

On Selfhood: Young Lesbians Within the Margins
Oral History Project

The Reminiscences of
Jenna

2023

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with ‘S’ conducted by Olivia Newsome on January 21, 2023. This interview is part of the On Selfhood: Young Lesbians Within the Margins oral history project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Olivia 00:01

Today is January 21st, 2023. I'm Olivia Newsome interviewing Jenna here in New York City in my apartment. Do I have permission to record this interview?

Jenna 00:11

Yes.

Olivia 00:12

Do you know you can stop recording at any time?

Jenna 00:14

Yes.

Olivia 00:16

Can you say your name, age and pronouns?

Jenna 00:19

My name is Jenna. I'm 19. And my pronouns are they/them and she/her.

Olivia 00:25

Can you tell me where you're from where you grew up and what your childhood was like.

Jenna 00:29

I'm from South Brooklyn. I live in Sheepshead Bay, like around Coney Island. And my childhood I grew up both my parents. My parents are both Filipino. And they immigrated here at a really young age. So technically, like, I am, like, first generation, but not really, because they're very Americanized growing up. But yeah, they lived in like Brighton Beach. So around the same area. And I have four other siblings. So there was a lot of people in my house. And, yeah, I grew up in a very Catholic environment, especially like that part of Brooklyn from where I'm from. I went to Catholic school, up until high school, so like Catholic school, and like the church and everything were really big. In my childhood, especially like, being Filipino, like being Catholic is also just a huge deal. So like, that was like always going to be a part of my life, kind of whether or not I decided it or not. So I'd say yeah, like Catholicism definitely fucked up my childhood a lot. And kind of influenced the way I think about the world now. But as much as like, I hate the Catholic Church. Like, there's parts of it, like growing up where it felt like safer because it's tinier and stuff. But I think as a child that feels nice, but like growing up, is like realizing that like that was awful. But yeah,

Olivia 01:57

You have four siblings?

Jenna 01:58

Yeah.

Olivia 01:59

Are you like, Are you a middle child?

Jenna 02:01

I'm the youngest

Olivia 02:04

Do you like your siblings? What was it like, having four siblings?

Jenna 02:07

I love my siblings, actually. I feel like they were a super low. Sorry. Yeah, my siblings are like, a super huge part of my life. Like, I feel like growing up now, like kind of realizing like, they like raised me a lot more than my parents did. Because, like, I'm also like, middle class. So like, my mom was like, constantly and my dad, like we're constantly working, just to make sure we, the four of us, like all, all seven of us can stay in Brooklyn. So my siblings basically like kind of raised me, I have three older brothers and an older sister. So that was a really big part of my life, I think, especially like, having such a big influence on my older brothers. definitely affected my gender and stuff like that, but I'm really close with them, especially now.

Olivia 03:00

So can you talk a little bit more about middle and high school? You mentioned that you went to Catholic school? What was it like?

Jenna 03:11

Um, so yeah, being I realized I was like, a little bit queer around like, 12 years old, like, in, in middle school in middle like Catholic Middle School, which was like, take off. Um, I remember being like, 12 years old. And like, we had to go to church every single Friday, at like, eight in the morning. And like, I think once I started, like, because I was online a lot, and like, like, on tumblr and stuff, and I was exposed to that I was kind of like, I'm a little gay. But

going to church every Friday would kind of make me push that thought down. And like, I just remember like, being 12. And like, sitting in a church pew, looking up at this, like giant, like painting of Jesus that my church had. And just like feeling terrified of being like, Oh, God, I can't think like this. And this is awful. But yeah. And then high school. I was already I came out, like at 13. As by and when I went to high school, like, I actually talked to like, a lot of my friends who are also queer now and they were like, I came out to them freshman year, and they were like, You didn't need to come out to us, like we knew. And, and like, I feel like I've my friends also told me this recently, we're like, they were like, Yeah, you were like the only out like queer person in our like Catholic High School. And like, that was kind of weird. Because like, even like the minute like freshman year the minute I stepped in the door, it was like, Oh, that was the gay person of that year and like, I kind of felt like I was like, known as that person in high school.

Olivia 04:48

Was it a hostile environment to be gay? Or just an awareness?

Jenna 04:52

I think a little bit of both like, I I wasn't like, it wasn't like the movie thing of like beat up in the hall. way every day, but like I was, you know, I'd be in class and like I remember sophomore year of high school I like was the first time I cut my hair like super short, like I got a pixie cut. And I remember like, sitting in homeroom, and like this guy just walked by and like whispered like lesbian, like it was a bad thing. And then like his whole table of friends were like laughing. And then this one girl was like, oh my god, stop, you can't say that. And it was just like little things like that, which isn't like awful. But like, it's still like the kind of like underlying homophobia, like that was surrounding the place.

Olivia 05:35

So can you talk a little bit about how class influenced you? Growing up? You mentioned that you were you said, you were middle class. And both your parents worked a lot. And you have four siblings?

Jenna 05:57

Yeah.

Olivia 05:58

So how did class impact you growing up?

Jenna 06:00

I think like, from living in New York, like, I feel like if I was from another state, I probably honestly would be considered a higher class. But I think the conditions of my family and living in New York like kind of put us like in middle class. And I think, also weirdly, like paying for Catholic school and like, continued like, my parents were so adamant about like, private school. Yeah. So like, my parents were very adamant about us going to Catholic private school. And that, like, impacted like, our living situation, and like, like our economic state, and whatever. So I remember being like, in middle school, and my brothers went to like one of the most expensive Catholic schools in New York, and that like put like a big financial burden on my family. So like, around that time was like, when I started realizing, like, Oh, we're a little poor right now, because of like, how much of this is on like, Catholic private school, like that was in my life? But so yeah, growing up, like, a lot of our money went towards that Catholic education. So you know, being in middle school and like having my siblings hand me down clothes or waiting till like the last thread of like, something would break what I wouldn't get anything. Or even just like tiny things like going up like, my parents being like, Okay, you might not get a Christmas present this year. And like me just being like, I that was normal. Like that was, what else could I do i for their siblings.

Olivia 07:27

Did you notice class differences at your Catholic private school?

Jenna 07:31

Absolutely. Yeah, I think, I think less than middle school because like, you don't like your kid. And like most I'd say most kids there were either so much to me, or honestly had it worse than I did. But high school it was like really adamant like, all of the rich white kids. Like it was so obvious. Like a lot of the things in Catholic school, you still have to pay for it to get like if there was like a trip or like clothes if you're on like a sports team or something. There would be like all of the rich white kids who got like every single thing ever. And then most of my friends and like other like POC there would be like in the corner who like couldn't get everything. But yeah, in high school, I definitely noticed the difference more.

Olivia 08:17

Was your school mostly white?

Jenna 08:20

I'd say yes. Yeah, there were like a good I think compared to a lot of the other Catholic schools in Brooklyn. We were like, a little bit more diverse, but wasn't saying a lot. But yeah, I was like, the only Asian person in my like, entire, like, honestly, maybe school. There's like one other girl. Wow.

Olivia 08:39

So on that note, how did race affect you growing up? Like, did you have an understanding of race, like within your area, like in the school context, maybe like, in like a national context.

Jenna 08:53

I think in my neighborhood context, I, the part of Brooklyn I'm from is like, a little bit of Jewish, a little bit of Asian and a little bit of like Russian. So like, at least where I lived, like I did feel a little bit of like the Asian culture. Like I felt safe there. Like the Asian markets near me, like always feel like home to me, but in my school, they're even Catholic school and, like, I mean, in middle school in high school, like there weren't a lot of other Asian people like I think if there were like they would be gone within a year like after I knew them, but race definitely impacted me a lot especially I think I noticed it a lot more in middle school like I have this like used to play this sick game with like, kids I used to meet where I'd be like guess my race. They wouldn't know they would they most people would either say like Chinese or Mexican but no, I like new like I would play this game knowing they would not get Filipino and it was kind of like going up. It was kind of like, like fun. Have you been like realizing it as an adult? Like, that's really fucked up? Yeah, not really. Uh, haha.

Olivia 10:03

Yeah. So you were aware of race mostly in high school?

Jenna 10:10

Oh, yeah. In high school, especially to because I only knew one other Filipino girl my year. And like, I think, like, I feel like everyone also, like my friends. We used to make jokes, or they're not my friends anymore. But there was this one guy used to make jokes. Like, I was really bad at math. And you'd be like, oh, like, aren't you the Asian girl or something? And like, I at the time, like, when we were friends. I was like, Haha, that's funny. But like, I think now, like, out of high school, I'm like, fuck that. I hate this person. Yeah, that was really fucked up.

Olivia 10:45

So how did you how did gender influence you growing up?

Jenna 10:51

Um, as I said before, I have like three older brothers. So like, I remember like, from probably like, My fondest memory of them is like, sitting on our basement floor and like them playing guitar hero for like, hours on expert mode. And I just remember being like, a little kid be like, I want to be like, exactly this. And like, just watching. Yeah, so gender. Yeah. My brother is playing guitar hero. Yeah, but I Yeah, even from like, middle school. Like I always, like whenever my friends would be like, Oh, are you like a tomboy? Or like a girly girl? Like, I was? Like, not really either. And I was just kind of, like, they'd be like, Oh, you could be both. And I was like, Sure. But yeah, like in middle school, like that was I think at the same time, I was recognizing like my sexuality. That was like, a super huge, also, big deal for me of like realizing gender. And I kind of put that on the backburner till High School. And I didn't really kind of explore my gender till like, senior year really?

Olivia 12:00

You mentioned it briefly, so I'm gonna have to ask you, Tumblr. How much were you on Tumblr?

Jenna 12:08

I think I wasn't on it as much I think as other people, but like enough to be influenced by it heavily.

Jenna 12:15

So What years were you on Tumblr?

Jenna 12:19

Like, a little bit of 2014 to like 20 like up until 2018? I'd say.

Jenna 12:26

Okay, so, towards the end of the bad.

Jenna 12:29

Yeah.

Olivia 12:30

2014-2018 Tumblr. So what specifically influenced you on Tumblr? What were you doing on Tumblr? What were you seeing?

Jenna 12:39

I was sadly influenced by Sherlock a lot on Tumblr. Like a lot of stuff. Not SuperWholock, mostly Sherlock. I did get a little bit of like the supernatural and the doctor who but mostly Sherlock mostly Sherlock Yeah, but I was really on Tumblr for a series of unfortunate events a lot because that was like my, like my book series that I read. But there were not a lot of other people on Tumblr for that reason. But so Yeah, mostly got like Sherlock in and one like, I think queer like, show that I don't think enough people talk about but influenced me way too much was Gotham. Yeah, yeah, and the shipping between the Riddler and the penguin.

Olivia 13:26

Yeah.

Jenna 13:27

Fried my brain. From 10 years old.

Jenna 13:30

The Riddler from what years old?

Jenna 13:32

I was like 12 I think you're watching Gotham.

Olivia 13:35

Yeah

Jenna 13:35

I think like my first my first like, instance of like, my mom realizing that I was definitely not straight was like me watching them. And like foaming at the mouth whenever like the Riddler the penguin on screen. And she was like, she I think she actually asked me one day, like, Are you gay or something? Because you like this a lot. And I just had to be like, no, like, straight him out. Yeah, it's just really a good show. It was not

Olivia 14:04

How else did Tumblr impact your, your queerness and your gender?

Jenna 14:09

I think that was like, the first time I knew what being queer was. And like, all the just terms and like the words that I could use to describe myself with like, I wouldn't have known like, what being non binary was if it weren't for Tumblr? And yeah, just seeing people like openly post about it, like, talking about their struggles. Like I was like, Oh, I actually also kind of experienced this too and like, that's okay.

Jenna 14:36

Were you in any other fandoms

Jenna 14:39

um, I said this You in the pre interview, but I was on stars on Twitter. From like, oh, yeah, I think like begin like, the summer of or the end of like, my junior year or no, yeah. At the end of my junior year up until like, honestly, or like, like freshman year of college that I stopped, but yes then Twitter was also a big deal for me. Talk about Stan Twitter centered or specifically, I think, like influenced me being a lesbian a lot because that was like the first time I really like encountered like other lesbians online. Like before, like the Tumblr days in middle school, it was like, mostly like other bisexual people, because I identified as bisexual at the time, but like, I feel like on Stanford, it was the first time I was hearing people say like, I'm a lesbian and, and like, I remember being in a group chat with like, a bunch of other people for Starburst and Twitter. And people were talking about the lesbian master doc. And I was like, Oh, what's this? And one of my, like, close mutual sent it to me, which sent me down a deep rabbit hole. And yeah, that was like, kind of the first introduction into lesbianism for me,

Jenna 15:55

was the lesbian master dog that you got said in this Star Wars? Like stand?
Group Chat?

Olivia 16:01

Yeah, it was sent in the group chat. Oh. I think it was 2020. Actually. 2020.
Yeah. Okay.

Jenna 16:10

So 2020 was when you were first exposed to lesbianism?

Jenna 16:14

I think. I wouldn't say like, I feel like as old like not my first exposure to it. Like as a kid, I think there were some other like exposures. Like, I think the first lesbian I ever knew was like this neighbor we had. So we used to have this house upstate, like, it was kind of like a little like getaway house. And our neighbor across she was Tammy and she was this, like, sweet teddy bear lesbian, and my mom and like a whole family were really close to her. Like, she took care of her house upstate, like when we're gone, she still does like to this day. And like, I think, seeing my mom, like, be friends with her, like, accept her, like, was a really big deal for me, because like, all the other like instances of like, homophobia and Catholic Catholicism. Like, I was scared about, like being queer. But like, when I remember like Tammy, I'm like, okay, maybe my mom won't hate me for being gay or being a lesbian.

Jenna 17:15

So, would you say that? Tumblr and social media affected you the most growing

Jenna 17:22

up? Yes, I think going back to like my mom working all the time, and being like, middle class, you know, there wasn't a lot of time where I could spend with her. So like, most of the time, in middle school, I would be on Tumblr, or I'd be on social media, because like, I didn't really have like parents to stop me from the internet access, which, like, now, like growing up being like, I shouldn't have been on Tumblr at 12 years old at all. But I Yeah, it's still impacted me whether or not whether that was good or bad.

Jenna 17:58

So what were your earliest interactions with queer spaces? Was it mostly online? Did you have gay friends?

Jenna 18:08

Um, it was mostly online. But I think when I came out in middle school, or when I was like, questioning it, there were like, some other crew people around me. I remember meeting this one person in the year below me, who I think their name is Venus now, but at the time, like, they also came out to me being like, yeah, like, I'm non binary. And like, being in middle school, and like, kind of like meeting some other, like queer people. But we were all like, very confused about what we were. And I think, like, net, like, when I was in, like, in eighth grade about to graduate, I didn't really like them as people, but like, they were the only other crew people I knew. So like, it was like, I would rather have them than nothing. But once I got to high school, I made friends with this group of people who were all straight. And then by senior year, they were not straight. And it was the joke that I turned them all gay because I went into the friend group as the only out person. But yeah, in high school, like, my queer friends who I met in high school, like we're still friends to this day, and they were super, like important for me and like, realizing or just being comfortable with being gay because I think they would tell me that like I did that for them, but they also did that for me, even if they weren't out yet.

Jenna 19:31

So how did you guys find each other? Did you all just gravitate to each other?

Jenna 19:34

I remember like, my friend Carolina, we were in art class together. And I had a Marvel backpack and she had a vans backpack. And I remember like being like, Yeah, she looks queer. I think we should be friends. And she told me like, I think our junior year that she thought the same thing she was like She saw the Marvel backpack it was like, Yeah, I should be friends with this person. But I met her in my art class. And then I saw her, like sitting at a lunch table with these other girls. And I just sat with them. And yeah, all those girls are queer now, like they're all out. But yeah, but like when I met them, initially, none of them were out and like, it was kind of cool that like, we just were like magnets and we like found each other.

Olivia 20:29

So can you talk a little bit more about when you were identifying as a lesbian? And how you got there?

Jenna 20:36

So right before actually quarantine? My, my friends. I feel like there was a big thing on Tik Tok, where like, it was like, the joke was like bisexual girls are into feminine men, but it's like, are you really into feminine men? Are you lesbian? And my friend, my best friend Emily, like said that to me, like, hey, this kind of sounds like you. And I was like, really? That's, that's so weird. Um, and I just, like, put it off for like, basically almost like two years. Like, like, it was like, JUNIOR Yeah, I think yeah, I was like, 16. And I was like, it's fine. And then not until like, quarantine? Was it like, you have basically all of the time in the world to think about those. So I spent like, 2022, like, probably up until like, the beginning of 2022. Like, kind of like, I don't really know, like, I

know, I like girls and non men that I don't know. And like, it was until like, the beginning of 2022, where I like, openly just said like, Yeah, I'm a lesbian.

Olivia 21:45

So was it hard? Like, did you why did you struggle with identifying as a lesbian?

Jenna 21:50

I think it was hard, because, like, there weren't a lot of other lesbians around me who I didn't like know, online. And like, the only other person I knew was like, this one girl on my swim team who was like, way older than me. And like, I didn't really see her constantly. So and it was also just like, the thing of like, oh, I don't know, I'm not sure. Like, the kind of the whole thing of like, is it a phase bullshit, like, so she's still being in high school and like, still in Catholic school, like, not a great space to like, think about that, and like, explore that openly. So I feel like once I finally got out of the, like, Catholic environment, I feel like I was comfortable being and like identifying as a lesbian.

Olivia 22:34

Did you ever struggle with your gender?

Jenna 22:39

I think I should I thought about like me not being a girl at 13. And like, all of high school, I basically just like, threw that away. And like, I think because I was mostly focused on my sexuality, and I was like, we could figure out the gender stuff later. But quarantine again, just was like, you have to sit down and think about this. I think I got this tip talk about Judith Butler. And I'm forgetting her book right now. But that was like her, I think this quote she had where it was like gender as a performance. And I remember seeing this tick

took where this person was like, Now when you're in quarantine, you don't have to perform for anybody, like you're just in your room by yourself. So that like that made me really think about my gender a lot. Because being in quarantine, I was like, I don't have to worry about all of these like racist white people in my Catholic school, being worried whether or not I look like a girl or a boy. So I really was able to explore my gender like in quarantine.

Olivia 23:46

So has your lesbianism been impacted by theory or academics in some way? You mentioned maybe encountering some Judith Butler quotes on TikTok.

Jenna 24:01

Oh, that was I forgot her name but the book about compulsory heterosexuality was. Yeah, super huge deal for me as well. I think that was kind of the first time where I was like, Oh, you're not bisexual. Like, this is just something that is ingrained into you. And like, kind of taught to you. And like, just that whole idea of like, okay, this is like, something that like society is putting onto you and like you don't actually like men you just think you need to and like that was a really big deal for me also realizing I was a lesbian.

Olivia 24:42

So who was your first queer crush? real or fictional?

Jenna 24:51

This is a weird one. But specifically, Bridgit Mendler as Juliet, in Wizards of Waverly Place where she was a vampire? Yeah, um, but yeah, I mean, honestly, any of the girls on visits we really plays like Alex and Harper, and even Hayley Kiyoko in it when she was in it for like three episodes. But yeah,

that was like I remember just being like eight years old, and whenever she was on screen, I was like, enamored, and like, glued to my seat.

Olivia 25:25

So Bridgit Mendler. Who was your first real Queer crush you don't have to say names.

Jenna 25:35

I'm trying to like think of any homoerotic friendships. Oh, I think I realized this recently. But I had this best friend when I was in kindergarten. And her name is Elgin. I actually don't know where she is at all anymore. Because she moved like when we went to first grade. Yeah, but we were like super, super close. And I remember whenever she was absent, she let me sleep with her Hello Kitty pillow at nap time. And like, I would be like, super happy whenever I go to sleep with it. And like, I remember, like, we went to this carnival. And she got like this Elmo pillow. And she gave it to me and like I kept on to it for like years. But I just thought we were like super close friends. But like realizing it now. I was definitely in love with her.

Olivia 26:28

So what were your first encounters with lesbian sex? both directly and indirectly, indirectly would be like porn, hearing about lesbian sex. You're on Tumblr? So seeing it, maybe you read fanfiction? Talking about that?

Jenna 26:48

Um, I think with lesbian sex, probably like TV shows, like, connecting back to like, having like unlimited internet access, because your parents are always working. Like, I remember watching Jessica Jones when I was like 11. And yeah, I think it was I forgot. I think it's her sister. The one of the characters.

Like it was like a very graphic lesbian sexy and, and I remember my mom was like, why are you telling people you watch Jessica Jones, like, you should not be telling people you watch this. But I remember watching Jessica Jones and just the endless amount of like porn bots on Tumblr as well. But I think probably with fanfic, I remember like, because of all it was also into like DC Comics a lot. Like there was so much like, Harley Yeah, there was so much of that. I think that was like a big influence there.

Olivia 27:43

You read harlivy (Harley Quinn x Poison Ivy) fanfics?

Jenna 27:45

Yeah.

Olivia 27:47

Where were you reading these fanfictions?

Jenna 27:49

I think I started on Wattpad because my sister was but I am an AO3 defender to this day. AO3 is superior.

Olivia 27:57

Yeah. So you were okay. I will say you're not the only person talking about fanfics a lot of people do. Feel free to talk about your fanfics.

Jenna 28:07

I never wrote any. Yeah, but I remember like reading a lot of like Legend of Korra. That was also a big deal for me like Legend of Korra. Marcelino in bubble gum. Yeah, like, a lot of like children's shows. Like we're characters in it. Also, weirdly, Voltron that was a bad one too. Yeah.

Olivia 28:31

Other people were talking about Voltron. Unless I made that up. But I feel like no.

Jenna 28:36

Most I think especially for my age, because I was like, again, like 13. Like Voltron is like the gateway into being gay. But Voltron also influenced a lot of my queerness kind of embarrassingly. But yeah, I think that's all of the fandoms I can think of.

Olivia 28:54

that you were reading? Yeah. What? What were you like what tags were you in? So like, you were listing what tags were on the Harlivy fic?

Jenna 29:01

I was reading mostly fluff and then like, okay, like in high school when I was like realizing my sexuality. It was mostly smut, because that was like, I feel like a lot of lesbian porn. Like it was all made for straight men. But like all of the fanfic is written by other crew people who like understand, like, what we're attracted to, and like how we perform in like intimate sections like that. So like, I feel like fanfic was the first time like, I was comfortable with sexuality and like, I understood what it was and it like connected to me.

Olivia 29:37

So you would say you mostly read fluff in middle school? Yeah, that's a story. You're sticking to it.

Jenna 29:43

I mean, I'm in middle school. I think like I would occasionally go to smoke, but in middle school, like I wouldn't know what it was. Yeah, no. Just give me the part where they're like kissing.

Olivia 29:53

Yeah. And then you were reading mostly smut in high school because porn less important was like really first straight men.

Jenna 30:00

Yeah.

Olivia 30:00

And a lot of fanfic is for written by queer people. I have been reading every single Sevika from Arcane.

Jenna 30:12

Oh my god.

Olivia 30:15

Well, one of the people in the project is actually writing me a 50k like, slowburn.

Jenna 30:23

Oh, that's crazy.

Olivia 30:25

and it's Sevika, it's an AU (alternate universe), it's a handyman AU. I'm like, I'm like a young divorcee.

Jenna 30:33

Oh my god!

Olivia 30:34

Like I'm in like my late 20s And Sevika is in her early 40s. And like, I like burst a pipe.

Jenna 30:41

I wish I could have more fanfic friends to like, like

Jenna 30:41

Oh my god!

Olivia 30:47

Like, they're writing it for me. And I got to pick my tags. Oh, for only got like, four like smut tags. And I was like, like I was, so I was really struggling. And I got a bunch of personality tags. That was for 20. And it's 50k words for my birthday in April. And then they're getting it bound for me. It's like printed.

Jenna 31:08

Yeah, that's amazing.

Olivia 31:09

I'm so happy.

Jenna 31:11

Whenever I see like, whatever I'm on a fic and like that notes is like to my friend. I'm like, wow, like, Yeah, you're a great friend for writing this good of a fic like,

Olivia 31:21

It's a self insert and they're like, I can't believe I have to write you fucking and I was like, just pretend it isn't me!

Jenna 31:25

Just out of body!

Olivia 31:27

Yeah! SEVIKAAAA! AH I don't even know.

Jenna 31:33

I think Vi for me recently that was like, big, big influence in my lesbianism.

Olivia 31:40

You watched Arcane?

Jenna 31:41

Yes.

Jenna 31:42

Vi, Oh my god. I'm forgetting her name.

Olivia 31:45

Cait? Honestly, red and the blue.

Jenna 31:47

Last year, last year I was reading their fanfics as well. Really good.

Olivia 31:50

There's a lot of new like Cait/Vi fanfics.

Jenna 31:53

I haven't looked at it recently. Like I only looked like right after I finished Arcane. Yeah, but I know it's probably still good to go back.

Olivia 32:00

I don't read those. That's not my ship. But Maia in the project, like an oral history. she's obsessed with Vi. So she reads a lot of Vi/Cait.

Jenna 32:12

Oh, hell yes.

Olivia 32:13

I have them. I don't read them. I'm only reading Sevika x reader fics. And then you remember Mel? the like black Councilwoman?

Jenna 32:24

Yeah, Oh my god.

Olivia 32:25

Her mom? Like Ambessa fics?

Jenna 32:31

Oh!

Olivia 32:31

Because she's big and mean. She's six nine, though

Jenna 32:37

Oh, don't say that!

Olivia 32:38

I think Sevika is like six feet tall.

Jenna 32:40

But I think for Vi she's like, not mean like she she looks mean, but like, you know, like, she's not mean at all.

Olivia 32:49

I like how mean Sevika is, She's everything to me. I know. She's not real, but she's real in my heart! Anyways, so fanfiction was very important. What about the other part? So your first encounters with queer sex?

Jenna 33:07

I think like weaker section general, it was a lot of like, MLM, like, it was mostly like gay men. But I as much as like, I think I was a lot more with like, men. I think it still made me comfortable with being queer. And also like, weirdly, that helped with like, the gender thing as well. Because I think like, I would be like reading or like, like seeing like fanfic of like, gay men have sex ed, like, I was like, Why do I want to look at this? And then I think was it up until like,

senior year, I was like, you it's gender, you just want to look like him. You don't want to fuck men. But like, that, like, helped with the gender part of it.

Olivia 33:51

So have your views on marriage changed before and after you identified as a lesbian?

Jenna 33:58

I think Yeah. I think growing up especially you know, in Catholic school is kind of like okay, you know, you're gonna get married in church or getting married to a man obviously, but like I think now, especially since a lot of people don't get married like I'm more open to it. I'm not like against the idea of marriage. I think it's sweet like it's like a nice concept but I don't think like I need to be married like in the future, but I just more see it as like, okay, like, this is an option I have like not like, as something I have to do in a church like I used to think when I was in middle school. So

Olivia 34:37

have clothing, jewelry, makeup, tattoos, piercings or other body mods or other forms of gender expression assisted with affirming your identities or your lesbianism?

Jenna 34:49

Absolutely, I forgot to mention this before, but I think recently like I like up until again when I was like 16 I am really into like punk subculture and like punk music. And you know, I was really influenced by like all the queer core bands. And like all of them have piercings and dyed hair, and the whole, like, punk and especially queer punk, like message of just like fuck everything, especially fuck gender and like, Fuck heteronormativity like just made me a

lot more comfortable with everything. But yeah, I think queer punks, like every single part of their expression has influenced the way I think about everything. And the way I present myself.

Olivia 35:36

and how are you presenting yourself?

Jenna 35:38

Um, I, like I'm mostly present I think as like, kind of masculine like I, I bind a little bit, but like, I think I'm only really comfortable with femininity, if I look like a femme punk girl, like, I think like, especially again, like punk, just the whole community. Like, I feel like influences by gender like, because all of the queer punks that I know and like see, they like can be feminine, they look feminine, but like can still identify like with like, he him pronouns are they them pronouns? Like it doesn't matter.

Olivia 36:12

Are you going to like punk events?

Jenna 36:14

Yeah, I literally yesterday I just came back from a pink shift show. Okay, um, but yeah, pink shift is like an awesome band. The the lead singer is non binary and queer. And everyone in the band is also POC. And yeah, like they I've met so many people through like shows like, it's probably like the biggest sense of community that I have in my life right now. Just like meeting other queer punks at shows. Yeah, like I love I think some other bands I can mention like, like older bands who aren't like active now. But like tribe eight and team drench, are like big, I think big punk bands for other lesbians too. But some other punk bands I love now like pom pom squad. And I'm

forgetting the names. We have pumpkin squad of pink shift are definitely up there for me with being like queer and POC.

Olivia 37:12

Do like tattoos and piercings help you feel more connected to your gender?

Jenna 37:16

Yeah, um, I think especially like growing up like afab. Like, you know, like, you're not supposed to get piercings, you're not supposed to get tattoos. But like, Finally, like being able to do that. It was kind of like a rejection of that of femininity in a way because it's like, I can look however I want I don't need to look like a proper presenting girl. I could have like tattoos all over my arms and metal in my face. And that's okay.

Olivia 37:46

What about what about clothing?

Jenna 37:48

I think clothing was really hard for me, especially in Catholic school because I had to wear uniform every day. But having my older brothers and like stealing their clothes when they grew out of it was a big deal for me. Yeah, I was like, comfortable. Like I'm more comfortable in men's clothing. And especially now like, I think my family is more accepting. So like, my dad gives me his old clothes and like, my brother also still gives me his clothes. But I think recently like I'm, again I'm, I'm comfortable presenting feminine in like certain contexts of like, going to punk shows or in a very, like, certain way or being feminine in my own way and not like the way that people expect me to be.

Olivia 38:40

So have any forms of art, like photography, paintings, theater or movies films, helped you with your lesbianism in any way? Like, have you felt connected to any of those?

Jenna 38:54

I think movies are a big deal for me. I was going to be a film major but I think lesbian movies are like so important. And again in high school like that was like my only like gateway into lesbianism. Like, but I'm a cheerleader. The Handmaiden the dubs like movies like that, where they're made by like, crew people and like have crew people in mind and they're like fun and campy and have happy endings. Like, I remember like being in high school, like purposely searching up like lesbian movies with happy endings, because like, I was so sick of just seeing, like, the ones where they die or something like that. Like I love like, can't be lesbian movies, and I think we need more of them.

Olivia 39:42

So, do you believe in coming out and have you come out multiple times before? And does the phrase coming into your identity resonate with you at all?

Jenna 39:52

Um, I came out twice, technically, or kind of three times. I came out at 13 as ba I and came out to your friends, I came out to my friends and then like two of my siblings, and I came out to my mom on Mother's Day in, mind you in a card that was supernatural themed because my mom likes supernatural. And I came out to her and that card. But I think after I did that, and it didn't go well, because my mom was like, I don't really believe you after she read the card, I kind of like stopped believing in coming out. Like, when I accepted that I was a lesbian, I didn't really come out to anybody. I just like, maybe I

made like, a funny post on my spam account as like, Haha, I'm a lesbian, like, I think like realizing, or, like being comfortable identifying as a lesbian, it wasn't like, Hey, I'm a lesbian. Now it was like, I'm just gonna post memes about and you have to pick it up. And same thing with being non binary, I just kind of was like, I don't need to say this to anybody else. And I'm just going to present myself. And if people pick up on it, that's cool. Because I just don't, I didn't really feel the need to like, fully address it to people, it was kind of like I accepted it myself. And if anyone else does, like, that's cool, but I don't need to formally tell you. But I definitely agree more with like coming in. Because that's how I felt like, like identifying as non binary and a lesbian. I came into those, like, I kind of came out to myself more than I did to other people.

Olivia 41:35

So we're getting to this section, we're going to talk about community and lesbian community, and all of those things. So how do you think class informs your interactions with lesbian community?

Jenna 41:51

I think, like, I'm still like, a little baby lesbian. And I feel like most of the other lesbians I encounter are mostly like white upper middle, like class people. So like, sometimes it is hard to relate to them. And like, you know, like, because I'm not like, I feel like most of the other lesbians I see. It's like the cottage core, like soft foamy people. And sometimes I don't always like relate with them. So sometimes that can be hard.

Olivia 42:21

I don't what are lesbians in your age group in the city doing? What do y'all do? Where do you go? Because you can't go to bars.

Jenna 42:32

I think for me, it's like shows like going to punk shows. That's where I meet a lot of other lesbians like me, but I don't really know where else like I meet other lesbians my age. Like most of the lesbians I meet my age are at concerts or like shows.

Olivia 42:52

So how do you think race informs your interactions with lesbian community? And by lesbian community? I mean, it can be your like friends, lesbians that you're meeting at these punk shows, maybe you have an understanding of how race impacts the lesbian community, like bigger, like zoom out lesbian community, maybe your lesbian community is online, that kind of thing.

Jenna 43:14

Um, in terms of the punk shows, I think all of the like, most like most of the punk shows I go to there are like queer POC people and like, especially with pink shift, like, it's like that is like our community and like, I I feel like everyone there like we just feel so safe because it's just like other queer people and especially like, I think being a person of color within the punk community itself is like a super huge deal. So like, meeting other like queer and POC people in the punk community is like really nice. And like seeing them make music and make art is like really important. But I'm like certain there's are certain bands like the ice where it's mostly like white people and like that is really hard. Like, even like I'm like, I love washing and stuff. So like sometimes seeing like white people who like either are too aggressive with like, going to shows and like pushing people over or like not aggressive enough where they they don't like really like Mosh it can be kind of hard. And I feel like that's where like I really see the race differences. Or even like, because I don't only go to punk shows, like I remember going to this Ricky Montgomery concert and like, there was like probably like a handful of like people of color there. But I think like within like the indie like, community and like, less of like punk music, but like more just like alternative music. I know. Like it's a big deal within folk music as well. Like the folk and indie scene aren't really like, I feel like there aren't really safe for a lot of people of color.

Olivia 44:52

So would you say music is a very big part of your lesbian community building? Yes, I'd say why is that? I think

Jenna 45:00

Music is just like a big part of my life in general. And like seeing lesbianism and music just made me more comfortable with it. Like, I remember like being, like listening to like lesbian songs like, like, I don't listen to claro anymore, but like Sofia by claro and Marsiling by Willow Willow Smith was like a really big deal for me and like helps me really be comfortable with lesbianism.

Olivia 45:33

So how do you think gender informs your interactions with lesbian community? Can you talk a little bit about what it's like being a non binary lesbian?

Jenna 45:41

I think when I first identified as it, like, I remember seeing the term on stan twitter, and like I, to this day, they're like constantly people who are like, you can't be non binary, and you can't be a lesbian. And so like, that was hard. Because I think that's also why I struggled with identifying as lesbian because I was like, Well, I'm non binary. I don't know if I could use this term. And kind of feeling like, maybe there were like, these weird lines that were drawn by people. But I think now obviously, I don't care. But also that there, there's so many other non binary lesbians, and I think, I feel like a lot of being a lesbian, like, is kind of rejecting gender as well. Why do you feel that way? At least in my own, like, experience, I just feel like, like being a lesbian and, like, loving other women, you're kind of just not, like connected to this like,

like, cisgender like idea of what being a woman is, and you're just not influenced by like, what the female gender like, Isn't what Heteronormativity is teaching you. And just like there's like, I feel like just this initial disconnect that like any sapphic or queer like women can feel.

Olivia 47:05

Do you have an understanding of how race informs your gender identity in any way?

Jenna 47:09

Yeah, so um, I didn't really find out this till like, I already started being nonbinary but a big part of like Filipino culture before we got colonized by like Spain, there were a lot of like, third gender people within like, the Philippines. And like, especially just like, before we got colonized, there were so much less like gender constrictions. But after we got colonized there, like a lot stricter gender roles, like when I went to the Philippines, like literally last week, there were so like, there's so many still like strict gender roles there. And it was kind of confusing, cuz I remember confusing a lot of the service workers there like a lot of them would call me sir. And then they would say, ma'am, but then they would go back to sir. So it was definitely weird there.

Olivia 48:00

And does that impact you now?

Jenna 48:03

I'd say yeah, I think I'm just recently like going to the Philippines and like seeing how I was treated they're like being like non binary and like presenting androgynous. It was kind of like disheartening to see that like, my home country, like they didn't really understand androgyny, but also like, it was like

really gender affirming, like getting called sir. And like, kind of confusing them. Because like, that's kind of what I wanted to have my gender. So it wasn't nice.

Olivia 48:34

Do you identify as an artist?

Jenna 48:38

Yeah, I'd say I don't like share my art publicly a lot. But like, I still make it and I share it with like people like my friends and stuff. And like online on my like, 10 like fan accounts and stuff like that?

Olivia 48:52

Do you have an understanding of how art making as a process? How art making as a process maybe impacts your lesbianism or your gender identity, like do you? Do you see art is like a specific creative output that impacts your lesbianism in some way.

Jenna 49:12

Yeah, I think. Like, I write like a little bit of like music and like songs in my little silly notes. But I remember like being in high school that was like kind of the only outlet I had to talk about lesbianism like in making music. Yeah, like writing songs about like liking girls are or not really feeling like a girl like that was the only time I really felt comfortable. And the only really outlet I had to express something like that.

Olivia 49:42

Are you like in community with other lesbian artists?

Jenna 49:47

Um, I think online like I have, like 20 Mutual's who like we like each other's posts, but not really like my close, like friends are like face to face.

Olivia 49:57

So who's in your lesbian community right now?

Jenna 50:03

I feel like there's a couple of my friends who like are a little bit thinking about being lesbian but the Oh like one of my closest like lesbian friends is my friend Carolina. Yeah, she like just reached it like just recently but like I'd say like little bit of last year was she like a little bit more comfortable saying she's a lesbian? Because before she was also by but yeah, I think she's like really special to my heart. I'm seeing her tomorrow.

Olivia 50:35

So are you saying that you're mostly meeting lesbians at punk shows and other music?

Jenna 50:45

Yeah, definitely.

Olivia 50:46

Are you on any of Lesbian dating apps?

Jenna 50:49

I am on hinge. Yeah.

Olivia 50:51

What's it like dating as a young lesbian? As an 19 year old?

Jenna 50:55

It is hard, I think. Cuz I feel like I was also on Yubo I don't know if you know what that is.

Olivia 51:02

I know what Yubo is!

Jenna 51:03

Yeah, so you've all I think also was like a big factor into me just being comfortable like dating women and like dating other lesbians. So like, it is hard because it just feels like you have all over again. And like I hated being on viewbot. But I think it is nice because I have like seen other also like, like lesbians of color on hinge and like punk lesbians of color on hinge, which is cool. But it is it's hard because it just feels like I'm texting someone online and I'm never going to meet them in person. So yeah, I don't really like it.

Olivia 51:42

So have you felt any or experienced any isolation or disconnection from the broader queer community in any way?

Jenna 51:53

I'd say yeah, like, especially like, whenever I go to big, like gay events, like, even like pride, like a big Pride Parade, like in June like it's there's so much just like, sis, like white gay men and like, obviously, everything I feel like is pandered towards them. Because that's the only like group that like the rest of society can comprehend as being queer. So it is weird. And being non binary and being a lesbian. I feel like there's not a lot of spaces that are just for us. And that feels like it's made for us and like, catered to us. So there's like that disconnection for me there

Olivia 52:39

If you're any lesbian spaces now, are you noticing any specific subcultures?

Jenna 52:44

Uh, for me, it is definitely the punk community. I feel like punk music. Yeah, punk music itself is just, it feels made for us. Like, we just have so much anger and so much emotion that like, it just makes sense that like, this is the biggest community for us there.

Olivia 53:01

Are you making punk music?

Jenna 53:04

I want to like I write a little bit of music. I don't think it's super punk though. Like, what I would consider punk. But I want to make more music that's like that.

Olivia 53:17

What was your first visit to a lesbian related place or event? Like?

Jenna 53:22

I guess like, pride, like I went to pride when I was 14 in high school with some of my friends.

Olivia 53:29

2014 New York City Pride?

Jenna 53:32

No, was 2017 Pride.

Olivia 53:35

2017. Yeah. Pride in New York City.

Jenna 53:38

Yeah.

Olivia 53:38

Okay.

Jenna 53:39

So like, I remember I went to the Youth Pride one, which was mostly just other like people my age, but going to the like, the parade for the first time. 14 was like, super, super life changing. I identified as by the time so I had like, my by flag, but like, seeing other like women there and like other career women there. And like, I remember like crewmen like yelling at me when I was waving my flag. Like, it was just like, very tiny experience. But like, at the time being 14 Like that was life changing. And I was like, wow, like, I this is okay. And like, something that I could celebrate and it was really nice for me

Olivia 54:27

What does identifying as a lesbian mean to you?

Jenna 54:31

It's hard question question. Um, I feel like identifying as a lesbian. It's just like a giant middle finger to like, all of heteronormativity because it's so it is really hard, I think identifying as lesbian in the current world we live in, but it is getting easier, but there's just so much like, again, I keep saying about heteronormativity where it's just it's so hard to Like, be a lesbian in certain spaces. But I feel like when you identify as a lesbian, it's kind of just like putting an importance on yourself. And like, I don't know, it's just a hard question.

Olivia 55:15

It's a pretty hard yeah, it's a big question. We can come back to it to want to think about it more. But what does lesbian community mean to you, I know that you're a young lesbian, coming into your lesbianism into your lesbian

has worked for a little bit now. So I know thinking about lesbian community can feel kind of nebulous. Especially because I don't really know if you have that many lesbian friends that you're very close to, or close lesbian community that you're involved in. So what does lesbian community mean to you?

Jenna 55:52

Um, I do like, I think the new at like the tiny lesbian community have is my, my friend Karolina and her other friend Melanie, who I'm not sure as a lesbian, but she's queer. But like, I remembered like this very specific memory of like, literally last summer, we were like watching A League of Their Own in my bedroom. And it just like, it just felt so safe. Like, where we could just say like anything, and just joke about anything. And kind of, I feel like lesbian community. Like for me, it's just the safeness and also like, just, like detached from like, everything like toxic and for me like whatever I'm whenever I was with them, it was kind of just like, there's no men here. There's no no like, this awful vascular with like toxic masculinity or like, male gaze that are put on us. Like, it just felt so safe that like I could say anything.

Olivia 56:51

What lesbian spaces do you wish existed?

Jenna 56:57

I want there to be like a bigger, like, queer punk community. I think. It is like getting bigger now. But I feel like it is a lot of it's very inaccessible to people. I mean, I feel like a lot of punk music. I mean, punk music is like, supposed to be underground. And it's supposed to be like, very local, but I feel like if it wasn't for social media, or like bands who were like constantly posting all the time, like, do people find it? So like, I wish, like people can find more of like this queer POC like punk community because it's a big deal. And I feel like it would change a lot of people's lives.

Olivia 57:37

Why do you think it would change people's lives?

Jenna 57:39

I feel like just, especially with the combination of queer and POC like, and punk. Like, it just all makes sense. Like, it fits all of those three categories, like fit together so perfectly. And like, I feel like if it was more accessible to people, and if people knew about it, like, they would just feel connected to it as much as I am.

Olivia 57:59

What feels inaccessible about the scene right now?

Jenna 58:02

Um, I mean, it's been like a problem for years within the punk community that it's mostly for, like aggressive white dudes who think the world is against them. And it's like, no, it's not. I don't know why you think you're making the greatest punk music ever when you're a straight white dude. But I think yeah, that reason, and the punk community itself is very scary. Like, as much as I love it. Like, it was hard for me to get into like when I was 16. Because there are people who are like you're a poser, you know, you only listen to this band or these bands. But that's also why I love like queer POC punk bands because they don't care if you listen to MCR like you're still you're still like as punk as you could be. If you've listened to Paramore at 12 Like

Olivia 58:50

what does lesbian Joy mean to you? When are you happiest as a lesbian?

Jenna 58:55

Um, other lesbians like, I feel like sharing joy with each other. And just feeling that sense of safeness and community is when I feel that joy the most.

Olivia 59:08

Is there anything you want to talk about before we stop the recording?

Jenna 59:12

Um, I think I wanted to talk about this more, but like, I didn't realize like also, the fandomness of like, in middle school also influenced my gender so much. Like I remember like, watching Sherlock or like watching Voltron. Like, I remember like looking at those, like very, maybe unproportional ideal, like unproportional and unrealistic depictions of masculinity but like they were still there and like really important for me. And like, especially like reading fanfic, with, like men that were written by women was like, Yeah, this is this is how I see my gender and like, how I can kind of connect to something other than being female, and maybe even just like connecting to this certain type of masculinity that is written by like queer people and like maybe even other lesbians.

Olivia 1:00:11

Would you identify as masc?

Jenna 1:00:13

Yeah, I'd say. Like, I'd say yeah, like, I'm like, in terms of being non binary, I am a little bit more like transmasculine.

Olivia 1:00:25

When you're dating, like when you're dating as a young as a young lesbian, would you say that you are involved in like, the Butch femme? Like, online wars are like the masc for masc? Femme for femme conversations?

Jenna 1:00:46

I feel like Luckily, most of the like online communities that I've been in haven't been like hostile like that. But if anything, I feel like they're, like more accepting of like, like being a masc lesbian for other masc lesbians.

Olivia 1:01:00

So you're masc4masc?

Jenna 1:01:01

Um, I feel like I don't not really masc4masc like, I'm open for anything.

Olivia 1:01:07

Okay

Jenna 1:01:07

But I feel Yeah, like a lot of the communities I interact with are like safe for like, I think any type of like presentation like that.

Olivia 1:01:18

Anything else? You want to expand on the fanfic gender thing more?

Jenna 1:01:24

fanfic gender. Like, there was something else to talk about gender. I think the only thing I can mention, like last semester, I was in like a creative writing class. And we had to write a paper about like, I think it was a good time you experience discrimination. And I wrote like, a whole like eight page narrative about being non binary. And like, that was like, really big for me, because like, I had only come out as non binary that can senior year. And then freshman year college, like, I got to write a whole paper about it. And like, I basically like, dissected, like, down from like, when I was like a kid to like, till now to like what I was experiencing. And like, I think one of the, like, bad experiences I was talking about, like my professor, like, I was talking about, like, just like bathrooms and stuff. And he was I was like, there are no like gender neutral bathrooms, like in this building on campus. And he was like, Oh, really, and it was only in the business building of my school, which didn't make sense because no business major is gonna be some fight airy. And it just was like, it was like, in real time, like, I was like, sitting right next to him. Or he was like, Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. This is like a problem on our campus. And I'm like, Yeah, but yeah, I think that's, that's all I can think about right now.

Olivia 1:02:53

Okay, well, thank you very much. Thank you.