Abstract: What makes some students more effective learners and better academic performers than others? Is the answer identical with respect to learning and academic achievement, or do the contributing factors differ? I examined two kinds of self-regulation – cognitive regulation and behavior regulation – as predictors of individual differences in middle-school students’ learning and academic achievement. Across several studies, cognitive regulation predicted learning effectiveness on inquiry learning, whereas behavior regulation predicted academic achievement (assessed by state-administered standardized achievement tests). Longitudinal analyses, however, suggested that it is indeed cognitive regulatory processes, not behavior regulation, that predict learning effectiveness, which in turn predict improvement on both Math and English state standardized test scores. These results suggest that (a) learning and academic achievement are distinct constructs, and (b) cognitive regulation is the more consequential long-term predictor of both learning and academic achievement. But to what extent do students’ learning effectiveness become effected by teachers’ instruction? Moving forward, I discuss an ongoing multi-year study on a large sample of Latino students (n=600) with an intervention aimed at a professional development effort on two-dozen teachers (n=25). Baseline analyses will be discussed, in aims to infer students’ differential susceptibility to the teacher manipulation, as well as exploring interactions between teachers’ and respective student’s autonomy, reasoning, and discourse.

Bio: Dr. Anahid Modrek is currently a postdoctoral fellow at UCLA working with Dr. William Sandoval in the School of Education & Information Studies. Her research bridges the fields of cognitive science and education, where her interests include basic and applied research on individual differences in learning (i.e., inductive reasoning), self-regulation (behavioral and cognitive), autonomy, and academic achievement for children from culturally diverse groups, especially those from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. A former fellow in Dr. Irv Garfinkel’s Columbia University Population Research Center (CPRC), Dr. Modrek has had a variety of research experiences, including serving as an Arthur Zankel Urban Research Fellow at Teachers College for inner-city youth, participating in CPRC’s Fragile Families working group, and serving as lead researcher in studies spanning across three boroughs of New York. In 2016 Dr. Modrek received her PhD in Developmental Psychology at Columbia University, where she worked with Dr. Deanna Kuhn, and had her dissertation chaired by Dr. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. Prior to her doctoral work, Dr. Modrek was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, where her primary advisor in the Department of Psychology was Dr. Joseph Campos, and Robert Reich, J.D., from the Goldman School of Public Policy.