

Theological Coherence



Theological Coherence of Church of the Nazarene Youth
Pastors in the United States with the Articles of Faith

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Introduction



- Theological coherence
 - Importance
 - Significance
 - Connection

Context & Background



- 954 Nazarene youth pastors in United States.
- Degree of agreement with Articles of Faith as indicator of theological coherence.

Statement of the Problem



Little was known about the degree of agreement 954 Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States had with the Articles of Faith.

Purpose of Research



- Degree of agreement
- Perceived relevance
- Strategic engagement
- Strengthen theological coherence

Literature Review



- Youth ministry as critical part of the mission of the church. Youth called to take part in every practice of Christian ministry (Dean, Clark, & Rahn, 2001).
- Youth ministry is first and foremost a theological task (Root, 2015).
- Decline in evangelicals due to increased biblical illiteracy and inclusive theology (Barna, 2001).

Literature Review



- Many youth that have grown up in the church have surprising views of what it means to be a Christian (Powell & Griffin, 2011).
- Youth pastors spent too much time on programming issues and too little time on theological issues (Arzola, 2008).
- Religions thrive because of clearly articulated beliefs (Gallagher & Newton, 2009).

Literature Review



- Millennials not expected to adhere to static set of doctrines and practices (Blomberg, 2006).
- Millennials view own conscience as moral authority over God's law (Farrell, 2011).
- No educational or credentialing requirement for Church of the Nazarene youth pastors (Church of the Nazarene, 2013).

Research Question 1



What is the degree of agreement with the Articles of Faith of Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States?

Research Question 2



What differences in agreement exist as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

Research Question 3



How does the youth pastor view the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry?

Research Question 4



What differences in agreement exist with the role of the Articles of Faith in local church youth ministry as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

Research Question 5



Based on the degrees of agreement, and view of the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry, what recommendations may be made to the Church of the Nazarene for developing theological coherence with the Articles of Faith in youth pastors?



Research Design



- Survey instrument created and pilot tested
- Degree of agreement with 52 mutually exclusive statements comprising the 16 Articles of Faith
- Previous familiarity
- Importance of knowing, teaching and including
- Six-point Likert scale (*1 strongly disagree – 6 strongly agree*)

Research Design cont.



- Qualitative data collection
- Anonymous and confidential
- Electronic distribution
- Four weekly invitations to all youth pastors

Data Collection



- Church of the Nazarene
- United States
- 954 population
- No limitation based on employment or credentialing status
- Electronic submissions
- Research department
- 324 sample

Participant Summary



- Male (77%)
- White/Caucasian (93%)
- In first marriage (79%)
- Full-time (60%)
- Nazarene college/university educated (59%)
- Church of the Nazarene member for 16+ years (60%)
- Ordained (47%) or in process (45%)

Analytical Methods



- Dependent Variable: Degree of agreement
- Independent Variables:
 - Education (some college or less, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree)
 - Credentialing status (no plans or local license, district license, ordained)
 - Years member of the Church of the Nazarene (5 or less, 6-15, 16 or more)
- Data treated as interval/ratio due to 15 or more orderings (Salkind 2012)

Analytical Methods



- Descriptive Statistics
 - Means, Variance, and Standard Deviations
 - Histograms
- One-way ANOVAs
- Tukey post hoc
- Qualitative content analysis

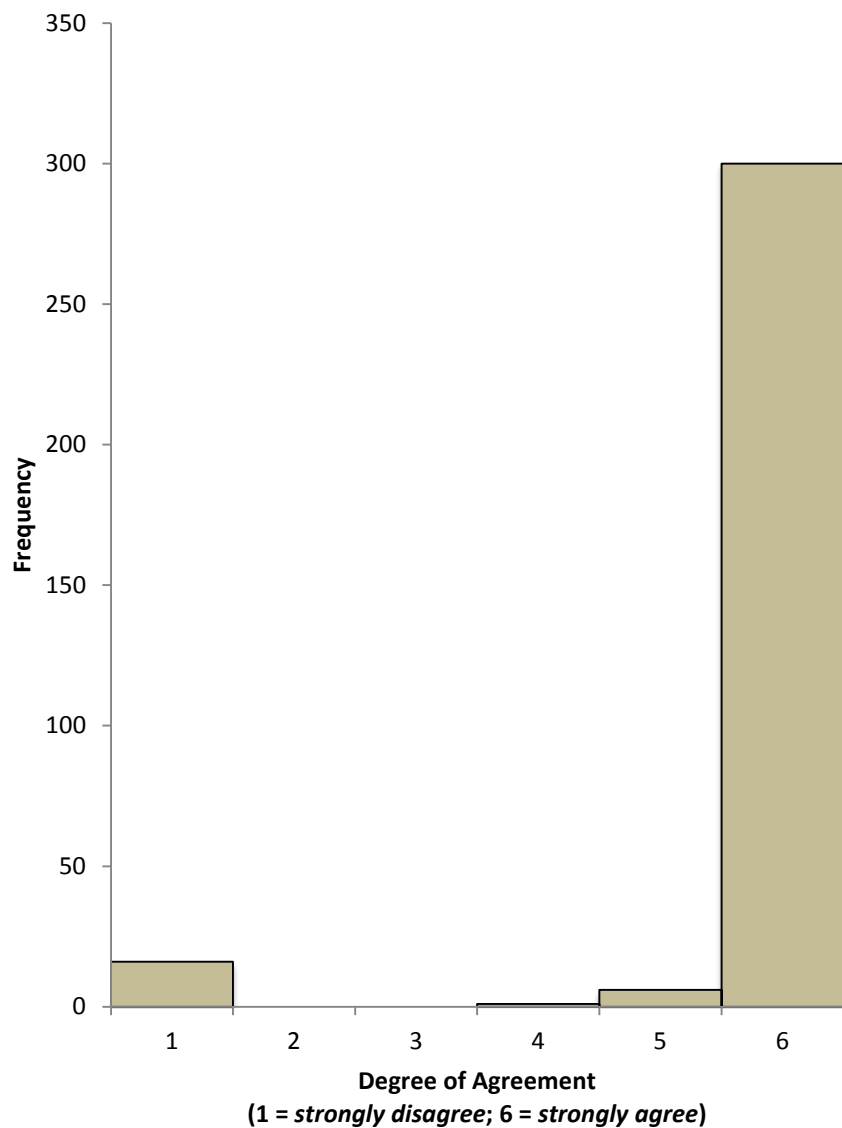
Findings – RQ1



What is the degree of agreement with the Articles of Faith of Church of the Nazarene youth pastors in the United States?

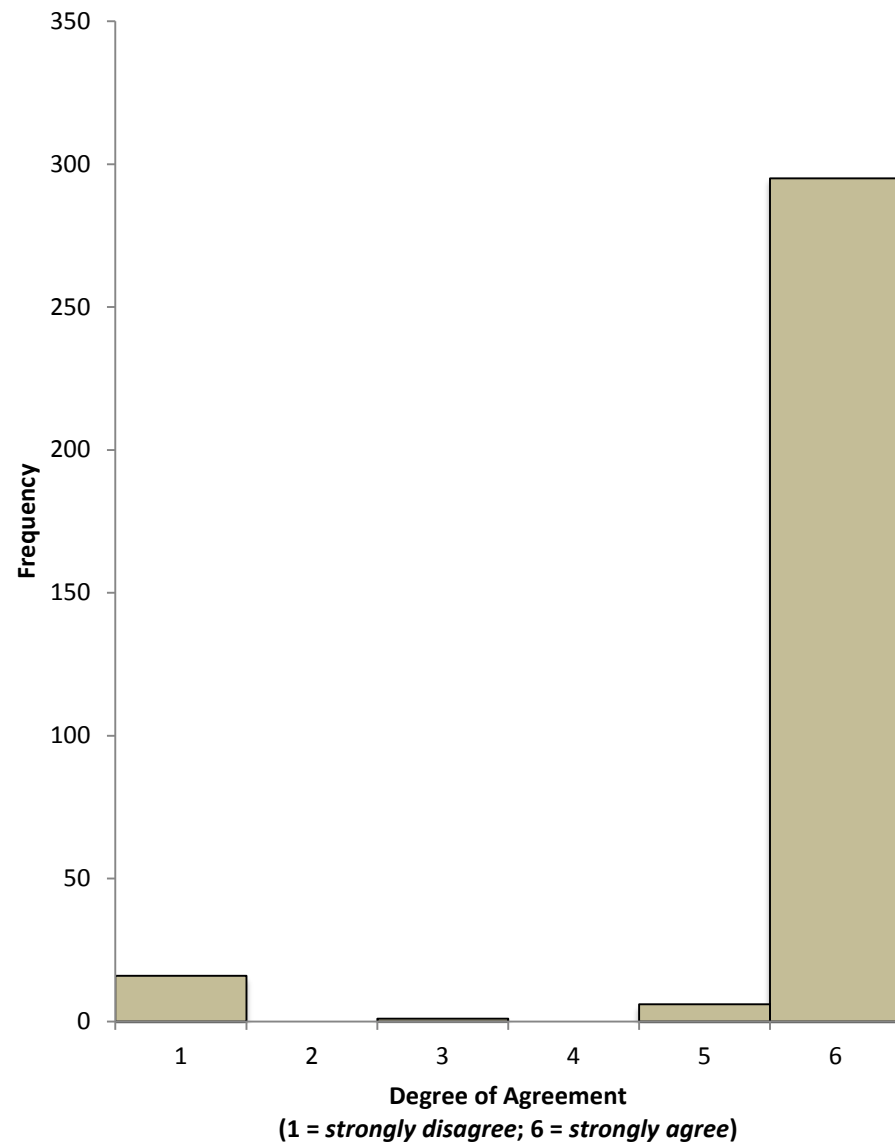
- Average mean response of 5.56 (*mostly agree to strongly agree*)
- Average range of means: .43
- None lower than *mostly agree* response
- Qualitative content analysis for language improvement and theological clarity

Figure 1: Statement 1



■ Statement 1: I believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; that He only is God, holy in nature, attributes, and purpose.

Figure 2: Statement 2



■ Statement 2: The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Findings - RQ2



What differences in agreement exist as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

- Education – no statistical significance
 $F(2,320) = 1.08, p = .34$
- Credentialing – no statistical significance
 $F(2,265) = .020, p = .98$
- Years Member – no statistical significance
 $F(2,264) = .756, p = .47$

Findings - RQ3



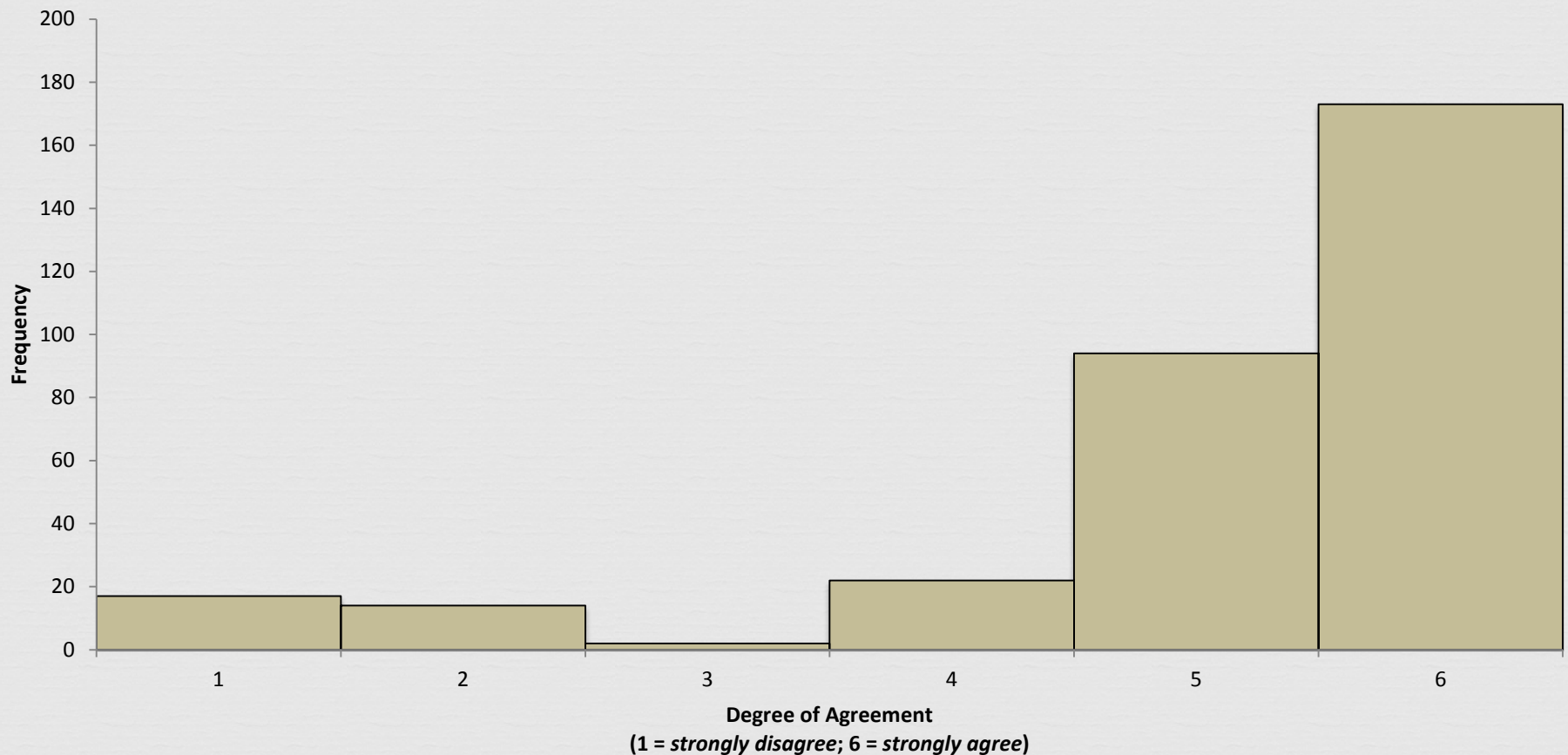
How does the youth pastor view the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry?

- ❧ 54. A Nazarene youth pastor should know the Articles of Faith in order to serve in the local church. [comment]
- ❧ 55. A Nazarene youth pastor should teach the Articles of Faith to youth in the local church. [comment]
- ❧ 56. The Articles of Faith should be included in youth church membership class instruction. [comment]

Importance of Knowing – 5.11

(mostly agree to strongly agree)

Figure 54: Youth Pastor Knowledge

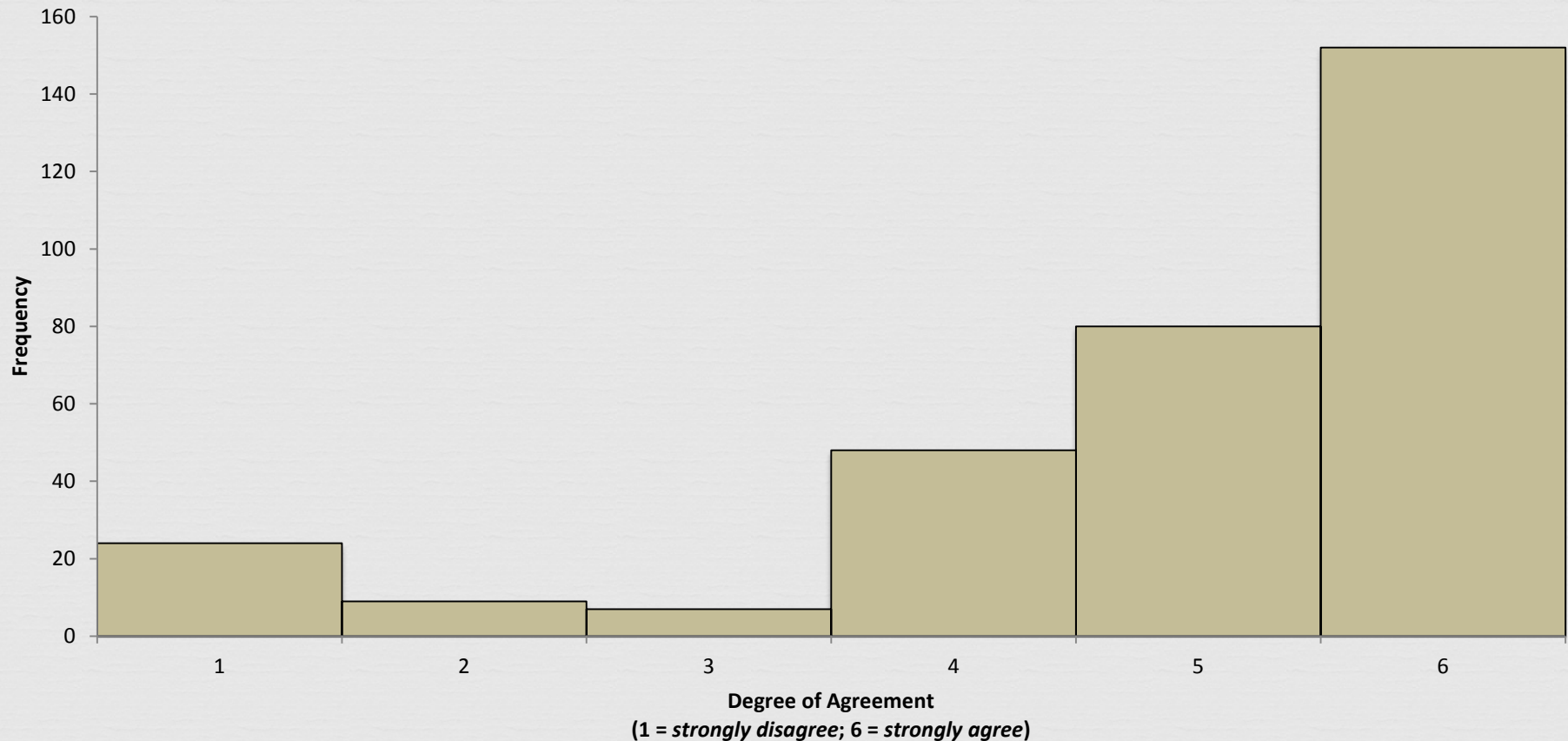


■ A youth pastor should know the Articles of Faith in order to serve in a local Nazarene church.

Importance of Teaching – 4.9

(somewhat agree to mostly agree)

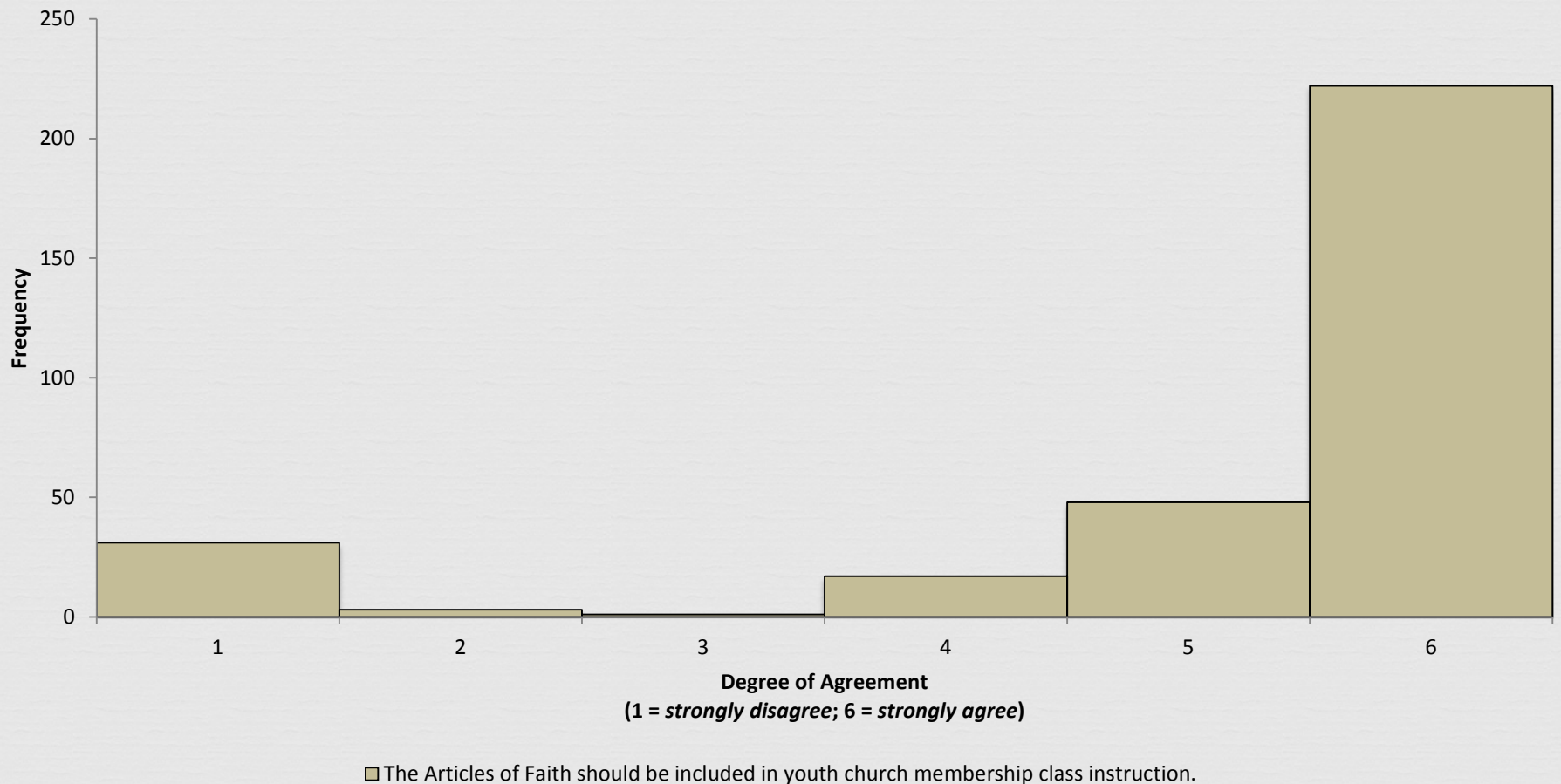
Figure 55: Youth Pastor Instruction in Local Church



□ A youth pastor should teach the Articles of Faith to youth in a local Nazarene church.

Importance of Including – 5.22 (*mostly agree to strongly agree*)

Figure 56: Youth Pastor Instruction in Youth Church Membership Class



Findings - RQ4

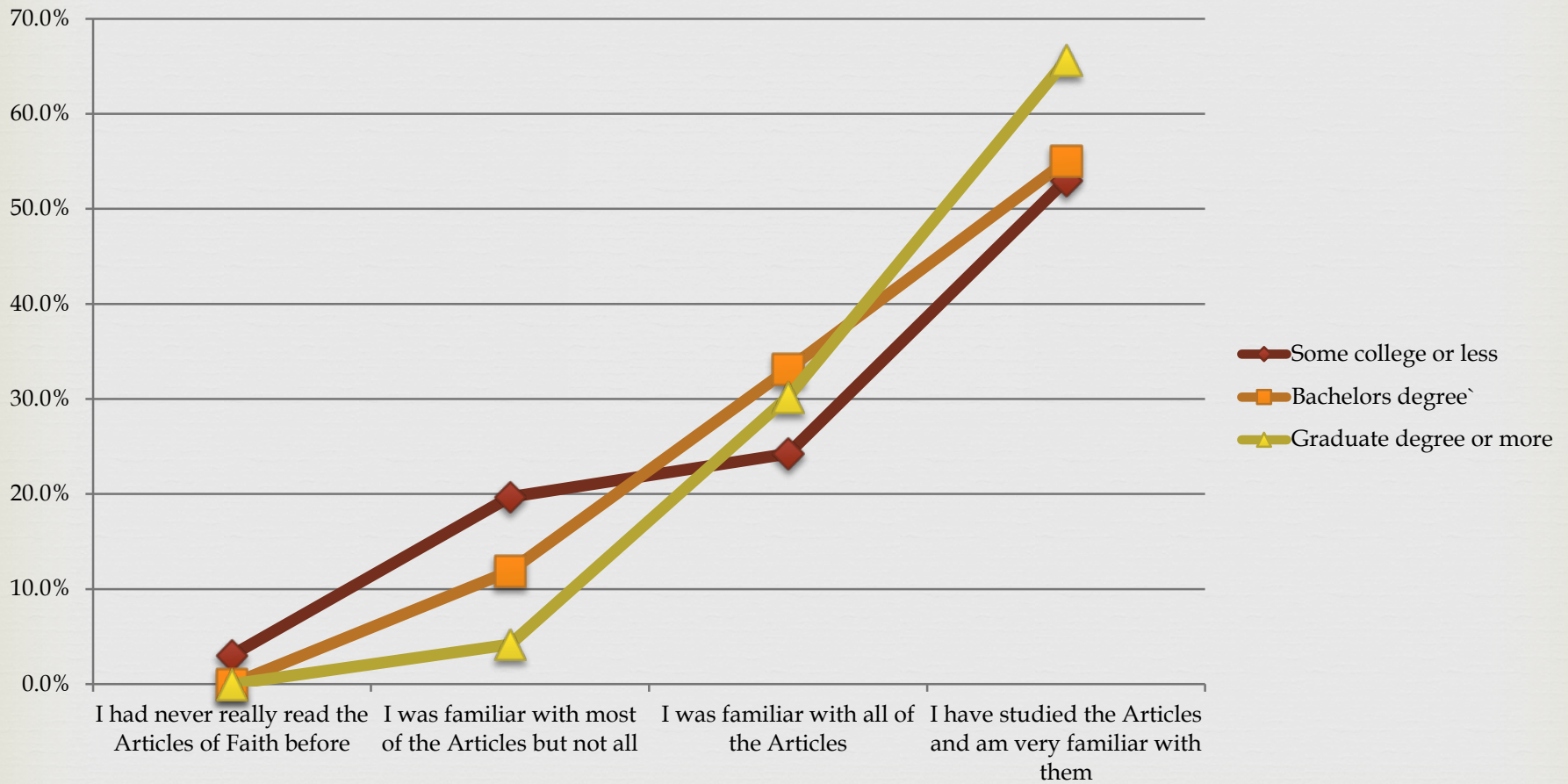


What differences in agreement exist with the role of the Articles of Faith in local church youth ministry as a factor of youth pastor characteristics?

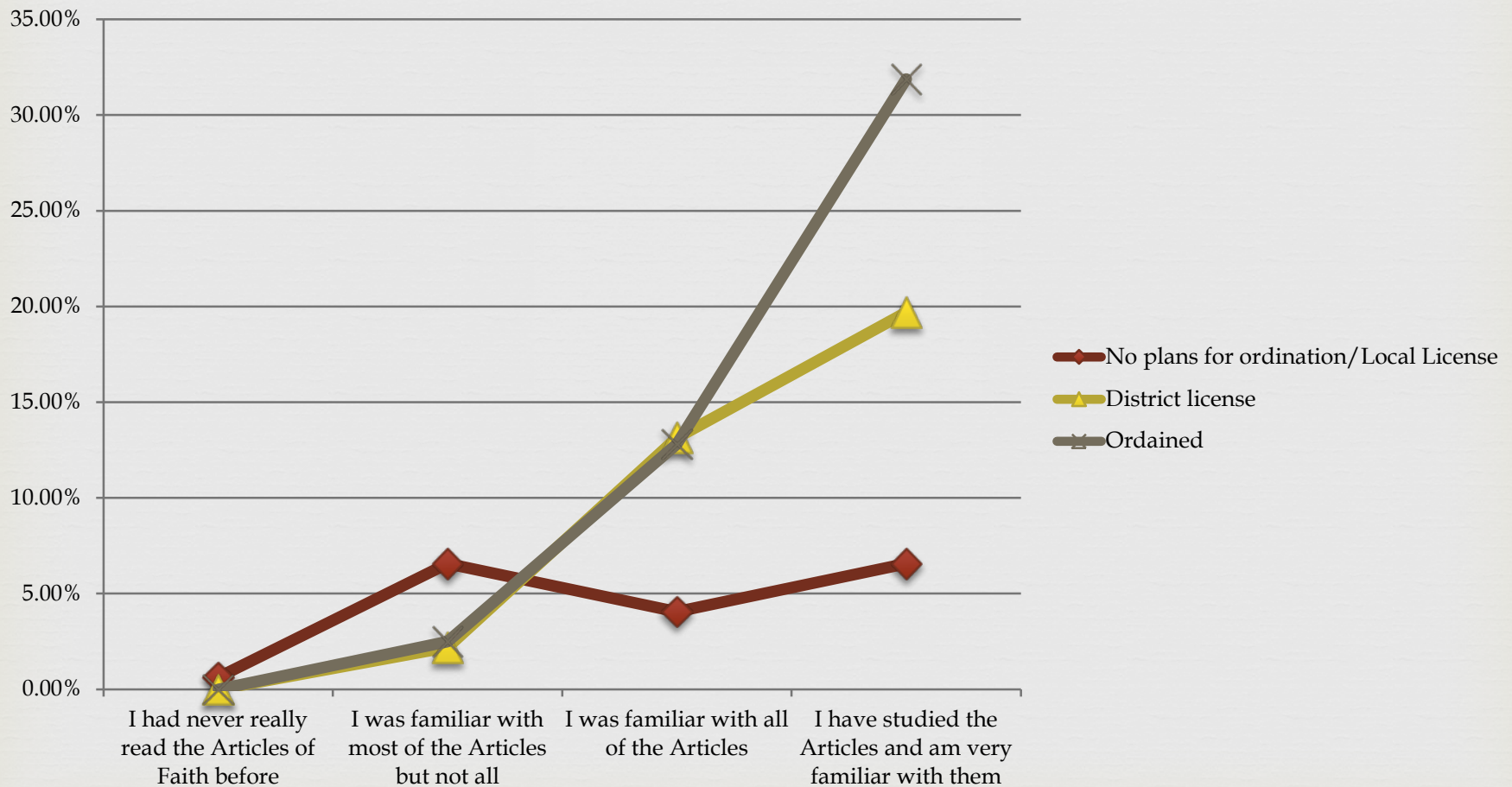
Knowing	Education	Credentialing	Years Member
Teaching	Education	Credentialing	Years Member
Including	Education	Credentialing	Years Member

No statistical significance found for any

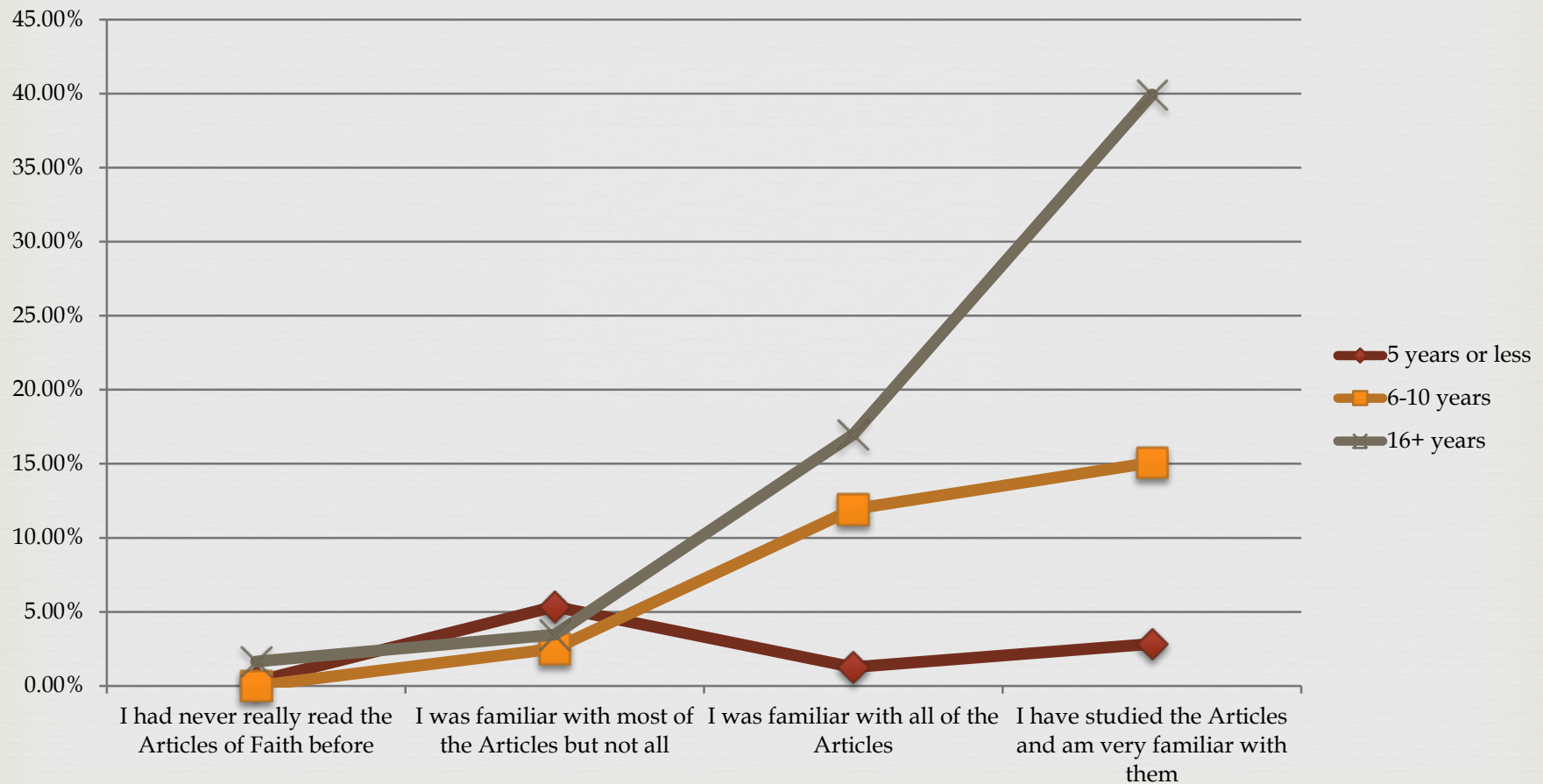
Familiarity–Education: $p = .01$



Familiarity–Credentialing: $p = .00$



Familiarity–Years Member: $p = .00$



Findings RQ5



Based on the degrees of agreement, and view of the role of the Articles of Faith in youth ministry, what recommendations may be made to the Church of the Nazarene for developing theological coherence with the Articles of Faith in youth pastors?

- Affirmation of youth pastors
- Increase familiarity
- Recognize education, credentialing process, and membership as opportunities
- Develop resources for preaching and teaching

Conclusions



- High degree of agreement exists
- Update language in Articles of Faith
- Educate on language usage
- Resources needed to support Articles of Faith
- Theological coherence within reach

Implications



- Youth pastors as opportunity to teach and preach Articles of Faith
- Denominational leaders should seek opportunities to build awareness and familiarity with Articles of Faith

Recommendations



- Expand study to other United States Church of the Nazarene pastors
- Expand study to youth leaders worldwide
- Strategic incorporation of Articles of Faith in pastoral development
- Update language in Articles of Faith or educate as to usage

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Limitations



- Heightened focus on theological coherence in higher education
- Development of *Nazarene Essentials* resource
- Confidential and anonymous participation
- Invitation from Director of Nazarene Youth International
- Only United States youth pastors