I have always viewed conflict as a very negative engagement and make it a point to avoid any and all conflict in all aspects of my own life. Never have I considered disagreements as a sort of positive form of constructive criticism. Rather, I’ve seen it as something to actively circumvent in all of my relationships, especially within the work place.

The speaker definitely shed a contrasting light on the traditional view that conflicts can produce. She advanced my previously held personal perspectives and expanded my thoughts on the possibilities that positive conflicts can have on my relationships. In her presentation, she told a story about a doctor and her partner in a research study that was a statistician. They worked closely one on one to complete an important medical study, she explains however, that despite working so closely the pairs personalities were completely opposite. She continues to explain that because of their opposite personality traits, the pairs working relationship ensured the doctor that her findings were sound. A result of the statistician’s perspective of conflict. He viewed his job as a form of duty to create constructive criticism, he said, “my job is to prove Dr. Stewart wrong.” In attempting every way to prove her conclusion incorrect, he in turn is able to ensure the doctor that if they cannot be disproven then they can only be right. This story really exemplified to me how conflict can be utilized as a character and relationship building tool and not only as a clash of collaborations that hinder advancement.

The newest and most positive and productive approach to conflict management is the interactionist view. This view is presented in Verma’s “Conflict Management,” handbook literature, one of three different approaches to conflict and the insight that I found the most compelling from this reading. It is defined as “the newest perspective, the interactionist view assumes that conflict is necessary to increase performance….... encourages conflict based on the belief that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil, too-cooperative project organization is likely to become static, apathetic, stagnant, and unable to respond to change and innovation.” (Verma, 1998) Constructive conflict in one on one relationships is much easier to facilitate and produce a constructive response, making it an effective tool in developing and enhancing our communication skills and improving achievements. However, recreating these same circumstances in a group setting like large corporations proves to be much more challenging unfortunately. Which is why I found this particular topic so interesting in this reading, because it also discusses the importance of a leader’s awareness to recognize what the appropriate approach should be taken in each specific situation. Good manager’s must be prepared to evaluate each issue and take advantage of using this approach to stimulate healthy debates that can provide innovative and beneficial results.

Seeing that conflict will inevitably arise and is virtually unavoidable, it is refreshing to perceive conflict as a manageable, productive engagement. Instead of conflicts being destructive they can help to develop our interpersonal skills and even take work or team group goals to the next level. If more and more managers adopted this unique approach as their primary response to tensions in the work place we may begin to shift the common negative attitudes towards differences among colleagues and the consequences that come from them.