

Pioneer Research Institute Evaluation Form

Scholar Information

Scholar's Full Name:	Sherry Shen
Scholar's Research Concentration:	Unequal Schools: Sociological Perspectives on Educational Policymaking
Title of Scholar's Research Paper:	Examining the Categorical of Ability Tracking in Hong Kong

Grading and Academic Oversight Section

Grade conferred by professor: A

**Full grading rubric approved by Pioneer Academics and Oberlin College*

The Pioneer Research Institute's college accreditation and academic oversight are conducted collaboratively with Oberlin College:

Listing on Common Application:	"Summer Program, Credit Awarded Directly by Oberlin College"
Course Title on Coalition Application:	"099" "Pioneer Research Course"
College Course ID on UC Application:	"INST 099" "Pioneer Research Course"

Comprehensive Evaluation Section

Evaluator Name & Full Title:	Brittany C. Murray Malcolm O. Partin Assistant Professor of Educational Studies and Political Science
College/University & Department:	Davidson College, Educational Studies and Political Science
Full Educational Background of Evaluator:	PhD, 2020, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill BA, 2011, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Please briefly explain the nature and requirements of the research paper and your interaction with the scholar:

I met with Sherry for a total of ten sessions across the duration of the program: five small group and five one-on-ones. During each small group session, Sherry was expected to come prepared by having read the course texts and having planned an oral presentation based on a specific prompt. In these sessions, she was also expected to ask questions of the instructor and her peers to engage in and initiate group discussion. For her research paper, Sherry was required to research and analyze an educational policy problem which culminated in a sociological research proposal that would help scholars better understand and address that problem. Sherry independently developed her research focus based on her observations of inequality-producing mechanisms in her local schools. She ultimately chose to focus on the social aspects of academic ability tracking and their implications for educational inequality in Hong Kong. Her final product proposed an experiment to compare students' experiences and outcomes from varied academic tracks in a de-tracked academic setting. In our one-on-one sessions, Sherry provided drafts of her research paper, and we discussed her research direction at length. I provided feedback which she regularly incorporated into her drafts.

Please rate the scholar in the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
Ability to form original ideas and concepts	X				
Ability to communicate thoughts in an effective and articulate manner	X				
Ability to synthesize and organize information from disparate sources	X				
Level of scholar's curiosity, aptitude, and industriousness	X				

Based on the scholar's performance through Pioneer, how would you rate this scholar's potential for undergraduate-level academic work at a top college/university, relative to other undergraduate students whose academic work you have mentored?

One of the best I have encountered, top 5% X	Excellent, top 10%__
Very Good, top 25%__	Good, top 50%__
Below Average__	

Describe some of the scholar's strengths:

Sherry demonstrated a strong readiness for using rigorous social science methods. In our one-on-one sessions, Sherry demonstrated very thoughtful analysis and discussion of a range of educational policy problems that required a causal framework to answer. In crafting her research proposal, Sherry engaged deeply with the literature on natural and controlled experimental methods to develop a research design that would help her assess the root causes of inequalities in Hong Kong's tracking system. We talked at length about reducing bias, selecting potential outcome variables, research setting, etc. Sherry's thinking on these issues was extremely impressive and is on par with the work of many undergraduates at my own institution.

Describe some areas in which the scholar can improve:


Sherry has great ideas and ambitious research goals and will greatly benefit from an undergraduate program that will build her skillset in social science methods and provide training in academic writing. Sherry encountered challenges conveying very complex research plans in her final paper and will need support learning to organize her writing into clear key points and arguments.

While the second half of the research work was one-to-one with the professor, the first half involved a small research cohort of 3-6 scholars. Describe the contribution that the scholar made to the research group discussion and learning:

During each small group session, Sherry demonstrated a deep engagement with the course material and the ability to use course perspectives to thoughtfully analyze her own schooling experiences. Sherry met course expectations by ensuring that her weekly presentations were driven by the course readings. In one presentation, she discussed racialized, gendered, and classed aspects of secondary tracking in Hong Kong which helped illuminate these social processes for her peers. She was also very attentive to others' presentations and demonstrated impressive use of new course concepts. I especially appreciated Sherry's engagement with and critique of her peers' ideas, courage to share her own thoughts, and ability to move the class' thinking forward by bridging and integrating new concepts. She was eager to learn the material, enthusiastic about the readings, and conveyed a genuine interest in understanding of the relationship between education and power.

Would you recommend this scholar to a college admissions officer at a top college or university? Why or why not?

I would enthusiastically recommend Sherry to a college admission officer at a top college or university because of her genuine curiosity and excitement about learning; demonstrated ability to develop empirical questions and write at the collegiate level; and her thoughtful analysis of how sociological concepts apply to her own and others' lived experiences.

Evaluator's Signature:	
Evaluator's Printed Name:	Brittany C. Murray
Date of Evaluation:	9/23/24
Evaluator's email:	brittanymurray@gmail.com

Pioneer Academics affirms that the scholar whose research paper is attached has followed Pioneer Academics' protocols for developing original research and that their paper has met Pioneer Academics' standards for authenticity. The grading and evaluation have met the standards collaboratively defined by Pioneer Academics and Oberlin College & Conservatory. If there are any questions regarding the work's academic integrity, please contact us at academic.integrity@pioneeracademics.com or by calling (855) 572-8863. We will conduct an immediate review and respond to your questions promptly.