



SOCIAL MEDIA & INFORMAL LEARNING

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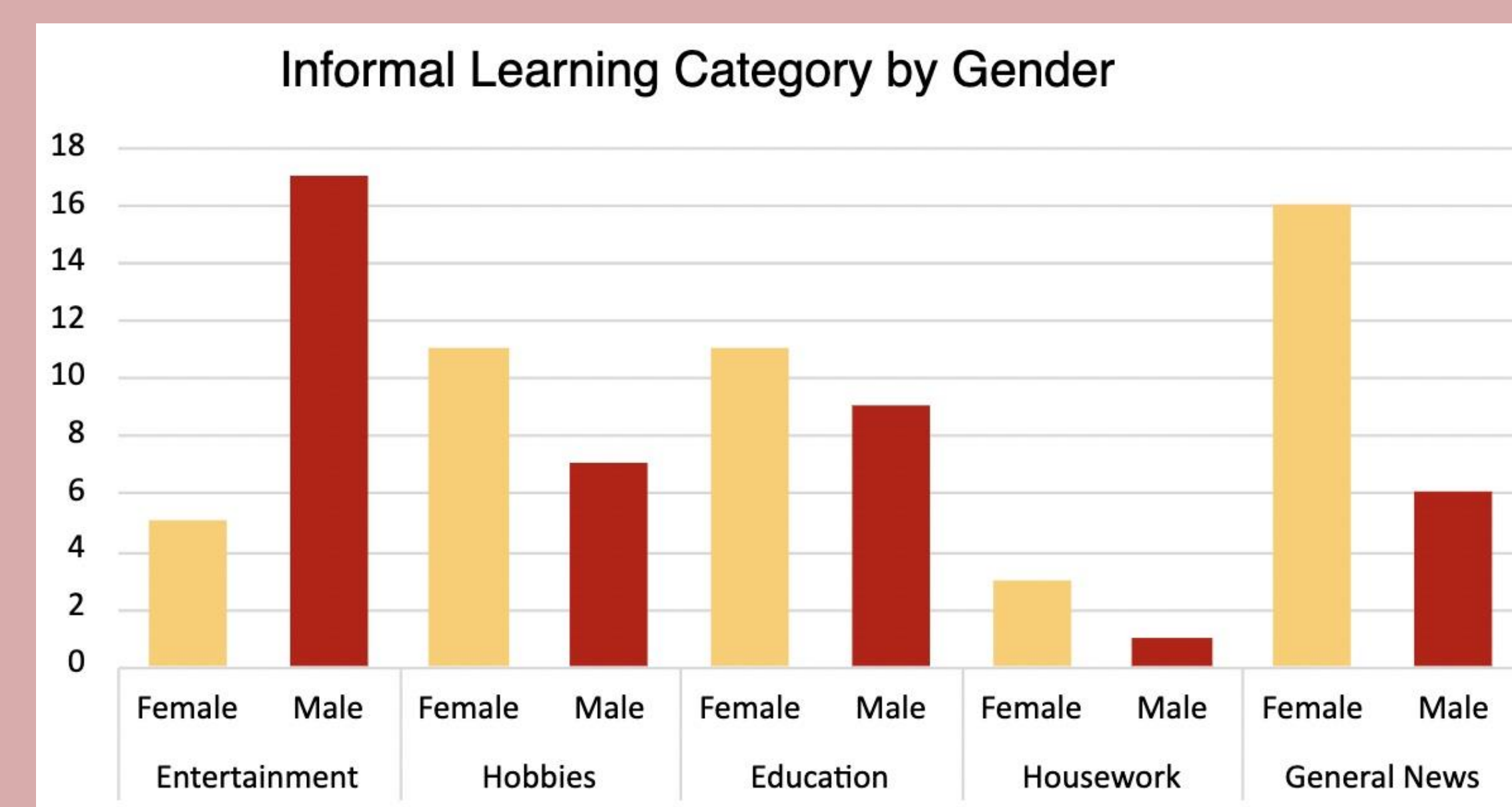
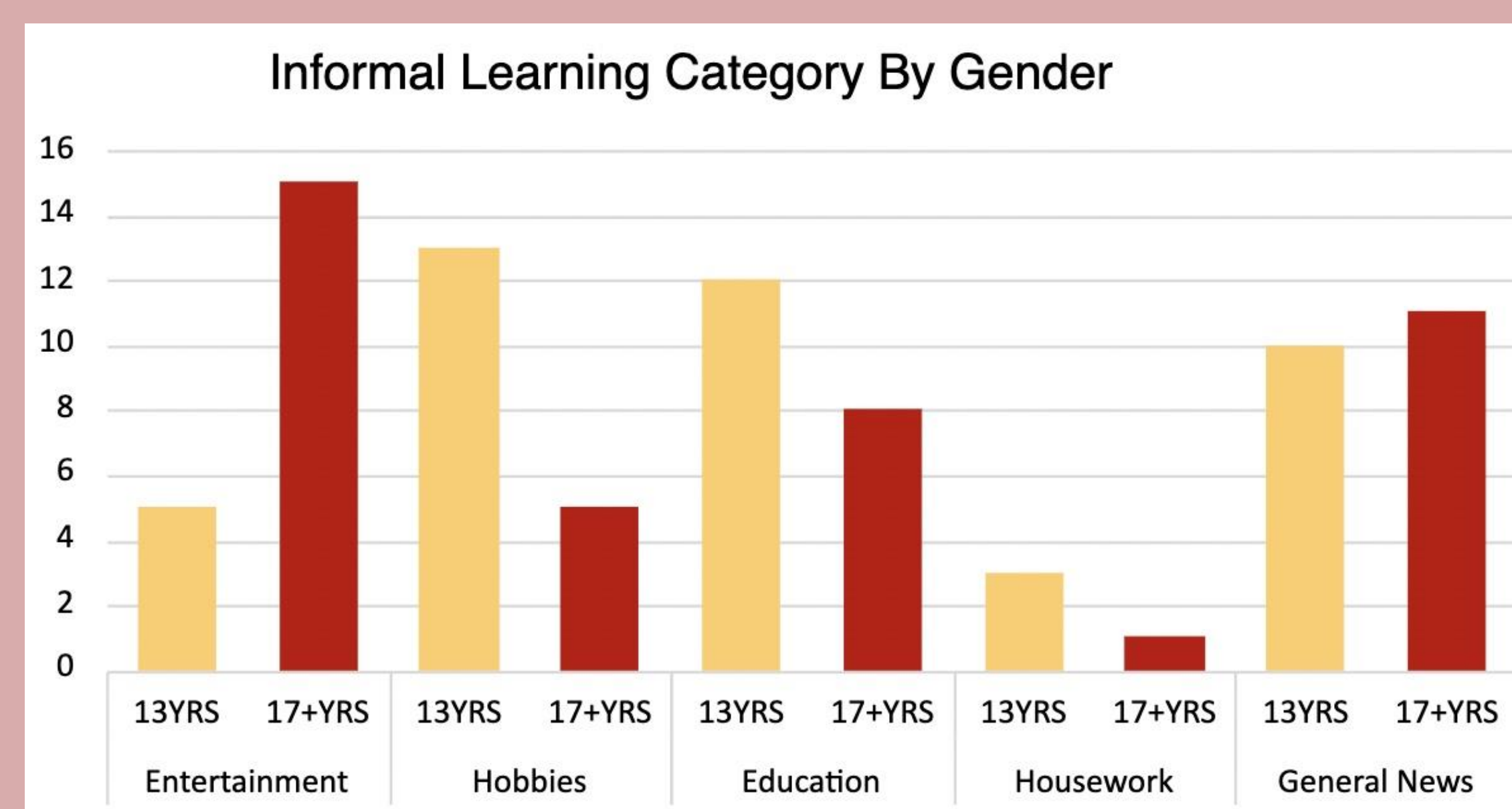
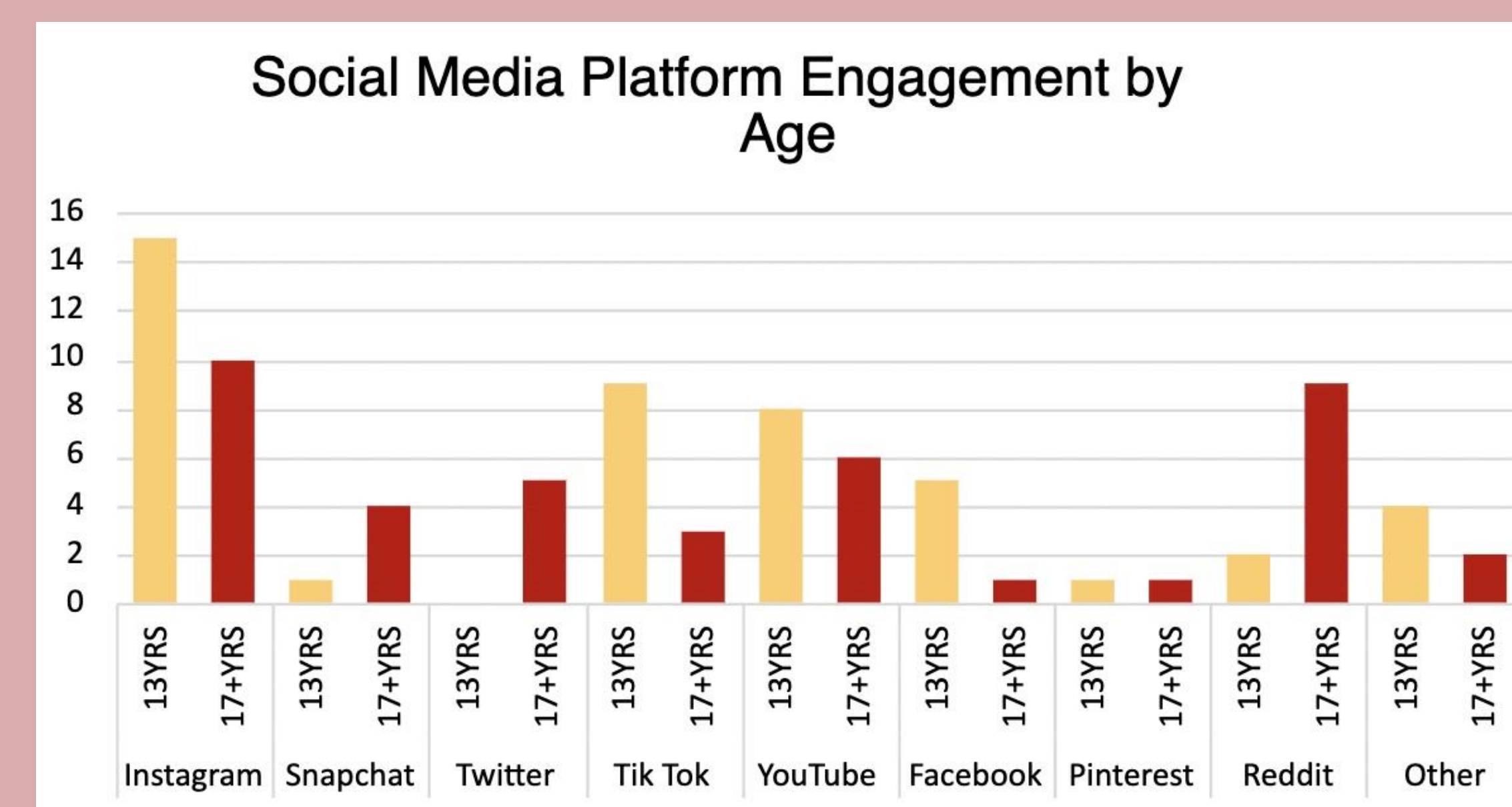
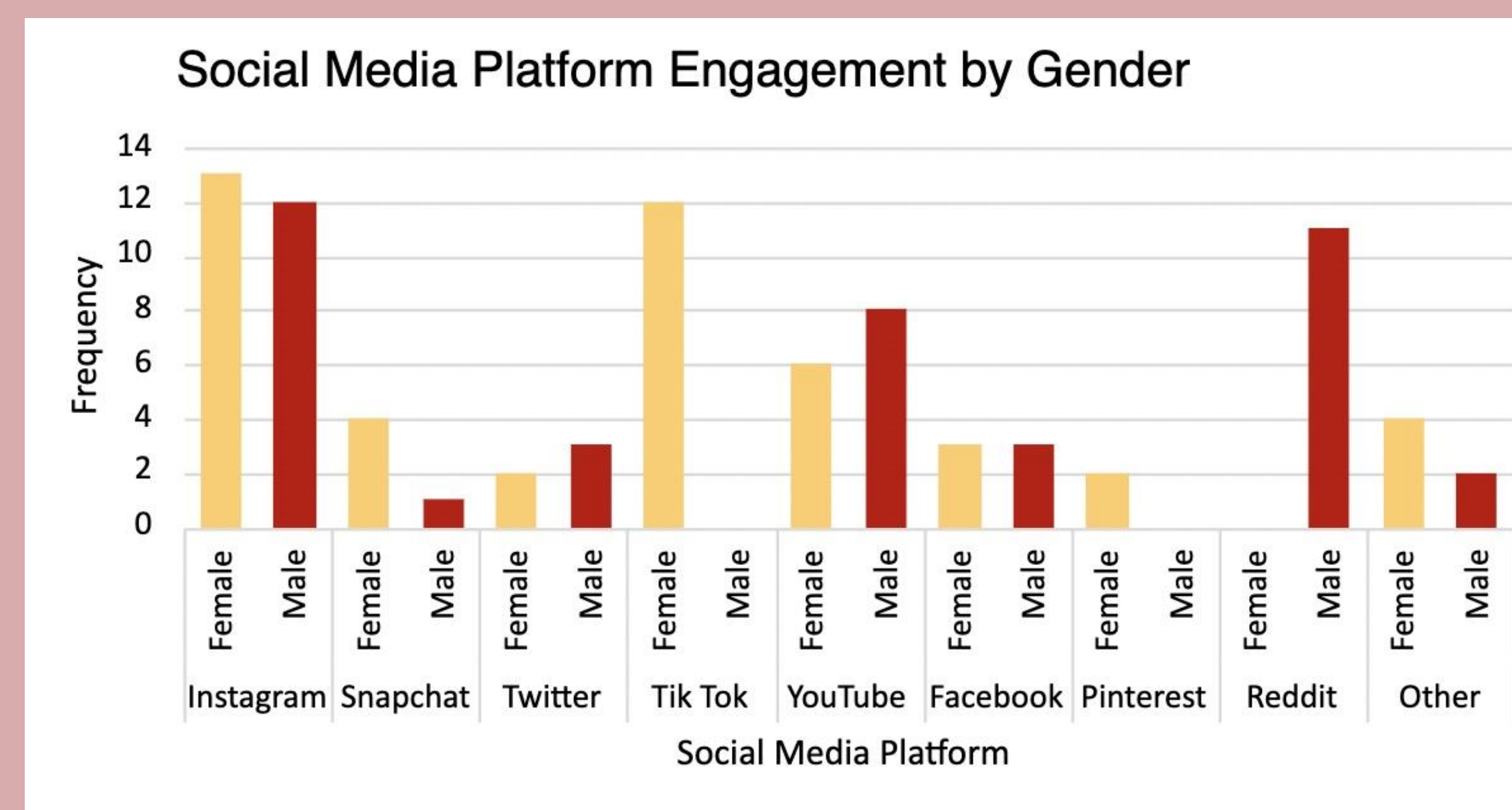
INTRODUCTION:

Current understanding in the field of education has come to realize the importance of out-of-school learning on students. Out of school learning can come from external sources, but is often self-directed, with a curriculum chosen specifically by the individual. This self-directed learning, also called informal learning, can vary in its setting and domain; in person and online. Due to an influx of students learning online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the engagement of informal learning, amongst students, is at an all-time high. The purpose of this study is to identify what social media platforms are used to facilitate informal learning, and analyze the information gained from doing so.

METHODOLOGY:

In the summer of 2020 and 2021, students were asked to describe their social media use, school preferences and situations, social life, and extracurriculars in a semi-structured interview. Next, these interviews were recorded and transcribed, from which our team was able to code and process the data. In our study, we identified, from the interviews, students who were interested / participating in learning through an online, social media setting (a nontraditional setting where informal learning might occur). Next, we selected a population size of four (two male, two female, ages 13 and 17+ equally) and codified both the information sought/gained and the social media platform used. We then performed a content analysis of the data to identify what information was most sought after and through which platform that information was found.

DATA:



REFERENCES:

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- Greenhow, C., & Lewin, C. (n.d.). *Social Media and education: Reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning*. Social media and education: reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17439884.2015.1064954?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

RESULTS:

There is a significant portion of participants that expressed interest in informal learning (of various methods), and there was a particular focus on conducting this learning through social media. While the entire data pool has not been collected, several categories have already formed. These categories of informal information found on social media platforms are 1) Covid-19 & General News; 2) Hobbies & Pastimes; 3) Cooking, Cleaning, Housework; 4) Education & Enrichment; and 5) Fun & Entertainment. The social media most used for informal learning ranks as the following: Instagram (25), YouTube (14), Tik Tok (12), and Reddit (11). The informal information sought by students during the Covid-19 on social media has been seen by this study. The importance of self-directed informal learning is incredibly relevant when discussing ideas of education during an isolated time such as a pandemic. When we couple this with the social media tools already in-hand by many, the possibilities for this seem just on the horizon. These results are strictly observations that will be continued with future data coding for conclusions and correlations to be made.

CONCLUSION:

These results are preliminary findings in a larger project; therefore, farther conclusions will be reached with a larger sample. In the future, studies testing the impact of informal learning through one specific social media platform, like YouTube, should be examined. As the platform with a seemingly important influence on the education of students informally, further research should be done into how this platform is effective at doing this. Overall, this topic has many future possibilities, and the extent to which it can be researched is just beginning to be seen.