

# QUEER LABOR IN SOUTHERN SUBURBIA

## GRAFTING SUBFIELDS IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

By: Ty Biser, Mentor: Dr. Rachael Cofield, Florida State University Department of Geography

### COLOR CODE:

- = Southern
- = labor
- = grafting
- = queer



## STUDY LOCATION



Adapted from U.S. Census map "Florida: 2020 Core Based Statistical Areas and Counties."

- Population: 384,298 (U.S. Census, 2020)
- Bureaucratic capital & college town with suburban and rural surroundings.
- Part of "the Panhandle" and U.S. South.
- Historic slavery and segregation, contemporary gentrification.
- Semi-Ordinary city (Robinson, 2006)

## INTRODUCTION

Queer labor in Southern suburbia is a complex experience. This qualitative study seeks to pull from a wide body of literature and conduct semi-structured interviews to address a knowledge gap in the extant literature on queer labor and queer life in the suburbs of the U.S. South. In this poster, I share preliminary findings on queer labor market experiences in Tallahassee, Florida.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What does queer labor look like in the workplace?
2. How does queerness materialize in Southern and suburban spaces?
3. How may socioeconomic conditions improve?

## LIT REVIEW

### Research Agendas:

- Queer Economies
- Queer Suburbanisms
- Southern Queer Studies

### Theoretical Groundings:

- Place-making theory
  - Company culture as an act of place-making and place-framing
- Rhizomatics
  - Companies as arborific, hierarchical power structures
- Cyborg feminism
  - Queer workers as cyborgs
  - Companies as immunological systems

## ANALYTIC F.W.

**Grafting** (borrowing from botany) is a spatial analytic framework of inclusion and exclusion.

- The rootstock = existing place-frame
- The scion = new, competing place-frame
- Embodied politics of inclusion & exclusion
- Queering the workplace / Tallahassee

## METHODS

- 30-40 semi-structured interviews
- Snowball sampling
- >18 y.o. and in the workforce
- Thematic saturation & analysis using Nvivo

## LOOKING AHEAD

- Interviews (SP - SU 2026)
- Analysis and writing (FA 2026)
- Publish (SP 2027)

## CONCLUSION

Queer labor in Southern suburbia is a nuanced experience. Preliminary findings show a plurality of experiences in the workplace, queer scene, universities, and the city. Materializations of queerness in this cis- and hetero-normative suburban landscape are ephemeral, informal, and often "mobile." Queer place-frames are grafted onto existing workplaces to moderate success. Feelings of queer futurity in Tallahassee are uncertain, considering the transient nature of the (student) interviewees thus far. As the study continues with more local voices, we can paint a picture of present and potential future spatialities of queer life and labor in Tallahassee.

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### 10 Interviews

Younger, Whiter, students  
Locals and non-locals  
Minimum wage

Plurality of Experience

Some workplaces "queer enough," but many are not.

Varying degrees of "out"-ness to coworkers

Diff. views on Southern (Queer) culture across race, age, class, etc.

Tally Queer Scene described as:  
"in decline" "cliquey"  
"gentrified" "there"



Calvin's Coffee House, a queer-affirming employer in the basement of the UKirk church.

Company Culture described as:  
"boys' club" "survival"  
"professionalism" "bougie"

"I want people to be, for places to be 'people' enough."

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## REFERENCES

