The Confirmation Project Team
Princeton Theological Seminary, May 2014
The Confirmation Project Team
PrincetonTheological Seminary, May 2016
The Confirmation Project Team
Princeton Theological Seminary, February 2017
Qualitative Research
24 Congregational Visits

Five Denominations:
• Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 6
• United Methodist Church: 5
• Presbyterian Church (USA): 5
• Episcopal: 5
• African Methodist Episcopal: 3

Congregational Size:
Small (50-125): 8
Medium (230-300): 5
Large (900-20,000): 5
Camps: 6
Quantitative Research
6777 Survey Respondents representing 2000 congregations

- Clergy: 2358
- Student: 2087
- Volunteer: 786
- Youth Minister/Worker: 747
- Parent not directly involved: 679
- Other Leader/Church Worker: 120
## Size of Confirmation Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>ELCA (n=505)</th>
<th>PC (n=248)</th>
<th>Episc. (n=319)</th>
<th>UMC (n=678)</th>
<th>AME (n=40)</th>
<th>TOTAL N=1790</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average # students</td>
<td><strong>19.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.19</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.76</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.48</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median # students</td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Insights
The Confirmation Project
Key Insights
The Confirmation Project

• Time for faith risk-taking
• Mentoring Relationships
• Connected Parents
• Strong Leadership
• Camps and Retreats
• Integrated into Congregational Life
The Confirmation Project

and

Confirmation Work in Europe
# Comparison of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st study: 7 countries</td>
<td>5 denominations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd study: 9 countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st study: 467,195 potential</td>
<td>170,000 + potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confirmands</td>
<td>confirmands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language translation necessary</td>
<td>denominational translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>necessary “Confirmation and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equivalent Practices”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Comparison of Research Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2007 Study:</strong></td>
<td><strong>2014-2016 Study:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t0 - leaders</td>
<td>t0 - phone interviews - ministers 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t1 - confirmands, workers, leaders</td>
<td>t0 - focus group - AME seminarians 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t2 - confirmands, workers, leaders, parents</td>
<td>t1 - confirmands, parents, leaders (fall 2014 - spring 2015 &amp; fall 2015 - spring 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012, 2013, 2015 Longitudinal Study:</strong></td>
<td>t2 - confirmands (summer 2015 &amp; summer 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t1 - confirmands, workers, volunteers</td>
<td><strong>25% of t1 youth took t2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t2 - confirmands, workers, volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t3 - confirmands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| t1 - beginning of confirmation time |  |
| t2 - end of confirmation time |  |
| t3 - 2 years after confirmation |  |
Important Contextual Differences

- “there is a clear lacuna concerning youth and religion in Europe” (Schweitzer, 2015, 17)
  - Youth and Religion is getting significant attention and $$$ in the US
  - “confirmation is the largest educational program of most Protestant Churches in Europe” (Schweitzer, 2015, 17)
  - Confirmation fits within a larger ecology of faith formation in the US

- Their “far reaching aim” is “to improve the practice of confirmation work.” (Schweitzer, 2015, 18)

- The aim of confirmation in the US is connected making disciples of Jesus Christ, however, there is a lack of agreement as to what this entails even within a congregation
General US Findings

- American confirmands are “Highly Devoted”
- History of congregational participation
- Confirmands “Like” church
How do youth participating in confirmation compare with American youth generally?
Devotion of American Youth

All Teens (NSYR, 2003)

- Lowest: 34%
- Minimal: 25%
- Moderate: 30%
- Highest: 11%

Confirmation Project

- Lowest: 2%
- Minimal: 11%
- Moderate: 59%
- Highest: 28%
National Study of Youth and Religion vs. The Confirmation Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All US Teens (NSYR, 2003)</th>
<th>Confirmation Project Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowest</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitude toward Christian Faith and Church

Question 14: How would you describe your attitude towards…?
- Average Likert scores are given on a scale of 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>the Christian Faith in General</th>
<th>my congregation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELCA</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>4.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCUSA</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AME</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belonging

• Strong sense of belonging
• Likely due, in part, to past participation in congregational life…
Beliefs

Question 26: My beliefs are the same as…
Average Likert scores are given on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

- One or both of my parents: 4.23
- My congregation: 4.15
- My denomination: 4.03
Beliefs

• Not Religious Rebels
  Youth report that their faith is more similar to their parents than their own congregation or denomination

• Mostly the “Regulars”
  Parents who have taken their kids to past church events (Sunday worship, Sunday school, youth ministry) are now signing their kids up for confirmation

• Participation is a Personal Choice
  YET, youth believe they are internally motivated

• Is this “all good”? 
  Is confirmation supposed to be for “insiders” only, or is this a moment for evangelism?

Is confirmation a time to “afflict the comfortable”? Or Raise hard questions?
Congregational Participation

Question 16 (all youth):
Before confirmation, or an equivalent practice, I attended...
Numbers indicate the percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers
Congregational Participation

• Nearly 85% of confirmands participate in worship services monthly
• How are confirmands acknowledged, leading, or included in worship?

• Over 80% attend a wedding, baptism, or funeral every year.
• Are these “life events” included in the content of what is covered in confirmation?
Questions 18-19 (ALL YOUTH): How often do you read the Bible AND How often do you pray?

- Numbers indicate percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers.

Table 18A, 19A
Camps and Retreats

Question 20 (ALL YOUTH): How many times in the last 5 years have you participated in the following activities?
Numbers indicate percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers.
Behaviors and Practices

• **Biblical Reading**
  Almost 45% of youth reported reading the Bible at least once a month by themselves.
  
  Is this good or bad?
  How might participating in confirmation affect this?

• **Prayer**
  Almost 85% of youth report praying at least once a month by themselves.
  
  Is this good or bad?
  How might participating in confirmation affect this?

• **Camps and Retreats**
  The age of 12 or 13 seems to be when youth experience their first “overnight away from home” experiences.
  
  How might leaders prepare families for “first time away”?
# Bible Reading and Prayer

- How central are Bible reading and prayer to the Christian life?
- What are ways to increase Bible reading in families?
- Are prayer and Bible reading practices that are taught about OR experienced during confirmation?
- What strategies do you have for teaching youth and families to pray or read the Bible?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Read the Bible by yourself</th>
<th>Read the Bible with your family</th>
<th>Read the Bible with friends</th>
<th>PRAY by yourself</th>
<th>PRAY with your family</th>
<th>PRAY with friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a year</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a month</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least once a week</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation for participation: European Youth

(1 = not applicable; 7 = very applicable)

(Schweitzer, 2015, 60)
Motivation for participation: American Youth

Chart 2C: Youth Motivation for Participating in CEP
(1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree)

The Confirmation Project
Comparison of Motivations and Expectations
United States 2013
Europe 2012

US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7
Combined total of highest categories (4 & 5 and 5, 6, &7, respectively).

- “To be strengthened in my faith”
  - US: 35
  - Europe: 87

- “To learn about God and faith”
  - US: 40
  - Europe: 87

- “To come to my own decision about faith and God”
  - US: 43
  - Europe: 81

- “To have a celebration on the day of my confirmation”
  - US: 25
  - Europe: 55
How interested are you in these topics? (1 = not interested; 7 = very interested)
(Schweitzer, 2015, 75/369)
How interested are you in these topics?
(1= not interested; 5= very interested)
(Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)
Comparison of Topics of Interest
United States 2013
Europe 2012

US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7
Combined total of highest categories.

- “God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit”
- “The Bible”
- "Justice and Responsibility for Others"
- "Love and Sexuality"
- "Death and Resurrection"
- “The meaning of life”
### Volunteering
(Schweitzer, 2015, 93-102, 369)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you think about the following statements? <em>(1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)</em></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EKDK</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>AT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>DE</td>
<td>EmK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KP01** I can imagine working in the church as a volunteer after confirmation time (for example in youth work or confirmation work).

**KP03** The church gives young people possibilities to become a voluntary worker.
Volunteering

Chart 5B: Volunteer Hours Required, by Denomination
This chart indicates the percentages of programs in each denomination requiring volunteer hours inside or outside the church. (Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)
Comparison on Volunteering

US:
“I can imagine myself volunteering in church during confirmation this year”
78% (t1) and 90% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree

“I can imagine myself volunteering outside of church during confirmation this year”
81% (t1) and 90% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree

European:
“I can imagine working as a volunteer in the church during confirmation time”
16% (t1) and 30% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree
Comparison on Volunteering

“I can imagine working as a volunteer in the church during confirmation time”

“Paired” t1 and t2 for US results, 329 respondents

US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7
Combined total of highest categories.
Beliefs t1
(Schweitzer, 2015, 42)
Beliefs t2
(Schweitzer, 2015, 43)
Beliefs

Chart 4C: Level of Agreement with Faith Statements (Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)

- **God loves all humans and care about each one of us**: 83% Strongly agree, 11% Somewhat agree
- **I believe in God**: 81% Strongly agree, 12% Somewhat agree
- **The Church does a lot of good things for people**: 78% Strongly agree, 18% Somewhat agree
- **If I have children, I want to have them baptized**: 75% Strongly agree, 14% Somewhat agree
- **Jesus died for my sins**: 73% Strongly agree, 16% Somewhat agree
- **Jesus is risen from the dead**: 73% Strongly agree, 16% Somewhat agree
- **I believe in the Trinity: Father, Son, HS**: 71% Strongly agree, 18% Somewhat agree
- **God created the world**: 71% Strongly agree, 17% Somewhat agree
- **Jesus’ death on the cross offers salvation**: 66% Strongly agree, 21% Somewhat agree
- **Scripture is the Word of God**: 62% Strongly agree, 24% Somewhat agree
- **There is resurrection life after death**: 57% Strongly agree, 25% Somewhat agree
- **Jesus is fully human and fully God**: 54% Strongly agree, 25% Somewhat agree
- **It is important for me to belong to my congregation**: 50% Strongly agree, 35% Somewhat agree
- **Faith in God helps me in difficult situations**: 50% Strongly agree, 31% Somewhat agree
- **Holy Spirit is active in my life**: 48% Strongly agree, 33% Somewhat agree
- **Jesus shows me who God is**: 48% Strongly agree, 30% Somewhat agree
- **After CEP, I anticipate participating in my congregation**: 45% Strongly agree, 33% Somewhat agree
- **I feel most connected to my congregation in**: 45% Strongly agree, 29% Somewhat agree
- **If I have personal problems, there is someone in my**: 40% Strongly agree, 25% Somewhat agree
- **I know what it means to be a Christian**: 35% Strongly agree, 42% Somewhat agree
- **Worship services are usually boring**: 10% Strongly agree, 26% Somewhat agree
- **I am unsure what I should believe**: 10% Strongly agree, 19% Somewhat agree
- **The Church does not have answers to questions**: 4% Strongly agree, 11% Somewhat agree
Comparison of Youth Responses to Questions About Beliefs

American youth participating in confirmation and equivalent practices self-report higher levels (almost double in some categories) of belief than European youth

“God loves all humans and cares about each one of us”

- Europe 2007: 59% (t2, 64%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 62% (t2 64%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 94% (t2 94%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Youth Responses to Questions About Beliefs

“God created the world”

- Europe 2007: 42% (t2, 41%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 38% (t2, 41%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 88% (t2, 87%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs

“There is [resurrection] life after death”

- Europe 2007: 50% (t2, 55%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 51% (t2, 55%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 82% (t2, 84%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs

“Jesus has [is] risen from the dead”

• Europe 2007: 45% (t2, 48%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
• Europe 2012: 44% (t2, 48%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
• US 2014/15: 89% (t2, 89%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs

“I believe in God”

- Europe 2007: 57% (t2, 61%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 58% (t2, 60%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 93% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs: General US Population

“Which statement comes the closest to expressing what you believe about God?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (I-AGE)</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-44</th>
<th>45-59</th>
<th>60-74</th>
<th>75 or older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't believe in God</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't believe in a personal God, but do believe in a Higher Power of some kind</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>138</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>66.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>296</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>668</td>
<td>1318</td>
<td>1349</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of Beliefs:
General European Population

“Do you believe in God?”
European Values Study 1999-2004,
Comparison of Beliefs

“I am insecure [unsure] about what I believe”

• Europe 2007: 33% (t2, 36%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
• Europe 2012: 35% (t2, 36%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
• US 2014/15: 29% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs

“Faith in God helps me in difficult situations”

- Europe 2007: 29% (t2, 34%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 37% (t2, 44%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 81% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale
Comparison of Beliefs

“I know what the Christian faith entails” European
“I know [what it means to be a Christian]” US

- Europe 2007: 49% (±2, 67%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 49% (±2, 63%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 77% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale