(a) Background: Attention and behavior problems occur at high rates among Latino children in the United States; however, they are less likely than children from other racial/ethnic groups to receive treatment for these problems. Efforts to address these disparities should include research to understand how Latino parents perceive and respond to child behaviors within an ecological framework, as broad contextual factors are known to influence both parenting and help-seeking.

(b) Method: This study utilized grounded theory methodology to analyze in-depth interviews conducted with a community sample of 25 ethnically-diverse Latino mothers of varying levels of socioeconomic status (SES). The primary aims for the study were: (1) To examine parental understanding and perceptions of DSM-IV ADHD and ODD symptoms; (2) To explore self-reported parental responses to clinical levels of child ADHD and ODD behaviors, as depicted in hypothetical behavioral vignettes; and (3) To explore general childrearing values and socialization goals among Latino mothers. Study aims were examined from an ecological perspective by considering demographic and parental psychosocial factors.

(c) Results: First, Latino mothers did not experience significant difficulty understanding DSM-IV symptoms of ADHD or ODD and the way they perceive these behaviors is largely consistent with the respective clinical disorders. Second, parental responses to clinical levels of ADHD and ODD behaviors were linked to external versus internal causal attributions across both disorders. Third, parental socialization goals, which reflected strong values on educational/professional goal attainment and positive interpersonal skills, were associated with reported parental responses to ADHD and ODD, respectively. Finally, there were trend differences in results by level of SES. The theoretical model that emerged from this study extends existing models related to parental beliefs, parenting, and help-seeking behavior.

(d) Conclusions: Findings suggest important clinical implications with respect to assessing ADHD and ODD among Latino children and engaging Latino parents into parenting and school-based interventions.