

capable of moving in such a manner are, perhaps, better resourced. Considering

is the ever-increasing number of local government entities established in

metropolitan geographies, and racial segregation. As new municipalities

to the ones that better align with their preferences. However, households

to commute to jobs at factories there.

it's important to shed light on this issue.

increased mortality rates for blacks.

the gaps between whites and Blacks in terms of wealth and socioeconomic status, it may not be surprising to see segregation worsen as some families move and others stay. Harvard economist Raj Chetty's research has established that economic mobility and residential segregation are inversely related. As CSEM researchers, we think

capturing tax revenue and increases the financial inequality between them and suburbs. Researchers have concluded that fragmentation harms minorities, through its promotion of spatial mismatch and its limitation of their political representation in the region.

Scholars also have examined political fragmentation's role in recent crises, such

Studies of political fragmentation and its effects in other areas nationwide have

been thought-provoking. One effect is that it inhibits central cities from

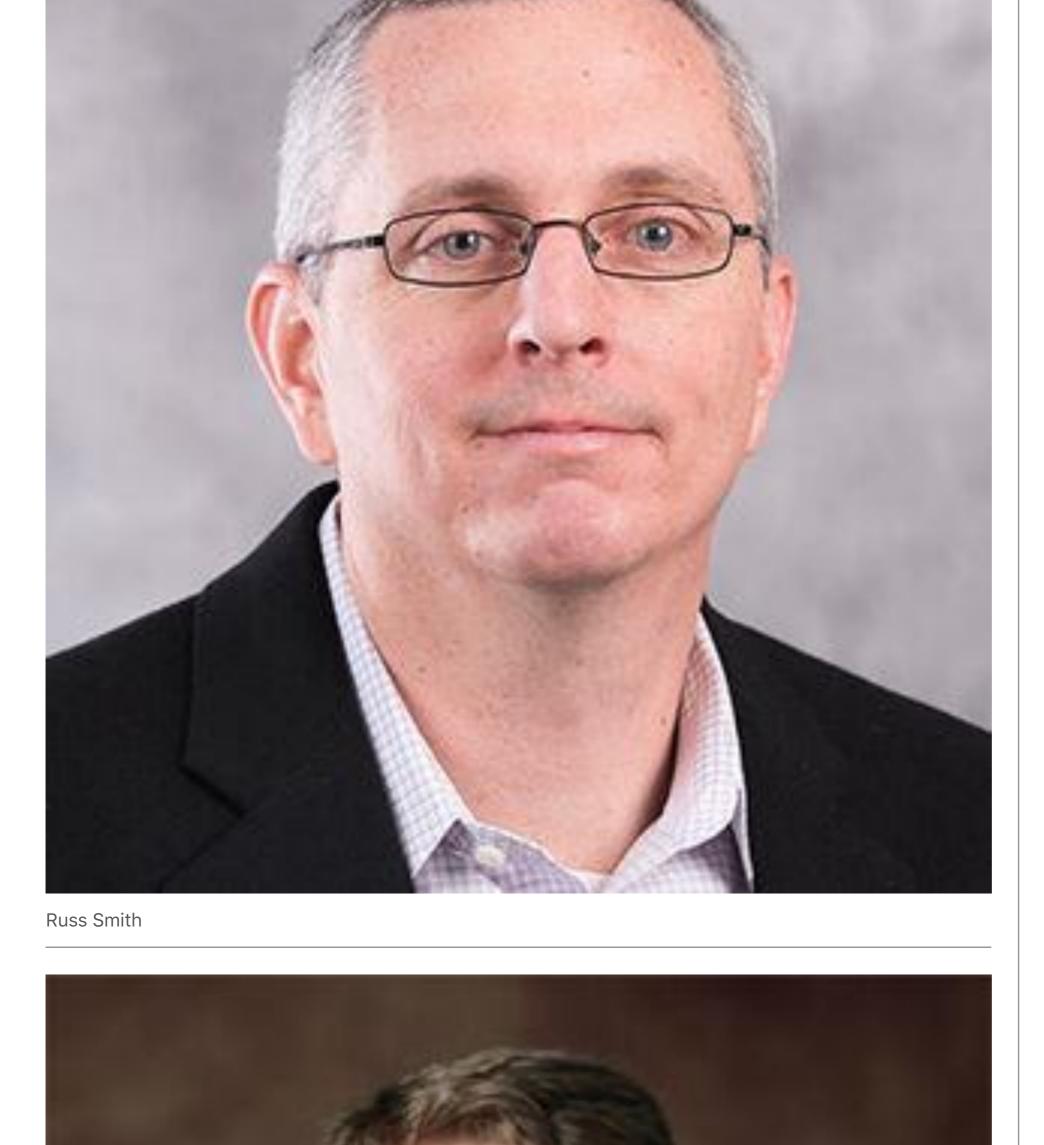
as the one in Flint, Mich., over contaminated water. In the case of Flint, scholars argue that fragmentation resulted in "environmental injustice due to racial segregation, unequal tax bases, and uneven service provisions." The range of consequences associated with political fragmentation have been well documented. Many of these are related to segregation and inequality. The effects of fragmentation on health outcomes are well documented, including

The creation of new cities and towns has real consequences, both intended and unintended ones. Hence, policymakers would be wise to study the establishment of new municipalities in order to ascertain the possible effects, such as the effect on segregation. Moreover, thresholds could be established by legislators to limit racial segregation following a municipal incorporation. For existing municipalities, elected leaders from outlying areas should work with urban ones

to determine what measures they can take to reduce segregation.

Considering our county has some of the lowest rates of upward economic mobility in the entire country, and that residential segregation is one of the strongest negative correlates with these rates, it stands to reason that further

research into the effects of political fragmentation are well worth the effort.



Zach Blizard

them.

**Q** 0 comments

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