Assessing Delusions

It is important to note that most criteria do not apply to all delusions. Oltmanns (1988) suggested that the presence of a delusions is best assessed by considering a list of characteristics or dimensions, none of which is necessary or sufficient, but with increasing endorsement produces a greater likelihood for the presence of a delusion. For example, the more a belief is:

- implausible,
- unfounded,
- strongly held,
- not shared by others,
- distressing, and
- preoccupying

the more likely it is to be considered a delusion. It is not simply the content of the delusion that must be explained and described, but the other elements that make up the experience. This multi-dimensional view of delusions is supported by a number of empirical studies (Freeman, 2008). Different factors may be involved in the various dimensions of delusional experience. Freeman (2007) outlined the following multi-dimensional model of delusions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of Delusions</th>
<th>Variability in characteristics</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfounded</td>
<td>Reflects a kernel of truth that has been exaggerated. It can be difficult to determine if the person is actually delusional. For others, the ideas are fantastic, unfounded, and clearly impossible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Firmly held</td>
<td>Beliefs vary from being held with 100% conviction to only occasionally being believed when the person is in a stressful situation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

