



## **DIVERSITY: RECOGNITION OF THE DIFFÉRANCE OR TOLERATED DIFFERENCE? A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF MINING AND STEEL PROFESSIONALS**

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To comprehend diversity on the organizational context.

**Originality/gap/relevance/implications:** There are few critical studies on the subject, here grounded on the ideas of Derrida (2002) and on the theory of recognition of Honneth (2003). The comprehension of diversity is related to the construction of identity among individuals and refers to the concept of tolerance, enabling a discussion about recognition (or not) of differences.

**Key methodological aspects:** Qualitative research, performed in organizations on the segments of mining and steel mill. Data were collected by focal groups submitted to discourse analysis.

**Summary of key results:** It was found difficult to live with people of different groups. Diversity was also associated to difference and the topic recognition. It was evident that diversity should be managed in the organizational context, but the diversity that comes on the agenda of companies analyzed, including the HR practices, is the tolerable diversity.

**Key considerations/conclusions:** Minority groups still lack of recognition, prevailing the valorization of a group over the others. To recognize differences is a challenging matter, considering the distance established between reflexive processes and the corporate practice. Finally, it is pointed out the need to promote actions that aim the equality of opportunities of treatment to the several groups present in the organization.

## KEYWORDS

Diversity. Minority groups. Difference. Recognition. Tolerance.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to understand, question, ponder, and even stimulate changes of perception concerning the theme of diversity and its management in organizations. We also intend to ponder about the *status quo* of minority groups, herein understood as groups that are less valued socially and therefore more vulnerable in the organizational context. The initial idea was to demonstrate that the theme of organizational diversity conceals the extent of interdependence relationships, insofar as it tends to reinforce the supremacy of a group over another, which is rendered silent in organizational discourse. Hence, we start by searching for an approach that perceives diversity as difference, which lead us to the *Différance*,<sup>1</sup> a Derridian concept<sup>2</sup>, based upon which we have developed the research and this paper.

Since the 1980s, studies on the theme of diversity have been gradually gaining ground in academic discussions and becoming a part of the management of organizations. In general, the organizational framework seeks to understand the impact of diversity on organizational effectiveness. Functionalist studies predominate and are concerned with promoting diversity management for competitive advantage (Diniz, Carrieri, Gandra, & Bicalho, 2013; França & Lourenço, 2010; Hanashiro, 2008; Thomas, 1996).

There are challenges to define the concept of diversity, for it is characterized by its amplitude (it involves individual, social and relational issues) and by multidisciplinary. Furthermore, it is a phenomenon originated from a social construction (Hanashiro, 2008; Nkomo & Cox, 1998). According to authors, such as Cox and Smolinski (1994), Nkomo and Cox (1998), Hall (2012) and Silva (2012), diversity is closely related to identity. Cox and Smolinski (1994, p. 12) define diversity as the representation of persons from different identities belonging to a group within the same organizational social system.

It is necessary to emphasize the concept of identity relativity and its close relation with the culture and the identity patterns that are valued in this context. The concept of diversity is often the result of the dichotomous division between groups “where one sees itself differently from others, from certain dimensions (such as race, gender, ethnicity, and nationality); however, this occurs through the dimensions themselves, and the meaning and cultural value they attach to the

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term *Différance* refers to Derrida’s “concept”. So that readers do not think about the pedantry of the authors, in many instances we chose to use the term *Difference*, with a capital “D” and in italics, yet referring to Derrida’s “concept”.

<sup>2</sup> The Derrida’s concepts are dealt with on the section 2 of this paper.

group” (Pereira & Hanashiro, 2007, p. 3). Following a critical view, Silva (2012) and Hall (2012) believe that such binary reductionism limits a broader understanding of issues concerning diversity. For these authors, the identity must be understood as a multifaceted construct, complex and socially built, which occurs through the perceptions of the similarities and differences among individuals.

According to Souza (2012), the themes of equality, difference and identity have mingled with the theme of tolerance. The other is tolerated and recognized and that tolerance occurs both through aspects of human rights and in relation to what is economically valued in terms of knowledge, abilities, genders, ethnicities, etc.

For Souza (2012) and Bernardo (2005), tolerance is a term that opposes hospitality – a rather Derridian term – because it is linked to the unconditional acceptance of the *Difference*. For these authors, the increasing use of tolerance is a discursive and practical strategy to avoid discussing in the society the growing and existing difference and inequality in reality. Therefore, such use is far from accepting the unconditional Derridian *Difference* and fully hosting the others.

Besides this introduction, this paper follows to the section 2, which deals with the concept of difference in perspective Derrida (2002), and item 2.1, in which the theory of recognition under Honneth (2003) is presented. The methodology corresponds to section 3 and the conclusions are presented in the final section.

## 2 DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

The contemporary thinker Derrida is known for his deconstruction proposal and often referred to as the “philosopher of deconstruction” (Pedroso, 2010; Wolfreys, 2009). Yet, the denomination of “philosopher of difference” is also attributed to him.

Derrida (2002) criticizes the rigid structure of structuralism. His proposal is to think of an alternative analysis, in which the writing inserted in the structure. To this end, the author resorted to the word *deconstruction*. According to Pedroso (2010), various issues are incorporated under the aegis of deconstruction, such as philosophical, literary and political ones, breaking with binary relations and the hierarchical orders of a term over another.

Thus, deconstruction in the Derridian sense differs from the term that is the antonym for “construction”. Likewise, it is not used as a synonym for “destruction” either, since it is not intended to destroy anything, but rather to confer unusual structures and operations. The term refers to a procedure consisting of questioning and reorganizing discourses. It can be said that Derrida’s

deconstruction operates in the field of ambiguity and duality, refusing binary reductionism (inclusion/exclusion, presence/absence, good/evil), particular of Western metaphysics, regarded as logocentric and overbearing (Pedroso, 2010; Wolfreys, 2009).

In the Derridian deconstruction, there is no centrism whatsoever. By giving a prominent place to the margins, Derrida shakes the center of domination (Pedroso, 2010) and breaks with the centralized and closed structure, formulating a new one that is marked by its openness. To this end, the author used new signs and presented the terms *différence* and *différance*, only graphically distinguished by the letter “a” and hardly translated in their essence into other languages; The neographism of *Différance* is inaudible phonetically<sup>3</sup>, and intends to confer a connotation that meets the interlacement of different directions, a general system of economies, as a detour. The *Différance* refers to an order that resists against an opposition that is particular of philosophy: the sensible and the intelligible.

The *Différance* cannot be perceived strictly as a word or a concept. Semantically, it approaches the verb *differ* (considering its meanings in both Latin and also in Greek) and, therefore, it includes the meaning of temporalization and spacing, beyond the meaning of discernible, of not being identical, of being another one (Derrida, 1991).

According to Derrida’s ideas, there are no absolute truths. These are instead seen through a dual perspective, i.e., terms or expressions impregnated with duplicity, which herein refers not to the mandatory choice between one or another, but to the association of these, the one and the other. By focusing on margins or the *differences*, the movement of deconstruction by Derrida opened space for the creation of emerging studies, such as the recognition of minorities (Pedroso, 2010).

Derrida proposes the understanding of minority groups in the social context from a broader perspective while remaining able to simultaneously add the remaining groups and their emancipation movements (Derrida & Roudinesco, 2004). The idea is to dare to deconstruct the standards, what is defined as normal; the other must be seen unconditionally and not through our desire, through how we perceive the other. Derrida’s *Difference* incorporates in its scope the correspondence of a group not being identical to another, just to be another, highlighting its specificities. This absoluteness would oppose tolerance, which is implied when we use the words difference and diversity.

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<sup>3</sup> In French, the original language of the expression, the replacement of the letter “e” with the letter “a” is not noticeable in oral speech.

The theme of the other, particularly their specificities, will be conditioned to have a value in modernity. The other is accepted for their difference, being valued in modern society, and this is the very value we are referring to herein. Therefore, the difference with economic value (whether explicit or implicit) is now tolerated. The valuation of difference is guided by the desire to produce certain consensus and social order. The economic value produces a consensus of what should be accepted (or not) in terms of the difference, which, for Peeters (2013), would function as space for social legitimation and for certain consensual to accept this different and diverse other.

Contrary to the theme of tolerance, according to Souza (2012), the theme of hospitality would bring a sense of welcoming of the other in their *Difference* and their strangeness. For its part, the theme of tolerance would be a strategy used by modern discourses (especially of the late 20th century) to accept the other. However, such acceptance is calculated, conditioned, and (instrumentally) rationalized. The tolerance is measured while it values the difference. Therefore, tolerating is not unconditionally accepting diversity among us, but a conditioned hospitality instead, which seeks to accept calculated diversity and difference.

In this sense, the more the management of an organization works with the theme of diversity in terms of tolerance, the more recognition and legitimacy they will have in the social environment. Thus, we abandon herein the modern concept of the existence of a totality, universality, a (certain) order, and a tolerance. We seek an opportunity to see that social and organizational realities are always contaminated by every cultural and historical context and thus should be studied as unconditionally *Different*, heterogeneous and fragmented.

In the scope of the questions on diversity, it is important to mention that the thoughts of Derrida can expand these discussions, especially in the field of administration. It would be possible to understand the minority groups in the context of *Difference*. We emphasize that the proposal to study the diversity in the organizational context has remained for a long time outside the traditional studies in the field of organizational and behavioral studies, mainly under a critical and reflective approach. To this end, the following topic addresses the diversity, or rather, the various groups, in the light of the recognition theory.

## 2.1 DIVERSITY AND RECOGNITION THEORY

Belonging to a particular social group or category, we have a structuring and intrinsic part of an individual's identity. A better understanding of the diversity in the organizational context requires extensive analysis, for these issues impact such groups. Authors such as Lucas and Oberto (2010) and Mattos (2004)

point out to the importance of establishing a connection between the “minority groups” with issues involving ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, among others, which we choose to place herein under the aegis of the diversity. In this sense, Honneth (2007) highlights the need for individuals, or various social groups, to be accepted and respected in their *Difference*, which shows adherence to Derridian ideas.

Belonging to the so-called “the third generation of the Frankfurt School”, Honneth (2003, 2007), seeks to understand the development of the society in the context of social studies, having at its central axis the struggles for recognition. To formulate his theory, the author followed the path of Hegelian theory and its understanding of the ethical relationships that are established in society, understood as inter-subjective and necessary movements for the process of identification and recognition of individuals.

According to Honneth (2003), the full development of an individual’s identity occurs to the extent that such individual takes on the attitudes of his or her social group and becomes accepted and integrated into the collectivity. Individuals acquire the certainty of their social value and become confident about their own ability to contribute to the collective from the recognition of their social group and their inter-relationships.

The individual develops his individuation based on the multiple recognition relationships that take place within the everyday social relationships. The author describes three patterns of inter-subjective recognition: “love”, based on the relations of emotional dedication; “rights”, based on the relations of cognitive respect; and “solidarity”, based on the relations of social esteem (Honneth, 2003). The author elaborates a tripartite classification of the forms of recognition that are closely related to each other.

The term *love* used by Honneth (2003) comprises the primary relationships of childhood, established symbiotically in the family. These are typically constituted as those relationships established between parents and children and represent the first affective and emotional connections of the human being, the very axis of an individual’s later behavior success in establishing their autonomy and independence from others.

It is through the legal recognition that individuals acquire self-respect, upon recognizing themselves and realizing that they are also recognized by others as bearers of collective rights and obligations. That is, they feel able to have “voice” and participate on an equal basis in the process of democratic public debate (Honneth, 2003).

It is possible to notice that the recognition in the legal sphere can only be established through a historical process, which is the evolution of the consciousness of rights and the development of legislation. Therefore, it is present in moder-

nity, for before the acquisition of rights it remained restricted to certain social groups. It is in the interaction and integration of the community that the individual is perceived as having rights and obligations to the same extent, once the individual rights are no longer tied to the expectations attributed to their respective social roles (Honneth, 2003).

In the Honnethian approach, it is precisely in the legal sphere that the struggle for recognition shows more explicit conflicts, derived from the experience of disrespect. For it is precisely the logic of law and its assumption of equality between human beings that impute social respect in mutual recognition. In a society, the fact that individuals live without individual rights means that they have no respect and recognition from this society. That is, there is a social exclusion to the extent that their recognition is denied. This is what is observed in the historical background when analyzing some minority groups.

The third pattern of Honneth's classification (2003) refers to the sphere of social recognition, which the author called "solidarity". This type of recognition can only be implemented properly when there are already embedded values and ethical objectives inter-subjectively shared by the collective. For the reciprocity to exist, it is necessary that individuals also share the meanings of particular properties of each person's contribution capacity, i.e. how this individual contributes to achieving the goals of society. Therefore, it is in their particularity and difference that the recognition of social esteem is endorsed. The author also points out that the measurement of social "value" relates to the social and cultural patterns established in a given society.

If the legal recognition advocates equality among human beings, the recognition of solidarity is based on the social esteem (Honneth, 2003). In this sense, Saavedra and Sobottka (2012, p. 136) point out that in the "recognition of law, the general properties of human beings are placed in relief. In the case of social valorization, the properties that make the individual different from others are placed in relief, i.e., the properties of their *singularity*". We highlight herein the importance of the individual differences because the recognition occurs precisely because of the characteristics that are unique and singular in individuals. Therefore, the relationship of equality and *Difference* are fundamental, along with the affective recognition, so that human beings recognize themselves as such.

It should be emphasized, however, that modern societies and their cultures determine the criteria that validate and guide such recognition, such uniqueness, attributing a certain "value" to it. This value comes from groups that dominate the society and this domination is noticed when we observe the power relations in society, which are always asymmetrical in the Derridian sense. Souza (2012) also points out that in modern societies the predominant value is economic.



Therefore, the social recognition is related to the constant, asymmetric struggle (and usually symbolic) through which the various groups seek to increase the value of their respective capabilities. It can be observed herein a certain consistency when we talk about valued diversity, clear and economically tolerated. In the inter-subjective interaction of individuals in their respective group, a possibility is opened for a positive relationship (a value), for the acquisition of self-esteem and, as a result, for solidarity with their peers.

The idea of (inter-subjective) recognition and valorization of the capabilities and properties of other members of the group may cause individuals to change their relationship with themselves, to the extent that, aware of their experience of social esteem experience and social legitimacy, they come to recognize the achievements or abilities that are consensually valued by their group. It is noteworthy that this form of recognition of economic – the social esteem – relates to the possibility of success in the labor context and occurs through the acceptance (in the sense of tolerance) of the abilities and the lifestyle of the various groups. Honneth (2003) then replaces the expression *social esteem* for *self-realization*, which incorporates the feeling of self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect.

However, as important as understanding the basic forms of recognition is to understand the forms of disrespect, referred to as “forms of refused recognition”. Disrespect also takes place within the intersubjective perspective of relationships and generates vulnerability and fragmentation of the identity of subjects. In varying degrees, the recognition, whether denied or refused, will affectively disturb the relationship of the individuals with themselves, i.e., their identity, proportionately to the sphere of recognition to which it corresponds, whether this is self-confidence, self-respect or self-esteem (Honneth, 2003).

Concerning the topic of disrespect, we can turn to Derrida once again. The idea of tolerance is related to the idea of disrespect. The other is tolerated with a certain respect. There is no unconditional acceptance of the respect for others or for their *Difference*. The tolerance and the consensus of what is acceptable, what is respectable and what should be valued, bring along the theme of a permitted respect, i.e., an almost disrespect. Still in the sense of searching for respect or less disrespect, Honneth (2007) considers that the current demands of different social groups when claiming for equal treatment, “identity policies” and processes of redistribution of material goods are characterized above all as struggles for recognition, which often are confined to the symbolic level; these will be socio-culturally legitimized by the societies, which will determine the value of the activities, attributes and contributions to be socially tolerated for each of these groups.

Consonant to the Honnethian ideas, Bendassolli (2012, p. 38) believes that the recognition at the workplace is a challenge in the subject-labor relationship.

The author calls into question its importance in the construction of the personal identity process and the relevance of the other (and the collective) in the value of subjects and of what they carry out at work. The author also points out that in the language used in the field of human resources (HR), recognition is considered a “key element of the subject’s relationship with labor and organization, with direct implications for the motivational processes and the perceptions of the appreciation of the worker and the justice”. The HR practices associate the recognition of subjects with being in a job, the retribution by the organization, the tolerable recognition and the contributions made by individuals. The author also points out that the practices of these professionals and their forms of integration in the workplace are quite heterogeneous, but within the limits of a certain type of manageable heterogeneity.

HR policies and practices are contextualized and reflect the socially constructed patterns, i.e., patterns that are tolerable, manageable, consensual and legitimate. For Derrida (2002), these standards and classifications insert asymmetrical power relations: those who comply with “the norm” and those different from it.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative, as Denzin and Lincoln (2004) regard as a field related to cultural and interpretive studies, marked by different historical times and that embraces the existence of various topics, concepts, assumptions, methods, and approaches.

The research corpus was designed based on two traditional economic sectors in the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, which are part of a single productive chain: mining and steel. They both stand out for their importance in the state economy. In 2010, Minas Gerais accounted for 35.3% of the national steel production (Dieese, 2012) and, in 2012, the state accounted for 53.2% of the country’s ore production (Ibram, 2012).

The research was carried out in four organizations,<sup>4</sup> and nine focus groups (FGs) took part in the corpus elaboration. This technique of multidisciplinary use, often adopted in qualitative research in social and human sciences (Gondim, 2003), seeks to collect data through the interaction of the participants on a theme suggested by the researcher. The sample was defined considering the availability and accessibility of participants, a trend that Gondim (2003) calls as “convenience sampling”.

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<sup>4</sup> Two of the operating in the mining segment and the other two in the steel industry.

To enrich the discussion, we chose to compose heterogeneous FGs, with persons from different areas, positions and formations. Among them, the presence of analysts and managers who worked on the HR, administrative and technical fields stood out.

The FG sessions were recorded and posteriorly transcribed. The collected data were analyzed in the light of discourse analysis (DA). This method helps to unravel the symbols that are subtly embedded in the discourses (Carrieri, Leitda-Silva, Souza, & Pimentel, 2006; Saraiva, Carrieri, Pimentel, & Souza-Ricardo, 2009). Our epistemological option was the French discourse analysis (Carrieri *et al.*, 2006; Faria, 2009; Pêcheux, 1997), which highlights the explicit and implicit elements, the way things are said and unsaid, and whatever is rendered silent.

For the purposes of discourse analysis, the focus group (FG) is considered as a unit of analysis (Gondim, 2003). Hence, the analysis approaches the entire group, instead of its members individually. Each focus group is represented by an acronym according to the segment to which it belongs: M (mining) and S (steel), followed by a number that identifies it, which ensures the confidentiality of the groups and companies participating in this research.

Once the conversations by the FGs were transcribed, many topics were designed and grouped into semantic paths. The themes were: difference, diversity, recognition and HR practices. We seek, therefore, to highlight which discursive fragments were the most interesting in the sense of bringing about polyphony. The discourse analysis is described in the following section.

### 3.1 ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE MEANING OF THE WORD *DIFFERENCE* IN MANAGEMENT

The difference needs to be addressed by management, that is, demonstrated in the analyzed fragments. The difference under the aegis of diversity as shown by authors, such as Diniz *et al.* (2013), Hanashiro (2008) and Thomas (1996), is part of the agenda of the managers surveyed.

(01)<sup>5</sup> When you talk about **difference**, I cannot think of difference without having a **reference**. I think everything derives from a reference. Something becomes different from the moment when it **goes against a reference** you have, or what that reference turns to be. For example, let's say, **subjugated**, that is, that reference that you used to have **becomes obsolete**, you start to have a new one, and your difference becomes a reference. [...] the difference is nothing more nor less than

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<sup>5</sup> The of use dashes in the discourse fragments intends to indicate the speech of different people in a given group.

an **opposite idea**, or one that **opposes any given reference** in any aspect – The **difference** only exists from **comparison**. (GF – S<sub>3</sub>)

The excerpt 01 explicitly shows that in order to define the word “difference” it is necessary to contextualize and compare, to show some “references”. This leads us to think of the details provided to the professional profiles that each company tends to adopt, or the desired profile in the selection process, which often seek to maintain homogeneity. The themes of consensus and tolerance emerge implicitly with the theme of reference, which becomes a reference profile that does not contradict the intended equality and legitimacy. On the other hand, the concept of difference or different is relative and presupposes comparison, inducing the idea of value judgment. The use of the expression “becomes obsolete” forces the assumption that the “difference” is not static; it is possible to infer some momentum as a result of the revision of values. We observe that what the respondent defines as valued difference is not the Derridian difference, but a tolerable and manageable difference that may change according to the dominant values.

The term “subjugated” refers to a domain of power, in which the different is devalued. This shows inter-discourse with Silva (2012) when this author argues that the difference tends to be built in a negative way that marginalizes and excludes those who are different. In general, this passage leads to the perception that the “difference” or the different have a negative connotation, which causes discomfort, insofar as it “counteracts” a consolidated view, what is regarded as “normal”. This view can also be seen in the speech fragments below:

(02) – **The difference**, for me, is like two things **that don't match**. So, they have distinct characteristics. – I thought of **diversity** too, but **not necessarily of friction, only of friction**. (FG-M<sub>2</sub>)

(03) The **difference**, you know, breaks from the **standard**. We move away from the **norm**. For me, something different is whatever doesn't fit that **norm** that I established, **a mental model for myself**, [for my] behavior. (FG-M<sub>6</sub>)

The excerpt 03 also associates the idea of difference to the reference “standard” of individuals. It makes the detachment from the norm explicit, which makes us suppose that the organization where this subject works has a greater openness to diversity when it moves away from the “norm”. However, it is possible to detect the ambiguity of such speech, since the “norm” was embedded in the respondent's own “mental model”, inciting us to think of the challenge

of inserting various groups in an organization. At this point, the issue of what is tolerable in the difference emerges, for this difference may be the standard to others. This inter-discursively refers to what Pereira (2006) argues when dealing with tolerance and hospitality.

In the excerpt 02, the expression “don’t match” leads us to think about the absence of adaptation, harmony break or devaluation. This idea again refers to Pereira (2006), when the author speaks of the non-relationship between tolerance and hospitality, i.e. when two elements do not match. The respondent explicitly states that diversity is not about conflict or friction. However, the expression “not necessarily of friction, only of friction” presupposes the existence of friction before what is different or diverse. The highlighted expression also associates “difference with diversity”. Along these lines, the management of companies would be also managing diversity or whatever is different, always valuing whatever is closest to the norms.

The following excerpt counteracts and presents a discourse that has a more natural connotation of the concept of difference:

(04) – There are always **two sides**: the black **and** the white, the good **and** the evil. There is always a **dichotomy and two sides**, you know, which make up the difference. [...] The difference is **something natural**. Things that happen every day that we get to see. Sometimes, we see people not getting along, clashing or sometimes getting along and coming closer. (FG – M1)

The participant explicitly performs inter-discourse with the dichotomous view emphasized by Derrida. One may notice the use of the conjunction of addition “and” in the association “the black and the white, the good and the evil”. This choice distinguishes itself from the frequent and excluding use in “black or white, good “or” evil” and is consistent with Derrida’s *Difference* (2002), which brings together different groups that are valued in their specificities. The problem is that the respondent brings the idea of difference closer to the natural world and not as a result of the social world. In other words, if the difference is natural, the value, the consensus, and the standard also become naturalized. By naturalizing the discourse, the participant dismisses the conflicts, the power relations, the dominant groups, and the social classes.

(05) – There is **respect for the minorities**; we have a lot of that here. – No doubt. – There are **accessible restrooms** and all, but this is also part of the legislation [...] we have to abide by it. – Yes, **but not everyone abides**. (FG – M1)

The excerpt 05 brings about the issue of inclusion of people with disabilities into the organizational context, when dealing with a certain adequacy of accessibility, implicit under the expression “accessible restrooms”, which performs inter-discourse with authors, such as Nohara, Acevedo and Fiammetti (2010). The challenges to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the work environment are complex and multiple. Among them, we may find the functional or architectural inadequacies that hinder accessibility, but it is also necessary to highlight the social barriers, those related to prejudice and discrimination, as one of the impediments of the inclusive process (Assis & Freitas, 2014; Nohara, Acevedo, & Fiammetti, 2010).

This discursive excerpt also shows that minorities are tolerated due to legislation (Quota Law). Tolerance produces, as has been said, “respect for the minorities”. But, as we have seen previously, in Derridarian order there is no unconditional acceptance of the respect for others or for their difference. Ambiguity can be noticed as well, when the respondents state that there is “respect for the minorities”, before denouncing that “not everyone abides”. Although legal requirements have increased the number of people with disabilities in organizations, many companies are yet to comply with the appointed percentage. Moreover, it is noteworthy that insertion (the hiring) differs from inclusion (the integration and recognition process) (Assis & Carvalho-Freitas, 2014).

### 3.2 DIVERSITY AND RECOGNITION

If, in the item above, the speeches pointed to difference as synonymous with diversity (and vice versa), in this paper the fragments associate diversity with recognition, and beyond that, they show that it is not any diversity or difference is accepted, but one that is manageable and, therefore, legitimized and recognized by managers and dominant groups within the organization.

(06) – In my view, I think humans can live with the difference **to a certain extent**. The differences are accepted **to a certain extent**, they are **manageable**, and you can deal with them. Now, when the difference takes on a trait of **strangeness**, then something that **could** be perceived as positive starts becoming **an obstacle for labor relations**. (FG – M5)

The excerpt 06 addresses the difference that is conveyed in the management “world” is one that is tolerable and in this sense, “manageable”. The issue of what is manageable brings along the issue of social consensus, as this creates a pattern, a profile, a mental model (excerpt 03). Likewise, it brings implicitly a non-Derridarian view of *Difference*, because it shows that the acceptance depends

on social and organizational circumstances, for it cannot “become an obstacle for labor relations”. The lexical item “to a certain extent” draws the line of what is tolerable. We also note that if the manager accepted the Derridian difference, this would produce “strangeness” and pose an obstacle for work management in the company. The term “strangeness”, which has an explicit negative connotation, induces the idea of detachment and even conflict. This refers to the work by Woodward (2012), when the author discusses the tensions that arise before the dissonance between the expectations and the prevailing social norms. The use of the modal verb “could” presupposes mere hypothetical possibility. Therefore, perceiving the difference in a positive way is only a remote possibility for that particular manager. Once again, we come across the meaning of tolerable difference. What is marginal is not tolerated since it lies beyond the norm.

On the topic of what is to be recognized:

(07) – **To be recognized is to be wanted.** But, in what aspect? If I’m at work “you’re a professional, so I want you to be here”. If I’m home, with my wife, then it’s “Look, you’re a good husband. I want you to be here”. So, to be recognized is to be wanted. And then, **to be wanted is to belong.** And as for diversity, **diversity is like this, do I belong or not? Am I wanted or not?** (FG – M5)

The excerpt 07 relates diversity with recognition through the idea of belonging, which is consistent with Honneth’s approach. It makes evident that “to be recognized is to be wanted”, is to be legitimate and socially desirable, and to have economic value for others. The sense of belonging is also linked to the theme of identity. Belonging to the group of workers is having economically important traits for the management of these. The fact that one belongs to a group highlights the enhancement of skills and individual properties together with the other members of the group. It is noteworthy that this form of recognition of economic, but also social esteem, relates to the possibility of success in the labor context and occurs through the acceptance (in the sense of tolerance) of abilities and the lifestyle of various groups (Honneth, 2003).

(08) – For me, to recognize others is to respect others the way they are. – **As long as they meet my expectations.** So, I recognize the other from **my own referential**, not from the others. – Recognition is **ultimately** translated into **inclusion**. If you recognize someone, you want to be close to that person, you bring them closer, you want to be together, and all. And **non-recognition** is expressed through **exclusion**. (FG – M5)

The expression highlighted in the excerpt 08, “as long as they meet my expectations”, explicitly indicates that the recognition is relational and must meet the references the manager holds. However, these standards are not entirely his own, since they reproduce the references of the dominant classes, which define what it means to recognize a mining sector worker. We note that the respondent’s speech carries the Derridian dialectic: recognition and non-recognition, inclusion and non-inclusion, equality and inequality. Furthermore, the management would seek the tolerable difference, for it would then approach his own reference, which would translate the reference of the company’s dominant group. Finally, this would be expressed through the inclusion of what is economically desirable.

### 3.3 THE HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) PRACTICES

Finally, this subsection exposes the speech fragments that associate difference and tolerate diversity to HR practices.

(09) – **I think the company is trying to reduce, to soften diversity in the organizations as much as possible**, since the technical training... in that case, I was the leader, I did a training here, just on this issue: one training for leaders and managers and the staff that manages people. So, in that training, they focused a lot on this issue of **knowing how to identify people**. In the case of groups, to seek the best of each, to see the need for each, see how you can treat each person, the way to treat people, **the way to give feedback**. (FG – S1)

In the excerpt 09, the expression “I think the company is trying to reduce, to soften diversity in the organizations as much as possible” implies the company where he works is seeking to decrease the diversity that exists in organizations through management. It is a metonymy. The respondent offers the example of his company to illustrate the whole, and in this sense, to generalize such actions. We must also highlight the word “soften”, which encourages the idea that diversity brings undesirable consequences into the organizational context. Inter-discursively, it refers to the negative effects of diversity when it is not managed properly (Thomas, 1996). Such management of diversity is linked to the training of managers (HR practices) to deal with the various groups, so as to optimize economic productivity (better results), which proves to be consistent with the functionalist approach (Thomas, 1996).

When asked “Which groups do you belong to?”



(10) – I'm not religious for instance, **I don't see myself as black** either, because **I am dark-skinned**. [...]. I think I belong to many groups, **except to homosexuals**. **I don't like men**, all right, you guys? (laughs) (FG – M3)

This excerpt (10) implicitly brings the idea that some groups are more valued than others, which aligned with Derrida (2002) and Silva (2012), when these authors point out that classifications and typifications insert asymmetrical power relations in societies, by determining what is the norm and what is tolerable. It is implied that the respondent refuses to be “black”, which is made explicit through the expression: “I don't see myself as black because I'm dark-skinned”, which shows valorization of the white skin. We know that in Brazilian society the white skin complies with the norm and with the dominant groups. Therefore, by assuming certain whiteness, the respondent approaches those who belong to the “norm” and hold power in companies. The *morenidade*, as Sansone (2003) has pointed out, that is, the light-skinned mestizo as a synthesis of the Brazilian race, refers to the myth of the Brazilian racial democracy.

In addition to the racial issue, this excerpt also includes references to sexual orientation. The participant explicitly excludes himself from the group of “homosexuals”, and ironically and subtly denounces the existence of hidden prejudice. This performs an inter-discourse with Saraiva (2012), who argues that homosexuals are the most discriminated category in the context of work, constant targets of humorous jokes. The speech of this subject shows how aspects such as skin color, being a male, and being heterosexual determine the inclusion. In this sense, Caproni and Saraiva (2014) point out the construction of the concepts of tolerable difference and “normality” that dictate the rules for inclusion in the organizational context. The power relations that dictate the norm within organizations create and emphasize the ideal employee profile (valued in HR practices), and this is the one that fits the consensus and normative homogeneous model defined in this speech fragment.

## 4 CONCLUSION

Given the purpose of this article and after the completion of the empirical study, we have determined through the speeches of the subjects interviewed a strong association of difference with diversity. In fact, the first explains the second and they are virtually synonymous. The definition or conceptualization of difference is developed within the scope of relativity, and is constructed impregnated with the values that predominate in society. It is also necessary to

point out that a pejorative view of the concept of difference prevailed among the participants.

It is possible to notice that respondents often find it difficult to live with different people, even when it comes to tolerable and manageable diversity (Excerpt 06). The difficulty is even greater when it comes to people who work in a traditionally male segment that involves risk areas, initially considered unsuitable for those who do not conform to the standard. In addition, it is noteworthy that in the surveyed companies the management of diverse groups is a recent phenomenon, although these have policies that favor the inclusion of some different groups (such as people with disabilities). On the other hand, according to reports, when you learn to manage this coexistence, it is possible to take advantage of it, hence increasing gains for the organization. Thus, it becomes evident that in the organizational level (as well as in the academic one), there is a prevalence of an analysis of the diversity which is typical of the functionalist approach.

We emphasize the role of HR professionals and managers in the management of tolerated diversity models. In the first models, the importance in changing some practices adopted stands, aiming to bring greater awareness of people to the appreciation and recognition of the rights and potential of people from different groups. Another important aspect is the establishment of more open recruitment processes, seeking individuals capable of contributing, but who are *a priori* out of the “standard” laid down by organizations, such as patterns based on race/color, sexual orientation, gender, and the existence of deficiencies, among others. We also highlight the importance of qualification in the training of personnel, especially managers, in order to deal with tolerated diversity in the workplace, as well as promote policies and practices that recognize people in their differences.

It is important to remember that in this context managers also play a different role, since their posture and mental model (Excerpt 03) arise from the recognition and acceptance of the dominant groups both in society and companies. Managers, as workers, are selected in terms of recognizably different workers’ standards. Moreover, the way you relate to people serves as a model to other team members, providing or not a change in the *status quo* of the organization, with regard to the respect for the management of a tolerable diversity. It is through process management, specifically in the relationship that is established with the manager, that individuals and their groups perceive or not the recognition of their skills and competencies in the organizational context.

It can be argued that thinking about the recognition of individuals belonging to different groups is a challenging task, given the distance between the reflective processes and the actual business practice. Furthermore, there is still prejudice and discrimination, causing that a certain group overlaps other ones.

In this sense, the valorization of diversity in the organizational context permeates the valorization and recognition (from the Honnethian perspective) of minority groups, traditionally subjugated to the hegemonic order in power, as already denounced by Derrida. We point out that companies, as creations deriving from social groups, cannot work the recognition of minorities, unless it occurs in the legal sphere.

We conclude by indicating that, in this analysis, the diversity is still far from being the recognition of difference as proposed by Derrida. We stress the need to promote actions aimed at the equality of treatment opportunities among various groups in organizations and an environment of respect for the emotional and supportive relationships that occur within social relationships established in the organizational context.

In addition, we suggest that business schools promote discussions concerning that matter and also foster the development of greater awareness and sensitivity on the part of their instructors, for these will form leaders, managers, HR professionals, among others. The perception of the diversity models must be expanded beyond merely tolerable recognition of difference, for it is necessary to change this condition.

## DIVERSIDADE: RECONHECIMENTO DA *DIFFÉRANCE* OU DIFERENÇA TOLERADA? UM ESTUDO SOBRE A PERCEPÇÃO DE PROFISSIONAIS DOS SEGMENTOS DA MINERAÇÃO E SIDERURGIA

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Compreender a diversidade no contexto organizacional.

**Originalidade/lacuna/relevância/implicações:** Existem poucos estudos críticos sobre o tema, aqui fundamentados nas ideias de Derrida (2002) e na teoria do reconhecimento de Honneth (2003). Relaciona a diversidade com a construção da identidade dos indivíduos e remete ao conceito de tolerância, possibilitando uma discussão sobre o reconhecimento (ou não) das diferenças.

**Principais aspectos metodológicos:** Pesquisa qualitativa, realizada em organizações dos segmentos de mineração e siderurgia. Os dados foram coletados por meio da realização de grupos focais e submetidos à análise de discurso.

**Síntese dos resultados:** Constatou-se dificuldade de convívio com pessoas pertencentes a grupos diversos. Associou-se a diversidade à diferença e ao tema

reconhecimento. Evidenciou-se que a diversidade deveria ser gerida no contexto organizacional, mas a diversidade que entra na agenda das empresas analisadas, inclusive nas práticas de RH, é a diversidade tolerável.

**Principais considerações/conclusões:** Os grupos minoritários ainda carecem de reconhecimento, prevalecendo à valorização de um grupo em detrimento de outros. Reconhecer diferenças é algo desafiador, haja vista a distância que se instaura entre os processos reflexivos e a prática empresarial. Por fim, ressalta-se a necessidade de promover ações que visem à igualdade de oportunidades de tratamento aos diversos grupos existentes na organização.

## **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Diversidade. Grupos minoritários. Diferença. Reconhecimento. Tolerância.

## **DIVERSIDAD, RECONOCIMIENTO DE LA *DIFFÉRENCE*, O DIFERENCIA TOLERADA? UN ESTUDIO SOBRE LA PERCEPCIÓN DEL SEGMENTO PROFESIONAL DE LA MINERÍA Y LA SIDERURGIA**

### **RESUMEN**

**Objetivo:** Comprender la diversidad en el contexto organizativo.

**Originalidad/laguna/relevancia/implicaciones:** Hay pocos estudios críticos sobre el tema, aquí basado en las ideas de Derrida (2002) y la teoría del reconocimiento de Honneth (2003). La comprensión de la diversidad se refiere a la construcción de la identidad de los individuos y se refiere al concepto de tolerancia, lo que permite una discusión del reconocimiento (o no) las diferencias.

**Principales aspectos metodológicos:** Investigación cualitativa, realizada en las organizaciones de los sectores minería y siderurgia. Se recogieron los datos mediante la realización de grupos focales y presentados al análisis del discurso.

**Síntesis de los principales resultados:** Se encontró dificultades para relacionarse con personas pertenecientes a diferentes grupos. También se asocia la diversidad a la diferencia y a el tema reconocimiento. Fue evidente que la diversidad debe ser gestionada en el contexto de la organización, pero la diversidad que viene en la agenda de las empresas analizadas, incluyendo las prácticas de recursos humanos es la diversidad tolerable.

**Principales consideraciones/conclusiones:** Los grupos minoritarios siguen careciendo de reconocimiento, cualquiera que sea el valor de un grupo sobre otro. Reconocer las diferencias es desafiador, dada la distancia que hay entre los procesos de reflexión y la práctica empresarial. Además, todavía hay prejuicios y discriminación. Por último, el punto culminante es la necesidad de promover acciones encaminadas a la igualdad de oportunidades de tratamiento para los diversos grupos existentes en la organización.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

Diversidad. Grupos minoritarios. Diferencia. Reconocimiento. Tolerancia.

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