Am I Delusional?

"...we are all capable of having convictions and it is a universal human characteristic to hold on to our own mistaken judgements." (Jaspers (1913), 1963, p.63)

1. Background
Delusions are a significant feature of mental illnesses and can occur in many clinical conditions (Maher, 2001)
- The standard clinical definition (American Psychiatric Association. DSM-5 Task Force, 2013) is highly contentious.
- Much of the literature holds elements such as bizarreness of content and incorrigibility of belief as defining factors of delusion.
- On closer inspection, delusions are not so easy to pin down.

2. Objective
Highlight some of the difficulties associated with the definition of delusion
- Clarify the phenomenology.

3. Methodology
- Examination of some of the philosophical, psychological and psychiatric literature with regard to the definition of delusion.
- Examination of first person descriptions of the experience.
- Consideration of my experience of my own mental activity and experiences from my therapeutic work.
- Identify areas for empirical research

4. Questions
Are delusions one kind of thing?
- Are delusions a heterogeneous group?
- Are we comparing oranges with armchairs?
- What are the external characteristics of delusion?
- Can we measure them?

5. Findings
External Characteristics of Delusion include:
- Distress
- Pervasiveness
- Impact on behaviour
- Impairment on functioning
- Affect at onset
- Emotional salience
- Rationality
- Plausibility

- Amenability to revision
- Conviction
- Fit with personality/history
- Cultural normalcy
- Intensity
- Preoccupation
- Integration

Some of these characteristics might be measurable by the subject experiencing them and/or a third party observer.

6. Being slightly (sub-clinically) delusional might be good for your mental health

7. More Questions
Different kinds?
- Do the different characteristics at onset and during maintenance tell us something about different kinds of delusions?

- Embodied, Extended, Enactive, Embedded: What place might there be for a 4E framework?

- How might this fit with the medical model and/or the bio-psycho-social model?

- What impact might the answers to these questions have on research and treatment?

References:

8. Next Steps:
More empirical Research

More analysis of the literature

Rachel Gunn
rgg321@bham.ac.uk
Department of Philosophy
References:


Images:

[7] https://www2.fin.ucar.edu/sustainability/books