Aim of the research

- To investigate “objective knowledge of religion” in the Italian high school students
- To replicate “ten years after” a research performed by Aletti (1989) on a selected Northern Italy adolescent population
- To evaluate if changes occurred in Italian school have influenced the religious knowledge
Introduction (1)

- Remarkable changes have occurred in the last twenty years in the Italian religious customs (Italians are born Roman Catholic)
- The Italian society is becoming overall less religious

Introduction (2)

- As result of an agreement between Government and Church, in the high school some hours are devoted to teach religion and are directly managed by Catholic church
- Teachers of religion are trained and managed by church
Introduction (3)

- “Hours of Religion” is not a compulsory subject, and students (or their parents, for him) can decide to participate or not at lessons

Previous research (Aletti, 1989)

- Free verbal association (Deconchy)
- Questionnaire: “Prove oggettive di conoscenza religiosa [Objective knowledge of religion]”
- 608 high school students from Northern Italy (52% male)
Present research (1999)

- Questionnaire about parents’ religious attendance and parental style
- Questionnaire about religious customs of adolescents
- Questionnaire on “Objective knowledge of religion”

Questionnaire on “Objective knowledge of religion”

- Built by a psychologist, a theologian, a teacher of religion, an author of religious textbooks
- 80 items (3 possible choices) classified in 7 categories
Objective knowledge of religion

- Church, history and structure (13 items)
- Doctrine (14 items)
- Revelation sources (13 items)
- Liturgy (14 items)
- Morals (8 items)
- Salvation (9 items)
- Jesus Christ (9 items)

Church

- The first pope was... [St. Peter / St. Paul / Jesus]
- An encyclical is...
- The official language of [catholic] church is... [Italian / Latin / English]
- The orthodox church is born with...
- ...

...
Doctrine

- Resurrection at ends of time means that...
- The Trinity is composed by [1 / 2 / 3] people
- The Word is... (the Son / Trinity...)
- ...

Revelation sources

- In the Bible, a prophet is ...
- The word “Gospel”, means ...
- The Whit Sunday has been told by ...
- The synoptic gospels are ...
- ...

11

12
Liturgy

- The day of Jesus death is [Friday / Saturday / Sunday]
- The Holy Week precedes ...
- Sacraments are ... [5 / 7 / 9]
- The Holy Oil is used for ...
- ...

Morals

- The third commandment tells that ...
- Following the catholic morals:
  - miscarriage is [permitted / not permitted ...]
  - the pre-matrimonial sexual intercourses are ...
- ...

13

14
Salvation

- Following Jewish people, Easter is ...
- Moses received the law tables on ....
- Exodus is ...
- ...

Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ is born in...
- John the Baptist was...
- The name “Christ” is a Greek word meaning....
- Jesus teaches to apostles the prayer of ...
- ...

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16
Present research (1)

- 426 subjects (41% male) attending high school in Northern Italy
- Comparison between 1989 and 1999 data on each of seven “objective knowledge” categories
- For each categories we count the number of exact responses

Present research (2)

- Due to different number of items, in order to compare and understand category means, we present data like if each category had 10 items
- But we used raw data for analyses
4 factor Anova (all between):
- group (1989 vs. 1999)
- gender (male vs. female)
- school (technique vs. humanistic)
- age (14 vs. 16 vs. 18 yrs)

Results:
- all single factors + group by sex + group by school + group by school by age

Objective knowledge

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## Conclusions of comparison

- An overall sensible decrease in religious knowledge has been detected between 1989 and 1999 data
- In the later population, females seem to be no more religiously knowledgeable than males

To understand these results, we made other analyses on the “1999” sample data
To understand changes

We found significant difference. Among then:
- parents’ educational level [if parents are graduated, siblings know more]
- prayer [if subjects pray, know more]
- Sunday mass [if subjects participate, know more]

Last conclusions

- Hours of teaching religion at school are inadequate to transmit catholic culture
- The last is presently transmitted mostly by catechesis and religious customs