

## Transgender Mtf Youth and the Sex Industry: Determinants and Risks



Christopher Rudan is in his second year in the MC Counselling Psychology program at AU, and is a graduate of the BAH Psychology and Religious Studies program at Queen's University. Christopher has previously worked with developmentally/intellectually/physically challenged individuals in various capacities, and was formerly a faculty representative with AUGSA. Christopher has written on the experiences of the Hijra (MtF) population in India, and the experience of being queer as an Asian-Canadian with a physical disability.

### Abstract:

As demand and supply for sex work is on the rise, facilitated by economic growth, the internet and changing sexual attitudes, there is an increasing necessity to address the needs of those employed in the sex industry. Although scholarship has focused on the sale of sex by cisgender women to cisgender men, research on queer sex work is rarely treated as a substantive scholarly pursuit, and to an even lesser extent when concerned with the sex work of transgender individuals. Students and practitioners of counselling psychology, as well as those in associated clinical fields, need to better understand the physiological, interpersonal and therapeutic needs of their current and prospective MtF (male-to-female) clients. These individuals are an especially vulnerable population in their youth, and the factors leading some of these individuals towards work in the sex industry need to be better understood. The literature review details the factors leading many young transgender women to become employed in, maintain working in, and refrain from working in the sex industry, and suggests that although an underrepresentation in sex work research has limited what scholars understand about this population, their experiences are often defined by discrimination, rejection, violence and poverty. The literature review additionally highlights a lack of culturally-competent therapists and mental health professionals as one of the primary barriers between transgender women and optimal mental health, as well as the reality that many transgender women are drawn to the sex industry in search of a supportive and familial sense of community.