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Racial Justice and Education

Reflection #3

1. Approximately 30,000 students apply for admission into New York City specialized high schools each year, and approximately 6,000 students are admitted. Of the students admitted, only 10% are Latinx or black. However, in NYC public schools, Latinx and black students make up 70% of the student body. This shows an underrepresentation of black and Latinx students being accepted into these specialized high schools. The most represented ethnicities within these schools are white and Asian.

2. There was a time in the 1980s when all NYC middle schools had honors or advanced programs for students. However, since then, many schools removed these programs, so now only certain middle schools have accelerated classes available for students. This is perhaps one reason for the significant disproportionality in admission rates for black and Latinx students. Another possible reason is that the education offered at middle schools in certain neighborhoods has deteriorated in recent years. Many black and Latinx students attend these middle schools which have a lack of resources. When the quality of education is poor, how can a student succeed or compete with other students in the city? Another factor that may play a role in the significant disproportionality is test prep. This typically requires a family being involved and seeking this prep for their child. Some test prep programs may not be affordable to all families.

The term achievement gap refers to the great difference between test scores or academic achievement by a subgroup in comparison to other subgroups. In this case, the video was discussing Latinx and black students. Opportunity gap, however, refers to the disparity between the resources some schools receive versus what other schools receive. These resources include the quality of teachers within the school, books, and extracurricular programs.

3. Mayor De Blasio's proposal to base the criteria for admission on the top 7% of students' GPAs in middle school rather than basing it on a test score is controversial. I do think this may result in more diversity in these specialized high schools since you would be taking the same percentage of students from each school. However, it does make admission more competitive for students in middle schools that typically have more than 7% of their students accepted into these specialized high schools. I can see how it would seem unfair to a student who was not accepted to a specialized high school, but has a higher GPA than other students admitted to the same specialized high school. However, I do feel this proposal would help to even the playing field for Latinx and black students, many of whom are disadvantaged simply because they attend a middle school that has less resources. I agree that students from all middle schools across NYC should have an opportunity to attend a specialized high school. I do feel it is fair to accept a certain percentage of students from each middle school. I also feel that this points to the fact that NYC must promptly focus resources on the middle schools that are lacking resources, resulting in lower test scores and admittance to specialized high schools for Latinx and black students. I agree changing the admissions process is important. However, to address the true issue, there must be educational equity across all schools in NYC.

4. Slots in these high schools are so highly sought after because many of these schools are a symbol of future success for students accepted. The quality of education in other high schools in

NYC also needs to be improved. While there are other adequate high schools, many public high schools throughout the city are lacking resources that would only benefit students and set them up for success. Also, the college acceptance rate at these specialized high schools is above 80%. That makes getting accepted to one of these schools enticing for students and their families.

Creating more high schools with quality education would create more opportunities for students of all ethnicities to succeed. The lack of quality options is causing the level of competition to rise. Creating more specialized high schools and even closing down or reforming low performing high schools would create more opportunities for students in NYC to succeed and eventually be admitted to college.