CONCLUSION

OBJECTIVES

1) To assess whether religious affiliation functions as an in-group marker in two adapted versions of the public goods game among Brazilian undergraduates; 2) to verify which variable (personality, religious practices and spirituality) better predicts generosity.

METHODS

Five hundred and thirty-five undergraduate students from different courses participated in one adapted version of the public goods game, either Game 1 (N=241) or Game 2 (N=294). In both games, subjects received three wafers and a small envelope labelled “Spontaneous Donation” in which to place the wafers they wanted to donate (Fig. 1). Subjects answered a religiosity questionnaire, the Brazilian version of the NEOPI-R and the Spiritual Transcendence Scale.

Four boxes (Fig. 2) were placed behind a folding screen, each with one of the following inscriptions: “Catholics”, “Neo-Pentecostals”, “Other Religions” or “Atheists”. The games consisted of three consecutive rounds with the following rules: (i) in each round, subjects could donate as many wafers as they wanted to any box by using the small envelope; (ii) by the end of the three rounds, all donated wafers were counted, and for each three wafers donated, the experimenter would add another wafer. The donations were made individually and anonymously.

CONCLUSIONS

As expected, subjects donated more when they received a direct benefit from their generosity (Game 1). In Game 2, which represents our generosity measure, Practicing Catholics, Neo-Pentecostals and Atheists donated more to the box representing their own group, suggesting that the name of the group worked as a clue to choose the box for donations.

When we added the five personality factors to the hierarchical linear regression analysis, the best predictor for total donations was, in addition to the type of game (1 or 2), the personality dimension related to generous behaviour. Religious practice and spirituality, when added to the model, did not increase the explanation power of the observed variance, suggesting that these two variables are not relevant in predicting generosity in the employed methodology. This result contradicts popular wisdom that religious people are more generous than those who do not believe in God(s), who would be more selfish (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2011). In our study, the religious affiliation, and therefore religious practice, is related to whom to be generous to and not to how much to be.