

# 'You must know what you mean when you say that': the morality of knowledge claims about ADHD in radio phone-ins.

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## Abstract

Drawing on a corpus of radio phone-ins, we present a discursive psychological analysis of how mothers carefully tailor their knowledge claims regarding their children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Mothers typically claim knowledge about their children's good intentions, but not about the 'ADHD-ness' of their conduct. Whereas the former is seen as appropriate knowledge for a concerned parent, the latter is treated as a matter of expert knowledge. We show that as soon as problematic behaviour is treated as observable from the outside and describable by mothers and other lay persons, it becomes vulnerable to being formulated as 'normal disobedience', rather than symptomatic of a professionally administered, doctorable condition. We argue that it is important to be aware of the moralities hidden in knowledge claims, as they help sustain an unproductive perspective in which either the child's brain or his mother is blamed for behaviour perceived as problematic.