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“Race and Indebted Access: How the Fringe Economy Shapes Political Inclusion”

Access to resources (e.g., money, skills, time) shape political attitudes and behavior. Yet, we know very little about how private financial institutions may shape these relationships. This article explores the links between exposure to financial services such as pawnshops, checkcashing outlets, auto title loans, and payday loans (collectively known as the fringe economy) and democratic inclusion. A salient feature of the American political economy is racialized resource distribution. Lenders and financial actors offer needed services, but often, when the services are for the poor, credit-poor, and racial minorities, it is on exploitative terms that limit or eliminate their long-term benefits. Adopting a political learning perspective, I present evidence that regulatory design simultaneously influences how individuals from marginalized communities experience fringe economy services and confirms their beliefs about the nature of government. Through their experiences under a given regulatory design, individuals in neighborhoods with the fringe economy develop service-specific beliefs about the predatory nature of the services and government responsiveness. Because individuals interpret their experiences with private financial institutions as reflective of how government works more generally, continued diminished efficacy about the government and fringe economy exposure become the basis for broader political orientations. I conclude that the views of government that citizens develop through fringe economy exposure help explain more general political action patterns and alienation.

PLACE

[Please register here for Zoom link.](#)

TIME

12:45 – 2:00pm.

INFO

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