This article discusses how minority students learned how to cope with their personal and academic identity in their high school science class. Students were interviewed about their science class experiences in focus groups. The groups were composed so that the interviewer can observe an interaction through conversations. During the interviews, the conversations were recorded and transcribed. The transcription allowed the interview to create tables with code summaries to help ease the analysis of the conversation. Students reflected how science was a unique learning experience compared to the other subjects in school. The students appreciated the “hands-on” activities that were done in the science classroom. Some felt that this improved their learning. Although interests were high in the classroom, the students still felt a disconnect between science and their future. Science careers still felt unattainable because they do not identify themselves with anyone in the career, whether it is because of their gender, ethnic identity, and social roles. This study illustrates the difficulties that minority students face in the science classroom. Students have a hard time dealing with how to incorporate their own identities in the science classroom. Understanding of the content can occur, but it is still difficult for the students to see the connection outside the classroom.

The article contained valuable information showing the difficulties that the students deal with in the classroom setting. The strengths of the article were found in the focus groups, their design and analyses of the conversations. The design of the focus group allowed for interactions and discussions to take place in a comfortable environment. It provided a diverse set of perspectives and conversations. The organization of the interviews and transcriptions allowed the researchers to dissect the thoughts of the students. Readers can connect the ideas of the students along with the bigger picture. As these were the strengths, it also became the article’s weakness. The sample size of students was small. A larger sample size could have brought more thoughts and insights into the student perception. The individual focus groups were a good size but it would be interesting to see how the students would react in a bigger groups. Would their thoughts have been really clear? Would they have been honest? The amount of time spent with the students could be improved. Instead of just looking into one academic year, the study could look into several academic years. The evidences provided in the study were profound, but more evidence through a bigger student sample could have improved the study. A new thing that can be observed with a bigger sample and/or a longer period would be to see possible patterns and similarities with all the students. Instead of generalizing ALL minority students because of these 29 students, a bigger sample would give a stronger weight in the study. It would be interesting to see if there would be disparities among students of the same background or is the feeling similar for most students.

I picked this article because the issue in my school site is closing the achievement gap between the two majority groups. I wanted to see if this article could give me an insight into other reasons why this achievement gap is even present. The study showed me that students may enjoy the subject but are too afraid to really be successful in science because of their personal identity. The school and community encourage this self-perception, which adds onto the
difficulty of the content. One of my goals as a science teacher is improving my student’s skills and have it be applicable to their other classes and mostly to the outside world. I want them to be able to see the connection between the classroom and society. This article reminded me that student brings forth his or her own experiences and prejudices into the classroom. I want to help make a connection with their lives and ease the disconnect that they felt for so long. This brings questions such as: What else can I do for my student? How can I show a connection to their lives? How can I make this connection a reality and not just a thought?