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Recognize: The Voices of Bisexual Men

THE PREFACE

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rec-og-nize 'rekig.niz,'rekə(g).niz/ verb

1. identify (someone or something) from having encountered them before; know again.
 2. acknowledge the existence, validity, or legality of.
- Synonyms: acknowledge, accept, admit.

It can be difficult to recognize all of yourself, particularly if you haven't yet encountered all of your parts, facets and nuances. For me, the difficulty was not because I hadn't encountered all of me but rather that I didn't see anyone in the world like me. When it came to the issues of love and desire, I didn't recognize myself in others. Before I entered the second grade of elementary school, I had a boyfriend and a girlfriend and had experimented sexually with both of them. I had no name for what these experiences meant for me. I could only recognize how they made me feel—good. But that's where my recognition would remain for some time.

It can be harder still to get the world around you to recognize all of you when there are parts of you it has yet to encounter. But once you have put together a substantial body of who you are and demanded the world acknowledge and accept your existence and validity, they had better recognize. Or there will be consequences. The sites in which these consequences manifest include bedrooms and boardrooms, street corners and salad bars, conferences and cabins. For a bisexual man, those consequences can be experienced as microaggressions and assaults on his humanity that daily slice away at the spirit. They crisscross along the contours and perturbations of the body, in some cases creating reservoirs of mistrust, guilt, resentment and rage and, in other cases, the promise of redemption and transformation. I was nearly twenty years old when my spiritual teacher, a father figure to me for nearly a decade, attempted to marry me off to another student, a woman, in ensure his "son won't become one of those homosexuals." The engagement didn't last but my capacity to love and desire people across a variety of genders did.



Recognition is an unfolding and continuous process that requires us to remember the parts of ourselves that we have lost, forgotten or had silenced. Being a bisexual man in a world dominated by straight or gay thinking, I continue to resist the pressure to conform to one or the other way of being even while I continue to question my own sensibilities. Are my sensibilities bisexual enough? Am I a straight/gay man in bisexual drag? Oftentimes, like when I first agreed to co-edit this anthology, I will have an experience that reminds me of the capacities for love and desire that I have carried since I was a child. Those moments bring the recognition and with it the dynamic tension I have with a world that does not truly recognize the complexities of being bisexual and male. To recognize ourselves as bisexual men, therefore, is a queer reclamation in that it frequently means that we are reclaiming lost or forgotten parts of our stories, our desires and ourselves.

But how can you lose or forget yourself? In a world that leaves little room for you to exist, it can be very easy, albeit it painful, to get lost or forgotten even within your own gaze and to collaborate with forces that have pushed you aside or rendered you fabrication, foil or folly. Living every day in the between spaces of the sexual landscape, the walls that have been built and policed to maintain the just order of sexual conformity can crowd out the space needed to love and desire as one is moved to do.

I invite bisexual men to consider the name of this anthology—REC*OG*NIZE: The Voices of Bisexual Men—An Anthology—as a call to recognize ourselves as well as a demand that others recognize us. Hopefully, you will recognize yourself in your brothers even if their voices don't exactly match yours. Let the voices contained within the book call us to recognize who we've been, who we are or who we are working on becoming. Let the voices call us to be vigilant in recognizing each other. The next voice you hear will be your own. RECOGNIZE.

INTRODUCTION

∴ "Silence and invisibility are extremely costly. Rather than disparage bisexual men who are closeted, we should examine why bisexual men are less likely to disclose their sexuality to others and also recognize the emotional costs of being passed over, or having their very existence invalidated.

There is an urgent need for even more representation and for a wider range of voices and experiences to be heard. There is power in speaking our truth. In so doing, we validate ourselves and we validate for others by offering them an opportunity them to recognize aspects of themselves in the written word."

Purchase your copy of *Recognize: The Voices of Bisexual Men* [here!](#)

"I still would define myself as bisexual partly because that's how I feel but also because I think it's important to — I think sexuality in this country especially is seen as a very black and white thing, and I think we should encourage the gray. You know?"

I don't go around in my life thinking, "Oh, my God, I'm going to have to have sex with a woman soon because I said I was bisexual!"... It's like saying you're straight or you're gay — it's just what you are, and whatever you're doing in your life it runs obviously parallel, but it's kind of secondary to how you are inside. That's how I've always felt, and I still do, even though I'm very happily married to a really amazing man and wish to be so for the rest of my life."

—Alan Cumming

