Choosing this conversation was arguably the most difficult part of this topic. Being that I have not been able to observe a conversation between strangers in person despite my best efforts, I was forced to turn to the internet for my subject matter. To my surprise, finding a conversation between two people that I did not have any predetermined opinion of that was not scripted was a truly daunting task – though I did find a plethora of tutorials relating to job interviews and making small-talk with strangers thanks to YouTube. My search finally came after a search for “candid interview” and hopelessly clicking on the first thumbnail of a person that I did not recognize.

The conversation was between Larry King and a man named Sam Kinison on a CNN set from around (I’m guessing) 20 years ago. Much of the conversation was held between Sam and Larry; however, a few people joined the conversation later toward the end by calling-in to the show. The last person to call the show was Jessica Hahn – a seemingly famous woman who was also an ex-girlfriend of Sam’s. The beginning of the conversation was an interview in which Larry asked Sam questions, and Sam would answer. The latter part of the conversation consisted of Larry taking phone calls from people who were viewing the broadcast, affording them the chance to ask Sam questions, and for Jessica to berate him on live television. (Lucky for me as I expected that my random selection of a conversation would result in me selecting a dull one).

For the part of the conversation that was had between Larry and Sam exclusively: it was about Sam. Larry asked Sam several questions not the least of which were about his decision to quit being a minister to become a stand-up comic, how his fame affected the way a car accident he was in was portrayed by the media, and if he is happy, which at first seemed like a strange question for him to ask a guest. Upon Sam’s response, though, it was clear that the questioning of his happiness was Larry’s attempt to give Sam an opportunity to self-disclose, if he wished, about the passing of his brother just a year prior. When Sam disclosed the tragedy, Larry responded appropriately by actively listening and supporting Sam as the spoke of his brother by leaning forward and adjusting his tone and echoing Sam’s disclosure.

During this segment of the conversation both participants demonstrated several verbal and non-verbal cues to indicate which one of them would be the speaker. When Larry asked Sam a question, he would lean forward, make eye contact, and then be silent to indicate that it was Sam’s turn to speak and to answer the question. More importantly, since the conversation was an interview, Larry used listener cues to indicate to Sam that he had another question. These cues allowed Sam to take on the part of interviewee, while Larry did his job as the interviewer to steer the conversation in a way that would be appropriate for television. On several occasions, Larry would even interrupt Sam to ask another question. Given the physical dimension of being on a live television set, his interruptions were more than appropriate.

Larry’s questions were then followed up by questions from the viewers that pertained to the lewdness of his jokes, whether his heterosexist jokes were just that, a joke, or a reflection of his personal beliefs, and question about another comic that he clearly had bad blood with. Finally, Larry asked Sam about his ex, Jessica Hahn, who after a commercial break was on the phone. The two of them proceeded to bicker back and forth for the remainder of the conversation. During their squabble they both interrupted each other repeatedly while also slandering one another.

As the conversation between Sam and Jessica continued to escalate, Larry began to thank both Jessica (who was still on the phone), and Sam for being on the show, and did so a couple of times very quickly which indicated that either he was annoyed by side conversation between Sam and Jessica or was running out of time. Either way, he did seem bothered by the conversation between them during his closing and wanted the conversation to end.