



# JORNADAS DE PSICOLOGIA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE AVEIRO

MÚLTIPLAS ÁREAS, DIFERENTES CONTEXTOS, UM SÓ OBJETIVO

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**ESTSP** | POLITÉCNICO  
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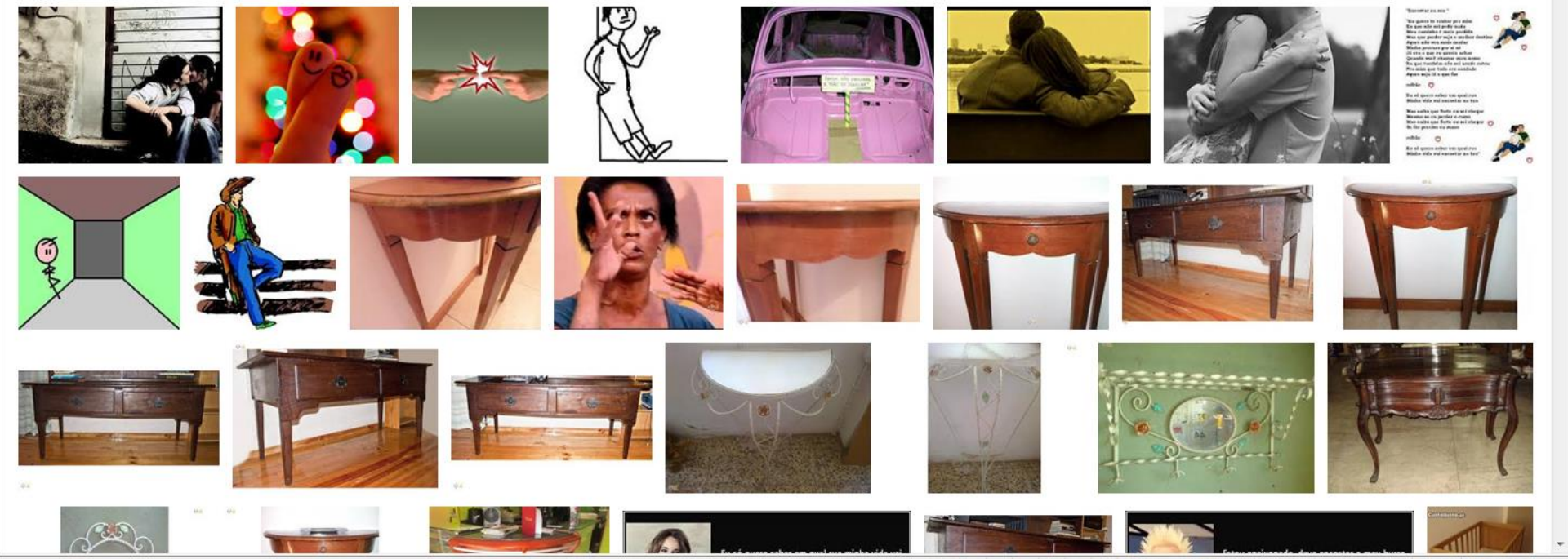
**U.** PORTO

**FEP** FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA  
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

# *Encosta-te a mim*

*Uma perspetiva (não tão) atual sobre  
a teoria da troca social nas  
organizações*

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# Social Exchange Theory

- “**Social exchange theory** is a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties. Social exchange theory posits that all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. The theory has roots in economics, psychology and sociology.”
- Yes, the Wikipedia.

*“There is no duty more  
indispensable than that of returning  
a kindness”*

*Cicero*

Social exchange theory (SET) is among the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behavior.

(Coprazano & Mitchell, 2005)

# SET: origins!

- **Homans**
  - Founder of social exchange theory.
  - Reinforcement contingencies from operant learning theory applied to social behavior.
- **Blau**
  - social structures have emergent properties not found in individual elements
  - Included the norm of reciprocity in the theory (derives from individual perception)
  - Social vs economic exchange!

# Social Exchange Theory

- Blau (1964) distinguishes social and economic exchange, where the nature of the economic exchange is usually an explicit and formal one, where each party fulfills specific obligations; social exchange, in contrast, involves unspecified obligations: **“favors that create and diffuse future obligations, not precisely specified ones, and the nature of the return cannot be bargained about but must be left to the discretion of the one who makes it”** (Blau, 1964: 93).

# Social Exchange Theory

- Thus, one party needs to trust the other to discharge future obligations (i.e. reciprocate) in the initial stages of the exchange and it is the regular discharge of obligations that promote trust in the relationship.

# The norm of reciprocity

- Gouldner (1960) made this process more explicit through his seminal work on the “norm of reciprocity”, stating that this norm implies two demands “

(1) people should help those who have helped them and

(2) people should not injure those who have helped them”

# The norm of reciprocity

- Gouldner (1960) argues that the strength of an obligation to repay is contingent upon the value of the benefit received. Benefits are more valued when
  - (a) the recipient is in greater need;
  - (b) the donor cannot afford to (but does) give the benefit;
  - (c) the donor provides the benefit in the absence of a motive of self interest; and
  - (d) the donor was not required to give the benefit. Therefore, highly valued benefits create a stronger obligation to reciprocate.

# SET's explanatory value has been felt in such diverse areas as

- Social power (Molm, Peterson, & Takahashi, 1999),
- Networks (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Cook, Molm, & Yamagishi, 1993),
- Board independence (Westphal & Zajac, 1997),
- Organizational justice (Konovsky, 2000),
- Psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995),
- Leadership (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997)
- (among others)

# SET: derivatives

- The norm of reciprocity plays an important role in the development of social exchange relationships by perpetuating the ongoing fulfillment of obligations and strengthening indebtedness
  - Psychological contract
  - Organizational Commitment
  - Organizational Justice
  - Organizational Trust
  - OCB
  - LMX

ETC

# A few examples of applied research

# More recently

- Gould-Williams & Davies (2005) used SET to predict HRM outcomes
  - evaluating the effects of HRM practices on employee attitudes and behaviors
  - results were consistent with social exchange theory supporting the proposition that positive exchanges result in reciprocal individual responses.
- These outcomes are consistent with recent government policy, which seeks to promote staff involvement in decision-making processes through best value reviews (DETR 1999; NafW 2000)

# More recently

- Lin & Huang (2010) proposed a theoretical KW-model from a personal and contextual perspectives in which contextual factors are subdivided into dimensions of rational choice, normative conformity, and affective bonding.
  - The results indicated that KW is influenced by trust and distributive justice in the environmental dimensions as well as team-related and personal outcome expectations.
  - However, group size, task visibility, procedural justice in environment dimension, and contribution self-efficacy did not have a significant impact on KW intention.

SET is a multi-field framework

e.g.

“Rules of social exchange: Game theory,  
individual differences and  
psychopathology”

# Tourism

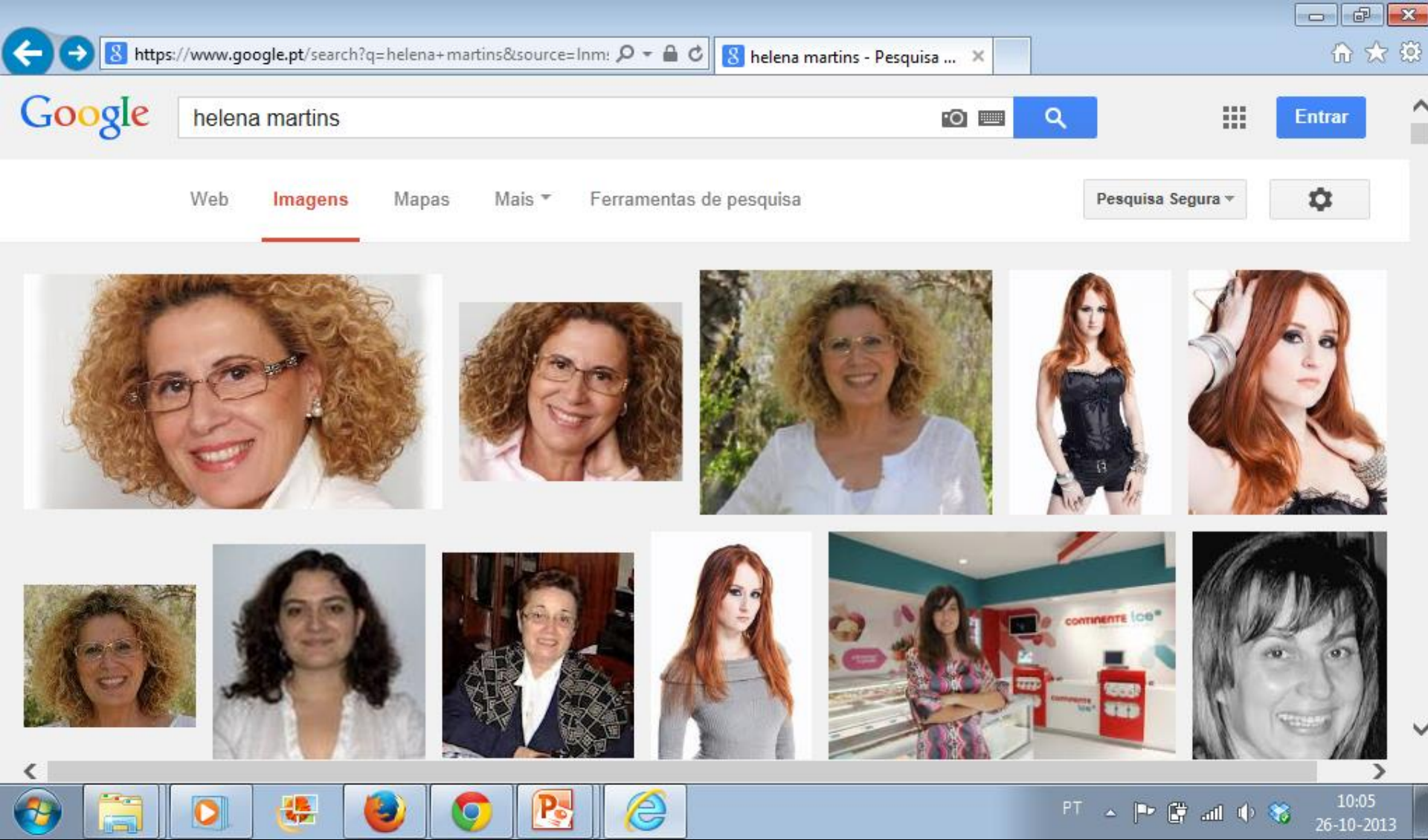
- Ward & Berno (2011) defended that demographic factors, including employment in the tourist industry and residence in a developing country, and perceived positive impacts of tourism predicted more favorable attitudes toward tourists; however, results also revealed that contact with tourists and low levels of perceived threats exerted incremental, positive influences on these attitudes.
  - Integrated Threat Theory and the contact hypothesis, and applying these to the novel context of tourism.
  - The results corroborated both the utility and limitations of social exchange theory.

# Distributor–supplier relationships

- Kingshott (2005) intended to establish the presence of psychological contracts and determine their interactive effects upon trust and commitment in distributor–supplier relationships within the motorized vehicle industry.
  - “Conclusive evidence of this has been provided through these findings, and in doing so a range of managerial implications within this context have been identified that have broader marketing consequences.”

# Romantic relationships (Wang, 2004)

- Social exchange theory is a useful way of approaching the way men and women behave in romantic relationships. It shows how economic terms of costs and rewards can be applied, focusing on the give-and-take aspects of interpersonal relationships.
- The three specific social exchange models that are most relevant to sexuality are equity theory, outcome-interdependence theory and investment model, and the interpersonal model of sexual satisfaction .
- Sexual intercourse can be viewed as a female commodity whose perceived value females seek to preserve by keeping the “price” high and the supply low. This explains why it is actually females who tend to maintain double standards for sexuality, in part by castigating fellow females who have many sexual partners. A woman’s virginity is viewed by society as more valuable than a man’s virginity.



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# References