Lina Fredholm

Unexplainable experiences

-Interpretations and geographical effects

Oftörklarliga upplevelser

-Tolkningar och geografiska effekter

Kulturgeografi
C- Uppsats

Datum/Termin: 06-06-12 Vt. 2006
Handledare: Bertil Lundberg
Examinator: Gerhard Gustafsson
Löpnummer:
Abstract

This is a study of peoples interpretations of what they consider are unexplainable experiences, the geographical effects of it and the connection between the interpretations and effects. The phenomenon itself is not studied. The study is conducted in Sweden in the county of Värmland by a student, in Human Geography at Karlstads University. An inductive way to work, a behaviour ideology and qualitative method have been used to answer the questions. Data have been collected by a “structured open ended” interview technique. Seven people have been interviewed. No general conclusions are drawn because the low amount interviews. Similarities and differences on the other hand are showed.

Key word: Geography, human geography, unexplainable experience, interpretations, Värmland.
List of contents

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 4
   1. 1 Background .................................................................................................................. 4
   1. 2 My problem ................................................................................................................. 5
   1. 3 Questions ..................................................................................................................... 5
   1. 4 Method ........................................................................................................................ 6
   1. 5 Things that might have gone wrong ........................................................................... 8
   1. 6 Delimitation ............................................................................................................... 9

2. Historical overview of different belief systems .............................................................. 11
   2. 1 A changing world ..................................................................................................... 12
   2. 2 Before Christianity ................................................................................................. 12
   2. 3 Where to find religious beliefs today? ..................................................................... 13
   2. 4 The paranormal phenomena ................................................................................... 14
   2. 5 Occultism .................................................................................................................. 15
   2. 6 Spiritism .................................................................................................................... 15
   2. 7 Other explanations .................................................................................................... 20

3. How people relate to place – a geographical perspective ........................................ 22

4. Feelings of insecurity and fear .................................................................................... 23

5. Field study ............................................................................................................................ 26
   5. 1 Interviews .................................................................................................................. 26
   5. 2 Where are these places located in Värmland? ......................................................... 35
   5. 3 Similarities and differences in the experiences ....................................................... 35

6. Analysis ................................................................................................................................ 38

7. Discussion ............................................................................................................................ 41

8. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 42

9. Summary .............................................................................................................................. 44

10. Comments from the writer ............................................................................................. 45

Sources ...................................................................................................................................... 46

Appendix: Interview questions
1. Introduction

Mankind has a desire for understanding the world, even things that she has not yet been in contact with. This desire follows us through our lifecycles, from birth to the very end. Maybe that is why humans have always been fascinated by the unknown and the unanswered. A feeling that there is something more around us, something that not belong to the material world we are living in - things that we can not prove, but that most of us are curious about.

In today’s society we can see an increased interest in the unknown and unanswered, most obvious in a lot of TV-shows. That’s entertainment. But how do people react when unexplainable things happen in their own homes, in front of their very eyes. In the safest of all locations - in the own home?

1. 1 Background

The reason why I have chosen this subject is that it fascinates me. I think my interest was evoked by my grandmother when I was a small child. In her home, located in the northern parts of the county of Värmland in Sweden, unexplainable things happened. But she and my grandfather adjusted and learned to live with it. My grandmother told me these stories, of course, and ever since then I have been wondering, why do people stay in homes like that? Does it not scare them at all?

My grandmother passed away a couple of years ago and I have no longer someone close by that can help me answer my many questions. That is why I saw an excellent opportunity when the C-essay was to be written. Now I can combine my interest and at the same time find answers to my questions.

Obviously, I can not study the explanations for the extra-phenomenon, since there, so far just, are no scientific explanations, and this topic seems, among researchers not to be admitted as a serious topic. What I have been concentrating on is people’s minds, thoughts and interpretations about unexplainable experiences, and what they believe. What kinds of feelings did the experiences evoke and how did people handle the situation. Did it change their relation to their home; do they for example avoid places where they have had an experience they can not explain?

This essay has had a great effect on me on a personal level. It is out of my own interest that I have been writing it. But it may also have some effect on people that have the same questions that I do. Or people that have had experiences that they can not quit explain, and have been too afraid to talk about.

Because of this being such a taboo subject among researchers, rationalists, and within the world of science this essay can also have an effect just by focusing the topic.
1. 2 My problem

In Sweden today, most people do not base their stability, their life fundament on their faith. Nowadays only a few go to church and actively participate in various religious activities. In Sweden we have a declining interest in religion and the role of religion is not as strong as it used to be. A lot of different traditions of religious thought influence us today and we are free to pick parts from each of them and construct a mind of our own. Life today includes many choices and the pressure on humans is sometimes high. Some say that there are too many alternatives today; that people have become religiously confused. They do not know what to think and believe any more.

Out of this it is easy to understand that unexplainable experiences have different effects on different people and that peoples reactions also is individual. There can be a bodily, mental and also geographical reaction. We may start to feel cold, happy, frightened, and lose concentration. Such experiences are certain to affect us in some way and we will remember them. Maybe we choose to visit the place where it happened again or maybe we avoid it completely. But how do you behave if it is impossible to avoid the place? What reactions can be found if it is in your own home, where you spend most of your spare time? Does it change the every day life? Does it change the geographical patterns in the home?

1. 3 Questions

I like to stress that my purpose with the research is not to find general explanations. It is to understand specific individual’s interpretations of unexplainable phenomenon and the geographical effects of it.

This topic is relevant and interesting in different perspectives. First of all it is especially relevant to me, the researcher, because I want to find the answers to my questions. But the topic is also important to “put into light” because it seems to be such a taboo subject and sensitive to discuss.

“Sensitive research also concerns “taboo” subject matter. Such “taboo” topics are those about which people fell embarrassed, shy or threatened” ¹

The sensitive character of this subject makes it even more relevant to discuss from my point of view. People have difficulties to discuss experiences of this character, they are afraid of what others will think about them. The more material there is to read about this subject, the easier it will become to talk about it. That is why I also, by this essay hopefully can contribute to a more open discussion.

I also think that a lot of people are curious about this topic and would like to know more about it.

The following questions I would like to have answered:

¹ Kitchin & Tate, 2000:39
• What kinds of experiences have people had in their home, or homes that they have lived in, that they think is unexplainable?

• Why does she/he think it is an unexplainable phenomenon?

• Why do people choose to stay in a home where they think, in their own mind, that an unexplainable phenomenon has happened/are appearing? Alternatively, why do they choose to move away?

• Have the unexplained experiences changed the movement patterns in the home, the geographical patterns?

• Have the unexplainable experiences brought changes to the everyday life?

1.4 Method

Doing research means that you are to answer questions. In human geography, research involves human beings, space, place and milieu.

The researchers’ opinions influence their work, in this case this essay. Personal ideologies cannot be avoided when you are to answer a question. A clear ontology in the research is the foundation for the research and in what way you are to handle the question. Behavioural geography offers an approach to my questions. This ontology states that people’s ability to remember and value geographical information affects her and can explain spatial behaviour and choices. The purpose of this research is to understand how people interpret unexplainable experiences/phenomenon and in what way they influence their geographical behaviour patterns.

My point of view is that you cannot study social values in the same way as the physical world. I think that the human social world is too complex to be explained with general roles and laws. I think that human behaviour and human interpretations of unexplainable experiences are individual and distinguished. I have, so to speak, an anti-natural perspective.

This study is more or less inductive in its approach. This means that I have no hypotheses to test in reality; instead I will study reality and try to find patterns. Inductive methods make common conclusions out of empirical facts. It is based on logic. The result ends up in higher or lower grades of probabilities, but 100% of certainty can never be established.

I choose to use a qualitative approach in my research and I motivate it with a little help from the scientist Morhed; the purpose of qualitative studies is to characterize qualities and capacities within a phenomenon. The qualitative method is based on analytic description and its purpose is to understand. In a quantitative method the purpose is to explain. Closeness and

2 Kitchin & Tate, 2000:6
3 Kitchin & Tate, 2000:9
4 Thure’n, 2000: 19-21
intuition characterize the interpretation in a qualitative method, whereas distanciation characterizes a quantitative method.  

Material is mostly based on books, which in my point of view are trustworthy. Internet sites have deliberate been avoided because I find them questionable. Lindblad the author of the book “Uppsatsarbete, en kreativ process” says that Internet sources shall be referenced to the same way as books. She also gives some excellent advises how Internet sources should be written. Of own experience I know that this in many cases not are done by students in Universities. I myself have not done this either and that makes Internet sources, not referenced to the right way, more difficult to look up, if interest is given, compared to books.

My method for collecting data is by interviews. This is a very common method in qualitative research, and a convenient way of collecting data in a relaxed situation. The data contain feelings and opinions. To collect that kind of material by a quantitative method would have been more difficult. I am using a “structured open-ended interview” because I am convinced that it suits me and my purpose. It is also an easy method to use if you are not an experienced interviewer. In a structured open-ended interview, all individuals get the same questions in the same order, they can then answer in what way they themselves find suitable. Hopefully, it will reflect the person’s thoughts. The interview questions are included in the appendix.

I had difficulties finding people to interview, so I advertised in a regional newspaper (Nya Wermlandstidningen), the Saturday on the Easter holiday date, 060415, saying that I was searching for individuals that had had unexplainable experiences in their homes, or homes they have lived in earlier in their lives. I chose “Nya Wermlandstidningen” because it is the largest newspaper in the county of Värmland and the majority of inhabitants read it. The economic situation unfortunately made it impossible to also advertise in the second biggest newspaper in the county of Värmland, “Värmlands Folkblad”.

The response to the advert was better than I expected. Within a few days, about six persons had contacted me, saying that they where interested in participating, most of them where females. A short letter was sent out to them, where I explained the reasons for doing the research and how it was to be done.

Two individuals/ respondents did I, myself, contact after being told about their experience through others. Both of them had been interviewed earlier in February when I did my pilot research. The interview process looked the same, apart from me calling them and not them contacting me. Also number three and seven in the interview process below was made verbally and not in writing with these two individuals.

Interview planning process:

1. Advertisement in regional newspaper.
2. People calling me saying they wanted to participate.
3. Sending them letters by mail where I explain the study and how the interviews are to be implemented.
4. Contact with the responders again, deciding date and time to meet.
5. Interviewing and recording the interview, at the same time take notes.

---

5 Morhed, 2000: 37, 38
6 Lindblad, 1998: 45
7 Kitchin & Tate, 2000: 213, 214
6. Write down the interview and make a smaller text version to conclude.
7. Send the smaller text version to the responder and ask if they want to add something, in case that I have misunderstood something.
8. Compare/ find similarities/ differentials in the interviews.
9. At the end of C. essay a letter are send to the responders, thanking them for participating and telling them where they can find the essay to read it.

The interviews have been taking place in the homes of the responders in all cases but one (at responder’s request) and have been recorded by a tape recorder. Words and phrases have been written down while the interviews where conducted in case the tape recorder would seize to function. The interviews took place in the homes of the individuals to create a more relaxed environment, at the same time it was interesting to see what their home looked like. After conducting the interview, it is written down and codes are added for example for pause and laughter. A categorizing of words are made and also a text version in a shorter model. Comparison between my original questions and the answers in the interview are implemented, and also compared with other conducted interviews to find similarities.

The small summarised text version is sent to the individuals that were interviewed, giving them an opportunity to contact me in case they think there is something that I have misunderstood.

In one interview the tape recorder did not work. In another interview the respondent felt uncomfortable being recorded. At one time the interview was conducted outside the responder’s home, her own request, at a public place in Karlstad. Recording was not possible at this place. Notes have been the material from these interviews.

The interviews have been conducted mostly at 11 a clock. I have brought pastry and coffee with me to the responder and the interview has then been conducted over a cup of coffee, to create a comfortable situation. From my point of view, this worked very well. The time for the interviews have been vary between 30 minutes to 1, 5 hour depending on how much the responder had to tell me.

1.5 Things that might have gone wrong

My intention was to use a structured open ended interview technique but I must admit that sometimes the situation during the interviews “forced” me to put that aside and use my verbal ability.

In some cases I have not asked the questions exactly as they where written, and sometimes not in the specific order. That is, because sometimes the responders have already answered my question in an earlier question. Then they might become irritated and think that I haven’t been paying attention to what they have been saying. If I’ve felt that the responders already have answered well and clear I haven’t wanted to create irritation by asking again- to get the same answer they’ve already provided.

If the respondents have not understood the question, I have added a word or a phrase to create dialog. This has worked very well and the respondents have continued talking and answering the question.
Despite of these “wrongs” that have occurred I have felt that the interviews have worked very well. It has been a very relaxed situation, almost like talking to a friend. I stress that I have been keeping to the interview script and the order pretty good, but sometimes I have felt that the conversation have stagnated and therefore my “verbal ability” have been used, to get back on track.

I can not totally confirm that the responders have answered my questions honestly. But I have during the interview never felt any reason or indication of none honestly.

The individuals that have been interviewed can be divided into two categories; five individuals that contacted me after reading my advert and two individuals that I previously had used in my pilot study. As stated before, the interview process didn’t look exactly the same in the two groups. I, myself contacted the two individuals when doing a pilot study in the beginning of the year (2006) after hearing their story from others. Number three and seven in the interview process, mentioned before, have not been made in writing but verbally.

It can also be discussed if these two interview groups are consisting of “different” people. The ones who contacted me after reading my advert, is most likely to be individuals who very carefully read the newspaper and a have time to do it. Maybe this excludes younger people, who in many cases do not buy the local newspaper.

1. 6 Delimitation

A geographical transportation to destinations far away was because of the economical costs not possible. That is why the interviews are concentrated to the county of Värmland and especially around Karlstad were the essay is written.

Advertising was only possible in one of the two largest newspapers in the county because of the economical cost. I choose the largest one that the majority of inhabitants in the county of Värmland read.

Of all the people that contacted me after reading my advert, saying that they wanted to participate in the research, I interviewed all but one individual. I chose not to interview this person because she was very old and she had had her experience when she was a child. She also was sick at the time and lived quit far away, but still in Värmland.

One interview was conducted with two respondents at the same time, a man and his wife. They both talked about the same experience.

Interpretations of phenomenon of this character are many, and I find it impossible to relate to all of them. Due to that fact, I am, in the next chapter explaining the historical overview, how some interpretations were given rise to, and how they regard unexplainable phenomenon. My following empirical part will consist of description about the history, first the time period before Christianity, then the church declining role and importance in the church, then the Spiritism development and what made it so popular and then I will explain Parapsychology and at last compare these believes with the old faiths in mother earth and other gods that were worshipped before Christianity. In the following part I will also put scientific explanations to
the experiences. This believes are different ways to relate to unexplainable experiences, but I intend to stand objective in the sense that I will not evaluate them. It is not in my intention with this essay to make any judgement or standpoints about these different faiths. My interest lay in the responder’s thoughts and interpretations of their experiences and their reactions to these experiences.
2. Historical overview of different belief systems

Human beings are the only species on earth that has the ability to think about the meaning of life. We are the only ones, who from an outside perspective, can look at ourselves and question; why we are here? What is the purpose with our lives?

In this chapter different beliefs are discussed. Science is a way to believe and understand the world but it is not a religion. The importance of science today is an result of a very long development, many hundreds of years. In Universities and schools teaching and learning is scientifically based and considered as the ultimate knowledge.8 Scientifically questions and problems are anything that can be systematic questionable. What is put beside that definition is questions that consider the nature of reality, questions like are there a God? What is the meaning with life?9 I therefore keep apart scientific explanations and religious beliefs. Knowledge in the world of today is bound to scientific explanations; any other knowledge discussed below belongs to religious thoughts.

To keep the different times in history apart, I have named them; before Christianity, Christianity, industrialisation where the church role decline and then finally modern time around 2000th century. It is possible to interpret that I have made the classification, from Christianity as the norm, but I like to make it clear, that that has never been my intention. A grouping was necessary to make the reading easier, and this was one way of doing it. Another way of doing it could have been to take modernization starting at 1700th century as a zero point; before modernization, modernization and postmodernism. But still it would not keep times before Christianity apart and in my perspective and topic it is important to do so. You will find out later in the text, why. I am aware that the time grouping is not distinct. It is a matter of a slowly changing process. There for I leave the discussion about time and specific historical moments to others and continue with my discussion. Modernization, as I have chosen at 2000th century looks different in different places on earth. I have in this essay been concentrating on Sweden and Swedish conditions and perspectives. It is important that the reader is fully aware of this otherwise it will be easy to misunderstand.

Different ways to believe influence peoples reaction to things in the world around them, including unexplainable phenomenon. Different religious thoughts and science does not necessarily have to be put apart. As you will read there are connections in the ways of thinking. Many religions, including the biggest ones today for example, Christianity, have God as a personified power. Before Christianity, people worshipped different energies and systems in nature, not one specific source. This can be compared to science, that also believe in different components and how they ensemble each other. It is easier to see a connection between times before Christianity and people’s beliefs then and science compared to Christianity and science. But, as I said, you, the reader will find out this by yourself from reading. Now, back to why humans are so possessed in finding explanations, and what explanations people have had historically.

8 Andersen, 1994: 11
9 Esaiasson, Gilljan, Oscarsson, Wangnerud, 2002: 27
2.1 A changing world

A long time ago, the exclusive rights to answers to the questions of life belonged to the church. But in the 1800th century it all changed and the church was starting to become more and more questioned. Science had made its entrance into the world. In the 1900th century the belief in the future rose, it was the time of industrialisation. Many people moved to the cities and their old traditional ways of living was changed, also the tradition of going to church. Some started to find faith in the new churches that were established. Life was designed by the time of work.

In the 2000th century the Swedish church lost their monopoly to represent the “right religion”, that is when the multitude of religious beliefs developed. The power of religion declined in society and the decision makers in the country no longer had an interest in people’s beliefs. The individual was free to develop a mind of their own. That is were the individuals are today. Many people find it difficult to know what to listen to, there are so many alternatives. We are living in a world of decisions, society puts pressure on its inhabitants and more and more persons get sick because of stress. There is an insecure feeling about the future, anxiety flourish, about life but also about death. Religion made us feel safe; we knew what was going to happen. Today we are in many meanings without knowing.

2.2 Before Christianity

In old times, death was a natural part in the life of humans. It was close to us. We made ceremonies to honour our ancestors and asked them for blessings and advise. In Scandinavia and Europe ceremonies where conducted at the end of winter, at midsummer, and at harvest times to ensure good harvest, which was extremely important. The ceremonies were festive compared with the ceremonies we have today in churches and cemeteries, that are, for example often sad. Then it was a time of joy.

Unexplainable phenomena were at that time nothing to be afraid of. Living creature as trolls, brownies and spirits was a part of life that where to tech us. Stories about other beings on earth had different purposes, to learn, to frighten or tell old traditions. But most importantly, these stories created belonging between people and to their place. It was a way to spend time together. This belief can be compared with religion. They both gave rise to bonds between people and had a great importance in the social life. It gave people roles to live after and created identity both individually and in group. By following quotation by E. Adams Hoebel I can also interpret these beliefs as a cultural component in society.

“[T]he integrate system of learning behaviour patterns which are characterized to the member of a society and which are not the result of biological inheritance...culture is not genetically predetermined; it is noninstinctive...(culture) is wholly the result of social inventions and is transmitted and maintained solely through communication and learning.”

---

10 Arlebrand, 1998: 10
11 Eason, 2005: 12
13 Blij, 1996: 218
Culture is a result of integration between people, a social creation that includes values, religion, language, family, sex and sexuality\textsuperscript{14}. It is \textit{“the man made part of environment.”}\textsuperscript{15}

In my point of view these older traditions and beliefs, made nonofficial rules and laws how life should be lived. A conviction that bound people together, that made them feel belongingness to each other and find a meaning of life.

Death was a natural part of life but so also where the spirits who came to visit. In most places people believed that ghosts came to help relatives and give them advise, few people thought they where miserable and unhappy “people”. All thou, traditional ways existed to prevent the dead from visit. For example, after washing the dead, the basin with water, which had been used in the process, was put into peaces, destroyed.\textsuperscript{16} As we can se it was a very relaxed feeling connected with ghosts, this has unfortunately changed.

\section*{2.3 Where to find religious beliefs today?}

At the 2000\textsuperscript{th} century society developed so people had a better way of living. The standard in houses got better, the economy rose and the medical care advanced. Death was no longer present in life.\textsuperscript{17} It became a subject of fear and insecurity, a subject that humans did not want to talk about, a part of our lives that we try our best to forget. It will not happen to me. But at the same time, death is the only thing that we can be sure of.

Alexander J Marcus, doctor in oriental medicine, anthropology and epistemology, claim that humans fear of death have brought greediness and conflicts to the world. He says that the world would have been a happier place if humans were to believe that they do not only have one body and one life. The material demand creates misery.\textsuperscript{18} J. Marcus himself is convinced that humans are to develop a higher level of spiritual awareness on earth. Buddha, Christ, Sokrates, Lao Tze, all of the religious leaders, were teachers who were to teach humans the right way. But by lack of knowledge people started to idolize them instead, and that’s when the religions of the world were constructed. He says that this was a misunderstanding, the revelation is happening inside ourselves. It is a journey of our own. We are our own masters.\textsuperscript{19} He says that religious beliefs and sects only give rise to conflicts and problems in the world. The core in the masters teaching was love and harmony between the people of the earth.\textsuperscript{20} Even if J. Marcus has some strange theories that I can not agree with, I agree with some of his reflection on this. People of today seek for stability, but wherever they look, they can not find it.

Maybe that is why we are getting more and more frustrated and give trust to a lot of “newer religions”. There is an increase of different beliefs today. Humans find answers from different directions to their questions, but never the less, she seldom finds a logical connected idea for the whole picture. It has been created a space for values, that before were considered as deviant. Religion and Science are no longer considered as norms for knowledge; they have

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} Knox, Marston, 2004: 176
\textsuperscript{15} Blij, 1996: 218
\textsuperscript{16} Wideén, 1982: 74, 77, 78
\textsuperscript{17} Eason, 2005: 13
\textsuperscript{18} J. Marcus, 1993: 102, 103
\textsuperscript{19} J. Marcus, 1993: 25,
\textsuperscript{20} J. Marcus, 1993: 78
\end{flushleft}
lost their previous status. The common attitude has for example been that paranormal phenomena are put beside what we, in our culture, in the west, has taken for normal, the truth.\textsuperscript{21} Beliefs in ghosts, healing, astrology, belong to the paranormal, phenomena’s that it is difficult to find a general explanation to\textsuperscript{22}. I, myself, interpret the word paranormal as a synonym word to unexplainable. But what do other people think about paranormal, unexplainable things?

2.4 The paranormal phenomena

Whitehead, 1974 and Jorgensen, 1982 have showed in studies about the paranormal in America that individuals seek truth, independent of were it is, without being attached to one principle\textsuperscript{23}. That confirms what has been discussed earlier. In 1978 and 1980 the Swedish magazine \textit{Allers} made an unscientific interview study about people’s attitude towards paranormal phenomena. The study was made two times and questions were designed as one; if humans have ability to experience paranormal phenomena, two; what they thought of the phenomena in general. The answer to the first type of question showed that two out of three believed that humans do have the ability to experience unexplainable things. Every tenth, from the study in 1978, had experienced healing, contact with dead people, and out of body experiences. Every fifth, from the study in 1978, had had experienced dreams that became true, notice and telepathies. There were no distinguish about education level, age or where they lived. Women were more likely to believe in the paranormal phenomena then men.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1994, a study at Uppsala University was conducted about teenager’s attitude toward the paranormal. 1488 people participated in the age of 16-18, from four different cities in Sweden. Sixteen statements about paranormal experiences are given to the responder, and they were to answer by marking one of following; I totally agree, I agree partly, I partly not agree, I totally do not agree. (Translation from Swedish) Every fifth agreed that humans could by mind move materials, that rebirth after death was possible, that walking under a ladder means bad luck. Every third agreed that it is possible to have contact with the dead, that telepathic is possible, that humans can walk on earth even after death and that UFO sometimes visit earth. Every second was convinced that it is possible to know what is going to happen in the future and that it is possible to predict things. Education level, social background, place to live did not influence. Girls were more likely to “believe” than boys apart when it came to the UFO question, were boys where more likely to believe.\textsuperscript{25}

Later in 1994 the same study was conducted but this time the responders where adults in the age of 18-79. The questions and the alternative answers were the same. One third said they did not believe in contact with the dead, one third did not know what to believe about the phenomena, and one third thought that it was possible. Again, women were more likely to believe than men. Also, the older you were, the less likely you where to believe in contact with dead people.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{21} Wikström, 1998: 51-54, 56
\textsuperscript{22} Morhed, 2000: 28
\textsuperscript{23} Wikström, 1998: 56
\textsuperscript{24} Wikström, 1998: 58, 59
\textsuperscript{25} Wikström, 1998: 60
\textsuperscript{26} Wikström, 1998: 62
Common in these three research projects is that women are more likely to believe in paranormal than men. It also shows that there is a great interest among all groups in society, independent of social background, education level and where you live. Even if science has a strong position in society today, possibly due to the prosperity it has brought, it seems that the curiosity and interest in the paranormal is also quite big. According to science, phenomena’s shall follow the laws of nature and physics to exist\textsuperscript{27}. Obviously people are interested in other explanations. And they have been for a long time. Starting in the 1600\textsuperscript{th} century.

2. 5 Occultism

Church had, as earlier discussed, a great power. People that believed in other things were to be followed and harassed, therefore secret occult organizations where established. The word occult comes from Latin “occultus” that means secret or hidden. Occultism thinks that there is a spiritual reality that normally is hidden for humans. But if she mentally develops, she can learn to use her true capacity, her supernatural abilities. When the church lost its cultural and political power, the organizations where able to stand free, but much, of tradition is still to be secret. A hundred years ago they started to publish own materials that earlier had been secret, also to members. Most occultism organizations have one open part and one secret and hidden part, possibly due to earlier traditions.\textsuperscript{28}

There are different kinds of occultism, for example, some date from old traditional beliefs in gods and Mother Nature, before Christianity, some date to the philosophical train of thoughts. Almost every occult leader is said to have received messages from “life after death”. They believe in systems of energy, both inside humans and outside. After death there are other worlds, to be exact, seven worlds between material and what they call “the absolute”. Many occultists are convinced that everything that happens in the physical world is “recorded” in the level of astral, the level between the real and the spiritual, in the “akashakronikan”. Some claim they have ability to read and get exact knowledge from events in history from this level. Occultisms way to revelation is spiritual awareness of who human deep down are. God is everything, and everything in the world is created by him and is therefore fulfilled by God’s energy.\textsuperscript{29}

2. 6 Spiritism

Spiritism, a part of occultism, is especially interesting from my point of view because they believe and concentrate in the contact with spirits. The hypothesis that spirits can and will communicate with human are old believes and exist in some way among all religions. Never the less, Spiritism does not appear as an independent religion.\textsuperscript{30} Stig Marklund, priest, says that this approach can be called a religious- beyond- worldly view of life, were ghosts phenomena are believed to be a small part of a bigger consistency. The communication occurs with an individual, ghost, from the world beyond death. Most commonly the communication

\textsuperscript{27} Marklund, 1996: 128

\textsuperscript{28} Arlebrand, 1998: 64, 65

\textsuperscript{29} Arlebrand, 1998: 66, 67

\textsuperscript{30} Arlebrand, 1996: 74
takes part through a medium, often a woman.\textsuperscript{31} Most of the occult leaders have been mediums, and claim that they have contact with the "higher developed" spirits. With higher developed spirits they mean messengers from the Great White Brotherhood, a group of humans that after their death have been appointed as masters.\textsuperscript{32} From them they are said to have gotten important information about different matters, for example how people shall live their life, the right way to revolution, and what happens after death. A lot of religious groups have been founded on this basis of mediums.

A medium can be psychic, which means that she deliver messages from the world of spirits through a leader or controller, a ghost that talks through her. Or she can be physical, when phenomena appear as sounds or things that change place.\textsuperscript{33} Many famous people are said to be in contact with the world of spirits. Some say that they have gotten instructions from the other side to create artistically materials, like paintings, poems or books.

The famous Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf maintained her belief that she had out of worldly perceptions her whole life. As an attempt to explain this feeling she has said "It feels like I am at two places at the same time." \textsuperscript{34} Selma Lagerlöf was very interested in spirituality and her library contained a lot of books about this subject. She also wrote many stories about ghosts and unexplainable phenomena. Her experience is much alike others, it is found at being in two places in the same time, bodily and mentally. The same thing happens when we tell ghost stories. We tell them when we are located in a safe and comfortable environment; mentally we are somewhere else, maybe a big dark forest or in a castle. Stories like that fascinate us because we are safe but in the same time unsafe in the story. Simplified this experience, being at two places at the same time, can have psychical explanations. The experience of movement in time can be explained by the contact between the left and the right half of the brain. Sometimes they do not work in the same speed and then this feeling arise.\textsuperscript{36} But that is of course not the Spiritists explanation to the phenomena. But back to how it all started, what where the factors that made Spiritism so popular?

As we have been talking about earlier, the stability in the church changed in the 1600\textsuperscript{th} century. There were questions that people felt that the church could not answer. They therefore started to turn to other directions to get their answers, for example to Spiritism. In 1848 there was an increased interest and stir in Spiritism. It is called the birth of modern Spiritism. It was also the time when Spiritism was getting more and more questioned.

\textit{The birth of modern Spiritism}

It all started when the Fox sisters heard knocks in their family home in New York. They developed a code system and where able to communicate with the source of the knocks. As it came to knowledge it was an old trade/commerce man that told them that he had been murdered by the last owner of the house and buried in the basement.\textsuperscript{37} When they started to dig in the basement they could not find anything, the hole was constantly getting filled with water. In rapports made later there are indications that body parts were found but that is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Marklund, 1996: 127
\item \textsuperscript{32} Arlebrand, 1996: 70
\item \textsuperscript{33} Brookesmith, 1987: 22
\item \textsuperscript{34} Wideén, 1982: 36
\item \textsuperscript{35} Translation swe; "Jag befinner mig liksom på två ställen samtidigt."
\item \textsuperscript{36} Wilson, 1988: 82, 83, 85
\item \textsuperscript{37} Arlebrand, 1996: 74, 75
\end{itemize}
nothing that Mrs Fox mentioned in her official statement the 4th of April 1848. Opponents to Spiritism made fun of the Fox sisters and it became almost impossible to them to live a normal life. Others pay tribute to them. The phenomena that the Fox sisters were exposed to developed from only being knocks to concrete communications with spirits and writing. By time furniture movement, light and sound phenomena became more and more usual. The 17th of April in 1851 Mrs Culver, a woman that was married into the family, made an official statement where she said that the Fox sisters where all fake and a fraud. Mrs Culver had been an assistant in the Fox sister’s demonstrations and she said that the sisters had taught her how to do the knocking with her toes. That Mrs Culver could demonstrate the knocking with her toes made her story even more trustworthy. The 24th of September, Margaretta, and her sister Catherine confessed. One year later both of the sisters, Margaretta and Catherine withdrew their confession and claimed that they had been exposed to pressure by powerful people. They choose never to mention anyone by name. Finally, the Fox sisters were never revealed as frauds, even if they where very carefully investigated. In 1904, when all the Fox sisters had died, an old wall fell down in their old family home where the knocking had first started. In the wall relics from a human was found. It was never possible to establish who the remains belonged to. 38 Some people say that the sisters were a fraud. Spiritists deny this of course. They believe that the pressure on the girls became too big and too difficult for the sisters to handle. Opponents say that they learned to make money out of what started as a funny trick. And they made a lot of money. However, at the end, both the girls were very poor and had alcohol problems. They were buried in graves for poor people. Fox sisters, even if they wanted it or not, made Spiritism a popular and much debated subject. 39

Despite that other mediums in the following period where exposed as frauds, the Spiritism grew stronger and the interest increased. It can be explained with a number of factors. First of all there was a very turbulent time in the western parts of the world. The industrial revolution had changed people’s lives drastically and old cultural patterns were dissolved. Charles Darwin’s new thoughts and published books put pressure on the church which had difficulties how to handle the new discoveries. People lost patience with the churches old traditional way and felt free to find a way of their own. Socialism grew stronger by every day in society and America had loud debates about the slave issue. But not to forget, it was also the world of men. Women had no political, social, spiritual or sexual power. Many women saw Spiritism as one way to spiritual freedom, power and equality. 40 Other reasons for the interest in Spiritism can have been the increased interest among royalties for séances, the first scientific rapport that confirmed Spiritism, the foundation of “Society for psychical research” and the First World War that claimed numerous victims. 41 Obvious, people need comfort in disturbing and turbulent times. When the world we live in is changing drastically or when a dear and near relative, friend or lover passes away we need something that can make us feel safe, something or someone that can convince us that the one we are missing not are gone forever, that they are having a good time and that it is possible to meet them again some day. We can not give up hope and the string of love we have to that person. We want something that can insure us that the love was not a complete waste, that the love will not die, and that the love will be relived with that person again when we meet. It is in times with instability, wonder and sorrow that most people tend to turn to alternative directions for answers, especially in times of death, because that is an unknown future. Spiritism can provide information about life after death and contact with the dead. Many people turn to Spiritism

38 Brookesmith, 1987: 64-70
39 Carlsson, 1991: 22, 37
40 Carlsson, 1991: 23, 30
41 Arlebrand, 1996: 76, 77
when it comes to matters that the traditional science can not answer or when the thoughts of he church are too vivid.

**Basic thoughts in Spiritism**

The basic thought in Spiritism is that the physical death is only a transformation to another level of existence. After death individuals continue to develop mentally and experience further deaths and levels of existence. Totally there is a journey of seven spheres. “Messengers” from the world of spirits describe the moment of death as peaceful and without pain even if the physical body sometimes shows us differently. In life after death the ability to imagine is incredible, everything can be created out of the power of the mind. After travelling in the seven spheres the individual comes to the “land of summer”. The goal in this level is to understand that everything that you believed was valuable in your life is in fact worthless. The ones that have had a life on earth consistent with violence, crime, and hate towards other humans are telling about another place, a dark and lonely place, what they call “the land of winter”. The individual are to stay there until she starts to listen to the better half of her self. Be aware that Spiritists do not describe the land of summer and winter as hell and heaven. It is not a question of punishment and rewards; it is a matter of different educational levels. Both the land of summer and the land of winter exist because of the character of the individual. As soon as she develops a higher spiritual awareness she will be transported to a higher level.\(^42\) At the end of all the levels, the individual has to make the decision if she wants to return to earth and be reborn or if she wants to leave the planet and take a step out in the unknown, and start over at a new place.\(^43\) But then, what about ghosts? Who and what are they?

**Ghosts and spirits**

Allan Kardec, one of the first and much intense Spiritists, well educated in both chemistry and anatomy, wrote “The spirits book” a classical in Spiritism where he explains his theory about ghosts. He believes that when the body dies, the soul is reborn into a new body. Between this two levels of existence it is possible that the “individual” wander around without being aware of his condition.\(^44\) Another theory is that humans and ghosts live in parallel universes and when these worlds get close, humans and spirits have the ability to become aware of each other\(^45\). Lindsay Harrison, medium, has a different explanation. She says that ghosts are the ones that choose not to follow the tunnel of light when they die. The ones that refuse to leave earth and understand that they are dead. Spirits, on the other hand, are those who went into the light but sometimes comes back to visit us, by different reasons. She compares the different dimensions with a fan. When it rotates at a low speed, it is easy to see the blades, this is the life on earth. On medium speed it becomes more difficult to see the blades but it is still possible to see some of them. This is the dimension of the ghosts. On high speed the blades rotate really fast and it is not possible to see them one by one. You get the impression that they do not exist at all. This is the dimension of the spirits.\(^46\)

Betty Shine, a medium who specialises in animals, says that the easiest way to be aware of ghosts is by pets. If a dog sees a ghost/spirit and feel threatened in any way it will show teeth,

\(^42\) Brookesmith, 1987: 31, 32
\(^43\) Brookesmith, 1987: 37
\(^44\) Wilsson, 1998: 239, 240
\(^45\) Eason, 2005: 25
\(^46\) Harrison, 2003: 20-22
snarl and maybe even try to attack the empty place where the ghost is located. Cats became all stiff and their eyes change colour. They will stay this way until the ghost disappears.47

As we can see there are many explanations to ghosts and spirits, maybe not surprisingly because no one can be told what is right or wrong. Religions have many similar histories; one example is the history of Jesus in Christianity. In the bible is to be read that he several times after his death came back to appear in front of his friends48. Christians of course do not interpret the same way as Spiritists do but I felt that it was interesting to make the comparison. And while there are many who believe in spirits and ghosts, there are also many sceptics.

Sceptics

In the 1900th century when Spiritism and mediums became a fashion many scientists started to question and investigate their ability. The top elite in science, including many winners of the Nobel price became committed to unveil mediums. But were they the right ones to expose, did they have the knowledge? Of course, they were all good at mathematics, physics and chemistry but they had something that stood in their way, the ethics of their profession. The scientists had difficulties to expose, because it was difficult for them to believe that some people where to live of deceit, as many of the mediums did.49 But even if the scientists sometimes got deceived, other groups in society were more successful.

To many illusionists it became a mission to expose frauds; one of them was Harry Houdini. When his dear mother passed away he started to turn to mediums to get contact with her again. He participated in hundreds of séances, but instead of meeting his mother he meet mediums that in reality only where bad illusionists. He saw all their tricks and the disappointment was so vivid that he dedicated the rest of his life to reveal mediums.50 The tricks where sometimes simple, others more difficult. Much of the success depended on the visitors mind and ability to imagine. Mediums worked with getting the right mood in the audience, it all depended on the audience’s willingness to believe. Then they could easily be fooled. Despite this, some mediums and some events, happenings, which have been documented, have never been exposed. There are simplified no explanation to the phenomena. One of this involves members of the SPR.

Is there proof of existence after death?

Society for physical Research, SPR was founded in 1882 and their aim was to study unexplainable phenomena. The four founders, Professor Henry Sidgwich, his wife Eleanor, Fredric W. H Myers and Edmund Gurbey where good and respected academics in the world of science. They had the interest in the survival of the soul in common. They made a great work for example investigating mediums but their work did not stop there. The most amazing event happened after the death of Gurney, Henry Sidwich and Myers. In a number of messengers Myers and others spirits started to communicate with different mediums. Between the years of 1901 and 1930 over 3000 documents where collected. Separately the messages made no sense but together they founded a puzzle. The investigators, Eleanor Sidwich and her brother Gerald Balfour made the conclusion that the messages was made by different spirits/

47 Shine, 2004: 22, 24
48 Bibeln, Pauls första brev
49 Carlsson, 1991: 58, 62
50 Carlsson, 1991: 102
persons who were good at classical literature, as Myers, Sidwich and Gurney were. The message was constructed with a play with words and anagram that Myers had been very interested in. He had also said when he was still alive; that the ultimate proof of survival after death should be a collected document from a group of spirits/individuals instead of a lonely one. By Spiritists this is said to be one of the greatest proves of existence after death. Sceptics claim that SPR’s investigators made a consumption of their own. It could have been wishful thinking, due to that fact that they had been studying this phenomena’s during a very long time. But what other explanations can it then be to experiences and phenomena like this?

2.7 Other explanations

Some believe that the psychic ability of humans can create experiences like this, as a way of handling difficult things in life. It is simply there when we need it. It is also a possibility that mediums have a personal disorder when the real personality is replaced with another character that has a completely different personality. The condition can be created if the person has been exposed to an event and situation that involved emotional shock. The new personalities are a way of taking care of emotions and feelings. Some mediums stayed sceptic about the spirits that talked to them, their whole lives, one of them was Eileen Garrett. She preferred to think about the spirits as products of her unconsciousness. She says that she never thought of “them” as spirits even if they themselves seemed to think that. The situation with different personalities within one body can for example be exposed by hypnosis. Following happened during an experiment with hypnosis by P Carpenter, an American scientist in psychology.

The experiment took place in front of an audience. One of the persons in the crowd was to take a step forward to participate. Carpenter said that he had the ability to make the philosopher Socrates come back from the dead and if the person would like to talk to him, this could be arranged. The following two hours the person and Socrates had a conversation and the person was told to repeat everything that Socrates said so that the audience could hear the whole conversation. The audience where so amazed by the answers that came from “Socrates” that some actually believed that there was a spirit in the room. The persons under hypnosis than later on had opportunity to talk to other philosophers and “...what emerged from these conversations was a wonderful system of spiritual philosophy..., so clear, so plausible, so perfectly consistent with itself and the known laws of Nature that the company sat spellbound.” The person under hypnosis had before been very sceptic to spirits and other existences, but he accepted it totally now because he could see them with his own eyes. Spiritists in the audience where convinced that it really where spirits present until Carpenter stopped the hypnosis.

To study the unexplainable experiences and trying to find explanations is called parapsychology. Parapsychology has developed from criticism towards Spiritism. Earlier, parapsychology found explanations in the mental condition of the individual. Today parapsychologists have more modern explanations. They believe that ghosts are a mental creation who develops to protect the individual. The experiences are a psychological way to

---

51 Carlson, 1991: 71, 92, 93, 94
52 Carlsson, 1991: 84
53 Wilsson, 1988: 57
54 Castellan: 2002: 9
handle difficult things in life. Parapsychology tries to explain phenomenon that science cannot. In 2004, a new professorship in psychology was created at Lund University in Sweden, to study the paranormal and hypnosis. This was the first of its kind in Sweden and a massive debate started. Many said that the donated money could have been used to more serious studies, others that these kinds of studies are good and necessity because the phenomena must be explained and none mystified. In Great Britain this research already exist at twelve Universities. In science, parapsychology is not admitted as scientifically.

Science only works with obvious and scientific processes. Therefore it cannot comment in unexplainable experiences, it cannot deny or verify it at this time. But not to forget, there are many examples of phenomena that earlier have been considered as unexplainable but within time has been explained scientifically.

Believes are often created based on the thought that science can not explain everything in this world. But the existence of God does not fail when finding scientific explanations, theories and models does not have to exclude a power/force behind the phenomenon. An individual can just the same believe that the scientific model gives a true description of God’s mechanisms. Antagonism exist between different believes and science, but they can also coexist. Just because a phenomena can be proven scientifically does not mean that there is not something behind it, creating it, which is not the phenomena itself. But in a scientifically perspective the unexplainable phenomena is not regarded any differently then religious beliefs.

55 Marklund, 1996: 134, 135
57 Renard, 1989: 108, 124, 126
58 Renard, 1989: 86
3. How people relate to place – a geographical perspective

Homo Sapience is the only race on earth that has spread over all the continents. It started in Africa about six million years ago and has continued since then. Factors of importance when finding a place to live, a home, was climate, history, ground, the quality of the soil and water maintenance. 59 Factors that in the world of today also has a great importance. Humans still have basic needs that have to be provided for in order to survive and the home is still a very important place in a human’s life. Knox and Marston write that places influences human and her choices in life. A place provides an emotional and cultural symbol, but it also contributes to memories and belongingness. “Place provide the setting for people’s daily life. It is in these settings that people learn who and what they are, and how they should think and behave.”

In human geography we can talk about the concept of “sense of place” It can be explained as following; “feelings evoked among people as a result of the experiences and memories that they associate with a place, and to the symbolism that they attach to it.” 60 According to this theory the feeling for a place is made by our memories and associations that we connect to the place mentally. Anne Buttimer says that human’s personal and cultural identity is bound to the identity of the place. When losing a place or home, an identity crisis is often produced.

The feelings for a place are different depending on if you are an outsider or insider. If, belonging to the place, e.g. you have a close contact to the place, you are an insider with feelings that can have been created out of language, family or history. Factors that make you feel at home. An outsider on the other hand does not base the feeling for the place by relations to other people; he bases it on the feeling of belongingness to buildings, nature and milieu. He describes the place verbally from e.g. types of houses, the use of the land and political boundaries. He is without cultural understanding of why the place look like it does. The Insider gives, compared to the outsider, the place values out of her every day life. The insider and outsider see different things in a place and give it mentally different values. This mental image influences the way they act in the place.

One other theory that regards sense of place, feelings for a place is the territorial theory that sees the problematic in another way. That humans have a need of a specific location, territory, to feel safe, get stimulated and develop an identity. It can appear as a favourite place on the bus. If there are a lot of people in a place which we are fond of, we may start to feel insecure, sad, stressed and pushed to the limit which can bring forth aggressiveness and light depressions. Opposite theory consist of the thought that humans have no biological need of a special place, but that this need is created and learned socially and culturally. Yi- Fu Tuan, a recognized geographer, has a similar idea that he calls “fields of care” which illustrate the emotional investment people make in a place. He explains it by the human verbal expression and values that human give a place. Humans describe the place with words that belong to a human’s personality and soul.

59 Blij, 1996: 64
60 Knox, Marston, 2001: 4
61 Knox, Marston, 2001: 237
62 Buttimer, 1978: 14
63 Knox, Marston, 2001: 238
64 Buttimer, 1978: 20
65 Knox, Marston, 2001: 236
66 Agnew, Livingstone, Rugers, 1996: 444, 445, 446
4. Feelings of insecurity and fear

As discussed earlier, unintelligible things seem to make humans wonder and worry. But the feeling, of insecurity and fear does not only exist for the unintelligible, it also exists in other parts of society. Commonly by these wonders and worries that are surrounding humans is that she in all cases tries to solve it and handle it, but in what way? How is life designed by the situation? And in what way does it affect the every day life? What other sources for insecurity and fear are there in society?

As I am about to exemplify there are many and different situations that creates fear, but first of all I think it is important to understand what fear is. Öhman, professor in psychology, refer to fear as a reaction to threat. This is a biological and genetic ability that all species have; it is a matter of survival. Threat can come from the outside as for example someone chasing you to hurt you, or it can be an inside threat, a psychological fear of, for example losing your mind. The threat does not have to be real; it can just the same be imagined. Evasion and avoidances is connected to dangerous situations where we feel threatened.67

Three examples:

Teenage groups

In England, Salford city, Bankhill, a part of Manchester’s city area, criminality has created fear amongst the inhabitants. The adult especially fear teenagers and youth groups the most. When seeing a young boy or girl doing something criminal before their eyes, like stealing, they do not have the courage to react because they are afraid that they then will return with his/her gang to get revenge. The inhabitants do not feel a local belongingness as a protection; they do not even put trust in their neighbours. On the other hand, young people, aware of the problems, have found ways to avoid interaction with bigger youth groups. They try to be invisible, try to avoid doing anything that might upset them. The also say that it is important to know someone in these groups. They do not steal from people they know.68

In this situation there are different ways of handling the fear. Adults avoid reacting to crime when they see it, afraid that a bigger group will come back to seek revenge. Young people interact partly with the groups, saying that it is important that they know who you are. But they also stay “invisible”, by not doing something that might upset or point him/her out. The young ones are spending time at the same places as the teenage groups, often on the street and do not feel the same fear as the adult do. In my point of view the adult stay away so much that their picture of the problem is mostly based on their imagination. It is obvious that the young ones in this area live inside and among the situation, the problem and that the adults stay away. Maybe it is possible to interpret this as an inside and outside perspective of the problem with criminal teenage groups.

Woman’s fear in public places

Comparison with men, women are in general more afraid in public places.69 The fear does not have to be real. It can be imagined but it still affects the individual negative and influences her

67 Öhman, 1994: 9, 10
68 Sahlin, Åkerström, 2000: 248-250
69 Ros, 2001: 2
movement patters, and life situation. Much fear can be created out of TV and others stories. But never the less, the fear is still real for the individual.

Women are most afraid of sexual related violence. Most serious and frightening is the thought of being raped. Fear influences the mobility, people as earlier discussed tend to avoid things that they feel are dangerous.

A research from Karlstad University, conducted in 2001 shows that ten out of twelve interviewed women did not feel totally safe in their living area. The interviews where taking place in a smaller community, a medium size city and a big city, Gullspång, Karlstad and Stockholm. Common by these ten women where that they felt afraid/none secure when they where alone outside at night, at dark places, and places with little people around. The research could also see reactions to the fear in the women’s behaviour. They said that they avoided certain things, like walking alone at night, they thought of how they acted, and avoided certain places. Younger women in the age of 24-35, tended to feel more afraid and unsafe than older women. They younger women were also more afraid of sexual related violence, older women of physical abuse and robbery.

Here it is quite clear that the fear affects the mobility. Certain places and certain behaviours are avoided, e.g. walking alone at night.

**Fear of people from other countries**

Xenophobia was a word that the old Greeks used to explain when being afraid of strangers. In the Nazi Germany in 1930 a new word was needed to explain the hate that the Germans founded the persecution of the Jewish people on. The new word was racism but the meaning of it had existed a long time before the Nazi.

Colour of the skin is not the only hallmark that racism is founded on. Culture is often used as a way to separate a group of people from others. It is many times taken for granted that new inhabitants in a country do not want to fit in the culture and norms in the country. But by totally adapting to the new culture, does that mean that they need to abandon their own culture? I think that is what some inhabitant’s demand of new inhabitants.

In USA the Afro-Americans have got a bad reputation. This is very strange for a country that has had immigration as a tradition during many years. Afro-Americans have become a stereotype, a subculture, and the colour of their skin makes them easy to recognize. And even if the intensiveness in racism has declined compared by 100 or 50 years ago, it still exists.

In Sweden foreigners were during a long time seen as a group of people that had to be controlled. In the beginning of 1900th century, special police offices where established with the only purpose to control people from other countries. Not until 1950 did Sweden start to

---

70 Wiklund, 1991, From Ros, 2001: 9
71 Koskela, April 1996/Nr 22: 71-72, From Ros, 2001: 15
72 Ros, 2001: 31-35
73 Fredriksson, 2003: 18, 19
74 Fredriksson, 2003: 121, 127,
75 Fredriksson, 2003: 127, 129
discuss the positive effects of immigration. But how have society developed since then, is there racism today in Sweden?

Yes! I think that question is easily answered and many can confirm it. I will show you one example. After the 11th of September 2001 when the twin towers where destroyed a hysterical fear for terrorism and Taliban’s became reality. In many harbours in Värmland terrorism fences have been put up for example in the small places Skattkärr and Grums to protect people. I can just imagine how much this has actually cost. Also, after the 11th of September people where harassed just because they had darker skin then the rest. A friend of mine, experienced people screaming at him, words like “Taliban bastard”. He was picked out because of his dark skin and dark hair. If the people screaming would have started a conversation with him, they would have noticed, that he spoke perfectly good Swedish, that he had been living in Sweden all his life and that he furthermore was from Egypt. Many innocent people where wrongly treated, also Taliban’s, because of the fear that the crash on the 11th of September brought.

**Comparison**

These three examples show different kind of fear in the society, fear of criminal teenage groups, women’s fear of public places and fear of people from other countries. The fear in all these cases ends up in a changed behaviour. When feeling insecure or afraid, the normal is put aside and instincts are taking over. The new situation someway makes us change, and we behave in manners that we normally would not. The fear in the first example made adults to insecure on how to react when they saw young teenagers stealing, in the second example women avoided certain places and behaviour, like walking alone at night or saying and acting in some ways. The third example shows how fear of people from other countries can make normal usual people act very insolent.

When experiencing an unexplainable phenomenon, it is likely that the insecurity and the fear that one might experience would conclude in a changing behaviour like the three examples showed. Important, the comparison only works if being afraid of the experience or feeling insecure. Not when experiencing the phenomenon as positive.

---

76 Oredsson, 2001: 361-362
5. Field study

The purpose with the research is to understand a few people’s interpretations of unexplainable experiences and the geographical effects of them. This chapter consists of a small summarised text version of the interviews, then a map which shows where the homes are located in Värmland and at the end a representation of similarities and differences in the interviews. Categorizing in the last part has been constructed from the questions I asked in the beginning, what I would like to have answered in the research, but new category that I found interesting to answer based on the empirical part have also been added.

5. 1 Interviews

In this chapter the interviews that have been conducted will be presented. I have chosen to do so, with a small conclusion of every interview. Mostly because I think that they are very interesting but also because it is important to present the whole situation of the individuals to understand the factors that end up in their interpretation of the experiences.

*Interview number one: woman, 54 years old.*

She has experienced two different unexplainable phenomena. The first one, when she was six years old and lived with her family in an apartment in Stockholm. In her and her sister’s bedroom, her bed was standing so that you could see the door if you lied in it. She woke up in the middle of the night and saw a person standing in the door with his arms outside from his body. He was dressed in white, had grey hair and was kind of big. He asked if she was awake and mentioned her by name. The woman started to question if she really was awake or still sleeping, so she pinched herself very hard in the arm. Then she understood that this was nothing usual that happened. It was not her mother or father. She closed her eyes hard and wished that the person would go away. When she then, dared to open her eyes, after what the woman says felt like forever, the person was gone and she managed to feel asleep again. She says that the experience made her a little bit amazed and scared. She describes it like a very special experience.

The next day she asked her family if any of them had been up that night or have noticed anything unusual. But none of them had and she decided to keep the experience to herself wondering if it might have been her grandfather that recently had passed away coming to visit them.

The second experience the woman had when she moved to Värmland with her family, husband, and three children, 16 years ago. They had decided to move back to Värmland where they both originally came from and bought a detached house in an area good for children.

In the house the woman and her husband have their bedroom just upstairs on the second floor. She says that when they had lived in the house a couple of years she started to feel that there was someone walking in the stairs by night, then standing still outside their bedroom door. She stresses that this was a feeling. Then, two or three years ago she could feel, lying in her bed, that someone was standing next to her. She did not see or hear anything, but she felt a
light cold. Then the woman then told her husband; that she did not want “it” there anymore. She didn’t mind when “it” walked in the stairs but when it come so close to her she felt that it was too near. “I wasn’t afraid... I felt that it came too close, it was trespassing on my integrity”77

By a coincidence the woman got to know a person that claimed that she had contact with the world of the spirits and she guided the woman to help the ghost to the other side. The woman says that at the end she could see a bright light and a young man. After that she hadn’t felt it anymore.

Through a friend, living in the same municipality, she got to know that the earlier owners of the house had had a son who had problems with drugs and that she later thought he killed himself. The woman says that maybe it was him wandering around. Maybe he was not welcome there when he was alive and now he just wanted to come home.

The woman says that she was never afraid and her movement patters in the house or her every day life did not change. The woman describes the experience as following. “If it is this way, then it is. I do not seek if it is true or false.”78

The woman is still living in the house where she had the experience and has never considered moving.

**Interview number two: woman, 32 years old.**

The woman rented an old house/ smaller country estate together with a friend in the northern parts of Värmland about one year. The friend of the woman had recently broken up with her boyfriend that had lived there earlier and she wanted someone to share the house and costs with. The woman had a dog and the house was located nicely so she found it very suitable. The woman lived on the first floor and the friend upstairs.

By themselves, they repaired the house a lot and used tools to do so. Often they experienced that the tools were missing and they started to blame each other or their friends that had been visiting. But then, the tools were found again in strange locations often in one of the smaller houses in the garden. The woman also says that doors and cabin doors opened by themself, no matter how orderly they had closed them. The woman’s friends’ glasses also changed location in the home.

When, sitting on the second floor, watching TV they sometimes heard steps in the stairs. At first they always thought it was one of their friends because they used to come and visit and therefore the entrance door was always unlocked. But at several occasions, no one came. She also says that she never feel alone. Like if someone was there. The woman’s dog did not like being upstairs. He often sat on the first floor barking up the stairs as if he saw something. She stresses that this is not the usual behaviour of the dog.

She says that most things happened upstairs and that she sometimes, when being home alone, avoided being there. “If you didn’t have to go upstairs, you didn’t do it.”79 She says that she

77 “Jag var inte rädd... kände att det kom för nära, alltså min integritet.”
78 “Är det så är det väl så här då och jag söker liksom inte, ta reda på om det är sant eller falskt.”
reacted differently to different things that happened. When things disappeared it was annoying but when she heard the sound of steps in the stair and when the dog was barking it felt unpleasant.

The woman’s explanation to the experience is negative energies or feelings that have stayed from an earlier owner that shot himself in the house, on the second floor, when he was in his 50 or 60s. She says that it can be negative emotions that are left; it does not necessarily have to be a ghost. But she thinks that the past in some way has to do with what they have experienced in the house. She has been told, afterwards, that the man who committed suicide was very accurate and that this could be an explanation to the tools that were found in the smaller house on the estate.

The woman and her friend moved because they didn’t get along with the landlord. She says that apart from what happened, she liked it a lot there. The house had a nice location.

This was the first time the woman experienced an unexplainable phenomena, before she had only heard about it from others. She also says that she doesn’t talk that much with others about it. People might think that you are weird then, ghosts are not supposed to exist.

After reading the small text summery from the interview, the woman called me and said that she had been thinking about the experience and why it happened. She would like to add that the experience can be compared with a footprint or DNA that have stayed in the place; invisible marks that have got stuck in time and in the house.

**Interview number three: woman, 49 years old, man 51 years old.**

The couple leased a farm in the southwest of Värmland between the years of 1995-2000. A long time ago, chapels, monasteries, and sacrifice places were common in this area. The woman and the man had been told that there was a plague put on the farm but they did not believe in it and ignored the warnings.

The couple owned one farm themselves, and then leased two others, this was one of them. The man and the woman say that they decided to lease instead of expanding their own farm. Two full time employed and one half time employed circulated on the three farms. The couple thinks that they, themselves, worked about 8 hours a day on the three farms.

In the barn most unexplainable things happened. The cows did not want to go inside when it was milking time. The man says that this is not a normal behaviour for cows, you could see that they were scared of something. They milked bad, got sick and died in high numbers. Things where thrown at them from the second floor where hay was stored, water taps where turned on by themselves, water also ran in the “wrong” direction and the electric machine that gave the cows food could sometime “go crazy” and the only way to stop it was by unplugging it. Many veterinaries visited the farm to investigate what was wrong but they could never find an explanation. Cows where also put to autopsy but the causes of death could never be established. It was especially three places in the barn were cows got more sick than in the rest of the barn. The man says that they tried, if it was possible, to avoid having cows there because it almost always ended up badly. One of the employees who lived in a house on the

79 “Var man inte tvungen att gå upp av någon anledning så gjorde man inte det.”
farm could wake up at nights by the frightened screams of the cows and a girl who worked there says that she sometimes could feel someone walking behind her back. Several times she started to cry without, as she herself has said, any specific reason. She really liked her work a lot.

During the time that the couple leased the farm many near friends and relatives experienced a lot of tragedies. One of the employees called his mother in the hospital from the phone in the barn. He got to know that she was better and was to come home sometime during the following days. One hour after talking to her, she fell in a coma and died the next day. The father of another employee got cancer and died. The brother of the man who leased the farms also suffered the same cancer but at the end he survived.

The couple got in contact with the one who leased the farm before them and the man told different amazing stories that had happened. His grandchild also died without medical explanations. They had contacted a medium but she could not make the things stop so he and his family had decided to move.

The man and the woman also decided to contact a medium and she could instantly by phone tell them that it was an evil old monk that caused the phenomena. She came to visit them. Without knowing anything about farming and cows she could say which one of the cows that where on heat and which ones that where pregnant. The man says that she was 100 percent accurate. He had veterinary rapport on the cow’s conditions. The medium could also point out the three places in the barn where cows especially had gotten sick on.

She told them that the monk put energy in hurting the ones close to them. That his name was Efraim, and that he had been living in the beginning of the time convert to Christianity. He had sacrificed both to the devil and God. The farm was built on the land of where an old monastery had existed a long time ago. The medium finally got in contact with the monk and helped him pass to the other side. She also felt that it was something else on the farm and when she came back another day she helped another evil man to the other side. She could also see a small nice man who was smoking a pipe. All in all, there where three different ghosts on the farm. Later the couple had been reading some history about the farm and found a story about a very kind man who was working at the farm and smoked a pipe.

The man says that he did not believe in this before but that he no longer can deny it. The experience has changed his attitude, before everything happened he was very sceptic. After the medium appearance on the farm the cows went directly into the barn to be milked.

The man says that the most difficult thing with the whole experience was to see the cows being that afraid, sick and dying. He describes the experience as dazed. After what he has seen he believes. They do not talk a lot about the experience, they keep it to themselves. Finally he describes the experience as a life experience. The woman says that she has become more interested in these kinds of things.

The couple stopped leasing the farm in the year of 2000 because the man suffered knee problems.

*Interview number four: Woman, 46 years old.*
The unexplainable phenomena that the woman has experienced happened two years ago, in 2004. The family, the woman, her husband and their son rented an old house built at the end of 1900th century, southwest of Karlstad. The house had been totally renovated and the second floor had been built in the 90s, later than the rest of the house. A smaller house on the estate, also built at the end of 1900th century was used as a guesthouse.

The family lived in the house one year and three months. The woman says that they rented it because the owner wanted it to be lived in and that they liked the house. She spent 24 hours a day in the house.

There are different experiences that the woman and her family have had:

The first thing happened when they moved there and had unpacked all their stuff. In the mornings the woman discovered that the pictures on the wall hang slanting. She corrected it every time but the next morning it happened again. Her husband experienced the same thing but at first he had different explanations than the woman. He thought it was vibrations caused by cars driving on the road outside.

The family’s dog reacted oddly as well, he did not like to be on the first floor and even if he had his bowl of water and food there, he would not come down. The woman says that that was not the normal behaviour of the dog. He loved food. You could see that something scared him and it was always at the same place. This thing with the dog happened in periods, sometimes everything was normal.

By night the woman woke up several times by the sound of someone walking on the first floor. All the bedrooms were at the second floor. The floorboard was very old and it made squeaking sounds when walking on them, so she could hear the steps very well. At first the woman thought it was her husband but then she saw him lying next to her in their bed. The woman points out that she never felt afraid.

The woman woke up at 02.30 one night hearing a woman talking to someone else outside. She could hear that the woman was very annoyed and indignant by something and she could hear her speaking with the common dialect in Värmland. The woman could never hear the one that she was talking to and when she looked out she could not see anyone.

In the smaller house on the estate guests used to sleep when visiting. The attic in that house was not renovated or used in any way. One night, a guest heard steps from the attic and when the woman herself tried to sleep there, she experienced it too. By every step, sawdust fell down from the second floor, in older times used as insulation. The sawdust fell down in heaps so you could very obviously see them.

Paint and other things where stored winter times in the guesthouse so the temperature on the radiator were put on 5 degree. Several times when the woman and her husband came there, the radiator had changed to 28 degree instead. Despite how carefully they controlled it, it always changed back to 28 degrees. One time a match was placed by the regulator on the radiator. The next day the match lay on the floor and the temperature was changed again.

The woman says that most things happened on the first floor of the house and in the guesthouse. She never felt scared, worried or unpleasant. But from the first time she could feel that it was something unusual and as time passes she got more and more irritated.
Her explanation to the experience is that it is a ghost, an individual that have died but not taken the step over to the other side. She suspects that it is the mother of the landlord. She believes that some people are more open then others to sense things like this. The woman says that she did not change her movement patterns in the house because she was never worried or afraid. The ghost is a friendly old woman. The woman also says that the experience did not change anything in her everyday life. She has always believed in ghosts and spirits and has several times before experience unexplainable things and spirits. If the experience had been unpleasant she says that maybe they might have contacted someone-a medium maybe.

She says that she tend to keep the experience to herself because she is afraid that others might think she is strange if she told them about the experiences.

The woman and her family moved later to another house but not because of the experiences.

**Interview number five: woman, 50 years old.**

The woman lives with her family, husband and four children in an old house/ small country estate east of Karlstad. She has not been working the last couple of years and has therefore been spending a lot of time at the house.

In the house they have experienced unexplainable phenomena, but not in the kitchen, that part of the house was build later then the rest of the house.

They had their first experience two weeks after moving into the house. An old friend was visiting and he could feel things in the house, he even told the woman that there where two individuals walking behind her, following her.

The woman and her husband have their bedroom on the second floor, right above the kitchen on the first floor. One night, when going to sleep she heard a conversation between two persons outside the bedroom door. She could not hear what they where saying but it sounded like a man and woman. After that they have experienced these conversations in other parts of the house. The woman can sometimes feel them walking after her. In one room, on the second floor, it is easier to feel their presence.

The woman told me about a special experience that her son had in the house. The family went to a Christmas event at the daughter’s school but the son, age 15, did not want to come so he stayed home alone. They where gone a couple of hours and when they got closer to the house they could from their car, see that every lamp in the house was on. It was kind of shining from the house and they thought that maybe something had happened. And indeed it had. They found their son sitting in the kitchen, trembling with fear. He told them that “they” had been following him around every part of the house the whole time, whispering. The kitchen was the only place in the house they did not follow so he had locked himself in there. The woman/mother became so mad at “them” that she went out into the rest of the house and told “them” that it was okay for them to be here, but that they were absolutely not allowed to frighten the children. After that the children have been left alone. The boy, that before thought ghosts did not exist now believe in them.
Mostly, “they” are hiding things and moving things around. The woman says that they are full of jokes but that it sometimes gets frustrating.

By curiosity a medium have been visiting. She saw a man and a woman that followed the woman a lot. Their names were Anna and Erik and they lived in the house at the end of the 1900th century. The medium said that they were happy that the family lived there and especially that they had children, because they never gotten any for themselves. Afterwards the woman talked to some neighbours asking them about who had lived in the house before them. She was told about the couple Anna and Erik at the end of 1900th century. The woman then asked how many children they had. The answered where; I do not think they got any.

The woman describes Anna and Erik as friendly but full of jokes and that it sometimes can get frustrating when they “hide” things. They belong to the house and by some reason they have stayed there. When Anna and Erik passes her by she can feel it, sometimes like a breeze. TV and radio are also turned on in strange times and the sound volume and channels change. The dogs have never reacted to anything.

The woman says that it feels safe to have Anna and Erik there. She is not religious in any way so this is her way of believing.

The woman and her family is about to move to another place in Karlstad and they have sold the house. They are doing this because the woman and her husband do not feel that they have the time or energy to take care of a big house anymore. She says that it will feel empty without Anna and Erik.

She says that she does not have any problems talking about the “ghosts”. Some guests have actually felt “them” when visiting the house.

Comments: We have heard the women telling about the radio that sometimes switched off and on by itself. By interviewing I used a tape recorder but when checking the tape afterwards nothing was recorded. I checked the electrical outlet but it was plugged in correctly. When coming home, I tried the tape recorder again, it worked perfectly fine. I am not saying in any way that the “ghosts” created it, but was it not a funny coincidence?

**Interview number six, woman 79 years old.**

The woman was living with her husband in a house in Karlstad. They lived 16 years in the house but the woman had the experience when they had lived there for three or four years. She then was in her 60s. They moved to the house because it was a good economic opportunity at the time. The woman worked full time, 8 hours a day and spent the rest of her time in the house.

One Sunday morning, when lying in bed waiting for her husband to come with coffee, the woman suddenly saw her dead father standing two meters from her at the door. He was wearing the same clothes that he usually did when he was alive and he was smiling to her. He stood there a couple of minutes, then disappearing more and more until he was gone. “Exactly as if he slowly went backwards, out from this world again.”\(^80\) She says that she was surprised.

\(^80\) “Precis som han hade gått baklänges sakta, ut ur världen igen”
but that it felt completely natural. It was not a dramatic experience; she did not get upset or frightened. She says many times in the interview that it was a positive experience. It had no connection with death or life, and it did not create any storming feelings. She describes it “like seeing an old friend for example at a city walk. Of course you become happy but it is not an exited moment.” She does not for a moment believe that it was a ghost, more likely a construction of her own mind. She was afraid of her father when he was alive and she thinks that this was a way of constructing a more “soft” father that she very much would have liked to see when he was still alive. But she also says that “it was a pleasant statement that my father had a good time where he is now.”

Afterwards, after her father had disappeared the woman went up from bed, touching the place where she had seen him standing.

The woman did not tell her husband about the experience because she was afraid that he might think that she was crazy. But it was nothing wrong with her mental condition she says. “It was the most proper and clear ghost I have seen in my entire life.”

The woman describes the experience as positive; therefore she never avoided the place where it happened.

Later, they moved from the house to an apartment by the reason that they wanted a smaller home in the city because they had a place north of Karlstad as well.

Interview number seven, woman 27 years old.

The woman was living alone in an apartment in a municipality north of Karlstad. She was a student at Karlstad University but no apartment was available at that time in Karlstad. That was the reason why she rented this one room and kitchen apartment for 5 months. She estimates that she was in school 8 hours a day and spent the rest of the time in the apartment.

The phenomena the woman tells me about is in different character. She explains that she had difficulties sleeping in the apartment; she woke up a lot during night and slept badly. The woman felt that she was not alone and she could feel breezes even if all windows where closed. The kitchen lamp one time started to sway without any reason.

One night, when she had a friend visiting her, sleeping next to her she woke up and saw a little girl standing in the door between the room and the kitchen. “At first I thought, o my God, I must be dreaming, I am imagining. But when you get that afraid, you at once become fully awake, and I sat up in bed, and she did not disappear. I saw her even if I was completely awake. And I was really afraid, and I probably had been even more afraid if my friend was not sleeping next to me on the madras.” The woman describes the girl with brown hair and

---

81 "Det var som att se en gammal bekant som man möter på gatan till exempel. Då blir man ju glad åt, men det är inget upphetsande."
82 "ett alldeles trivsamt konstaterande utav att pappa har det bra där han är."
83 "Det var nog det tydligaste och redigaste spöke jag sett i hela mitt liv"
84 "…först tänkte jag att så här herregud jag drömmar eller jag inbillar mig bara. Men när man blir så rädd så blir man ju klarvaken, ååå sätter mig upp i sängen och hon försvinner inte, jag såg henne fast jag var klarvaken. Ååå då blev jag livrädd, jag hade blitt Ehh, ja jag hade säkert blivit ännu räddare om inte min kompis sov på en madrass på golvet"
about six or seven years old. "...I closed my eyes and whispered please go away, go away. And after a while I dared to open my eyes and she was gone." 

The woman describes the feelings about the experiences as unpleasant, but that she felt that it was nothing evil or bad that wanted to harm her. She did not feel safe in the apartment and the most strenuous in the five month was that she could not get much sleep. Sometimes the woman did not want to go to bed because she knew that she was going to sleep badly. She says that she could feel that it was something strange in the apartment. "It felt a little bit scary sleeping there alone, but you did it anyway, you knew it was nothing, but you still slept very badly." 

She did not tell her friend about the experience but he complained that he had had a very bad night’s sleep.

The phenomena happened in different parts of the small apartment. The woman say that she did not avoid any place, but sometimes put an extra eye on the places where things had happened, to make sure that everything was normal. The woman’s explanation to the experience is that some people are more sensitive than others. She also says that she believes in these things.

When the woman later got an apartment in Karlstad and was cleaning this apartment she found drawings from a small child. She says, "I never felt calm in that apartment. When I arrived to my new apartment I could feel the difference at once, I felt safe and calm and I liked it immediately."

85 "... jag blundade å viska snälla försvinn, försvinn. Och när jag efter en stund vågade öppna ögonen så var hon borta."
86 "Lite otäckt att sova där själv, fast man gjorde ju det, man visste att det inte var nått, men man sov väldigt oroligt och dåligt."
87 "Jag kände mig aldrig lugn i den lägenheten. Och när jag kom till min nya lägenhet så märkte man sån skillnad, där kände jag mig (...) trygg och lugn, där trivdes jag med en gång."
5. 2 Where are these places located in Värmland?

The locations of the homes are pointed out very vividly on the map by circles. That is because no individual shall be possible to expose. They are, as said before, anonymous.

My interest does not lie in where the homes are located; the locations are only showed for the reader’s interest.

5. 3 Similarities and differences in the experiences

The concluded expression of the interviews and the answers will here be represented in categories. The analyses to this part have been made by looking at each interview and then see them in relation to the other interviews.

Type of home where the experience took place?

---

One individual lived at a farm, one in an apartment, two in a house in an area with other houses; three lived in a house in the countryside.

**How many still live in the home where they had the experience?**

Two individuals. Five have moved but by other reasons than the experience.

**Type of experience?**

Three individuals said that animals in the house reacted, two dogs and cows at the farm. Three individuals saw a person, three heard voices, two heard steps, two experienced that things disappeared and changed places and one experienced unexplainable death causes, (many dead cows). Five individuals said that they “felt” it.

**Why unexplainable?**

All individuals, except one, say that they could not find any logical explanation to what was happening. The one who found an explanation said that she, even though not aware of it, created it in her mind.

**Feelings connected with the experience?**

Two individuals said that they where not afraid, one that she was afraid, two that it felt unpleasant, one said that it felt positive and one said that it felt safe. In other words; three find the experience negative, two find it positive and two were “not afraid”.

**Did it change the movement patterns in the home?**

Five individuals did not change their movement patterns in the home. Two partly changed it, they avoided certain places. One of the five who claim they did not change their movement patterns in the home says that she often looked at the places where she had experienced thing to make sure that everything was “normal”.

**Did the experience change the every day life?**

Four individuals did not think the experience changed their every day life. Three said it did. Of these three, one said that she thought about the reason/explanation for the experience, one that she felt very tired and one said that it affected the every day life because it changed their economical situation when many cows died. He also said that there was no joy to work in the barn when the cows got sick and died.

**Was the experience connected with time of sleep?**

When connected with sleep I mean; when waking up from sleep, before falling asleep and when waking up in the middle of the night. Four individuals had some of their experiences connected with time of sleep. One individual in all her experiences (she had only one) and two individuals had no connection to sleep when experienced the phenomenon.

**Contact with medium?**
Three out of seven have been in contact with a medium. One out of curiosity, and two because they wanted the unexplainable things/experiences to go away. These two say that the medium helped them and that the phenomenon disappeared.

*What do the individuals believe?*

Four individuals believed in ghosts, one did not think about it, one believed in negative feelings/energies that have stayed from an earlier time. One believed that it was a mental projecting that her mind constructed without her being aware of it.
6. Analysis

No clear patterns can be distinguished from the interviews; the number of respondents are not enough. To see general laws and patterns a higher amount of responders is necessary. My study can only give an insight in seven people’s experiences and their interpretations. Differences, but no patterns can be seen from the interviews.

From the eight individuals that I have meet in the seven interviews, seven have been women. As read in the empirical part, women have during all times been interested in unexplainable phenomenon and many women have been mediums. If this is because they are more interested, open minded, sensitive or have easier to talk about the subject can not be said. All of the interviewed say that they do not talk to everyone about the experience, they tend to keep it to themselves because others might think they are crazy. One of the interviewed was more open about her experiences than the others; she also said that the friendly ghosts where as family.

Type of home where the experience took place is varying. One live on a farm, two in houses close to other houses, (population centre), three lived in an older house on the countryside and one lived in an apartment. The homes had different age and different size. The unexplainable experiences have taken place in different homes, in different locations and in homes of different age.

Five of seven have moved from the place where they had the experience, all of these five say that the experience did not influence them to move. They changed home by other external reasons such as studies, work, problem with landlord or the economic situation. The experience obviously did not frighten them/ frightened them enough to leave their home. As discussed earlier our home is our safe location in the world, a place where we find ourselves relaxed and calm. The experience the individuals had did not trespass the feelings attached to the home, not enough to make them move. None of the interviewed says that they even have considered that option. One individual says that if the phenomena had been bad and negative, she might have considered contacting a medium that could help the phenomena to disappear. It seems like the phenomena must create very negative feelings before people move from their home. At first it seems like people tend to contact someone to help. Two of seven individuals have contacted a medium because they wanted the phenomena to stop; they claim that it helped and that the phenomena disappeared. (I will come back to the medium part later)

All of the interviewed think of the experience as unexplainable because they could not see any logical explanation to it. Their interpretation and explanation to the phenomena on the other hand is varying. As discussed earlier, people are desperate to find explanation to things they can not understand, and when the basic thought in society, the master of knowledge as considered, science, do not have an answer people tend to turn to other directions. Things of this character can not either be proven or denied by science. Science work with laws, structure and processes that are obvious; science can not study a phenomena, which existence not has been scientifically proven. The explanations from the responders shows that four thinks that it is a ghost that they have experienced, one thinks that it is energies, invisible “foot prints” that have got stuck in time and place from an earlier event. One of the interviewed did not think about the explanation to the phenomena, she just accepted it and one thought it was a construction by her own mind, unconsciously. So to speak, five responders can be connected to the thoughts of Spiritism. The individual who believed that the experience was a construction of her mind can be connected to psychological effects, the mystery of the minds.
capacity. The one who did not try to seek explanation to the experience I cannot connect with any believes discussed earlier. The majority of the responders, five out of seven, found explanations that did not have any connection with science.

The responder’s experiences can be categorized in seven groups; reaction from animals, seeing someone, hearing someone talk, death, feeling, hearing steps, material things that disappear/change places.

Three out of seven had a reaction from their animals, four of seven had animals. One individual did not have a reaction from the animal. Betty Shine, medium, have said that the easiest way to be aware of ghosts where to see reactions from animals that are more sensitive than mankind. By the three individuals who saw reaction from their animal, two where dogs, the other experience involved a high amount of cows. The dogs reacted by barking and snarl. They also refused to be at certain places in the home. The cows, where frightened and did not act as cows normally do. They also got sick and died without medical explanations. The individual who had animals who did not react had two dogs and one cat.

Three out of seven saw a person. Two saw a person that they where related to, who had passed away. One saw a stranger appear. All three of them explain the experience as very clear; they can describe details, like clothes, hair and what the person did. One of these individuals also heard the person talk to her. The ones that saw a close relative did not get upset by the experience. One was a small child by the time of the experience and she got surprised and a little bit afraid when she understood that it was not mum or dad. The other one had her experience when she was an adult; she describes the experience as very positive, and did not get afraid at all. The third individual saw a little girl who she never had seen before. She got really frightened. The two who saw a relative had a positive experience, while the one who saw a stranger thought of it as negative. Common by the three who have seen someone in figure is that the experiences in all cases have appeared close to sleep. When waking out from sleep or going to sleep.

One of seven had experiences unexplainable death in a high amount as part of the unexplainable phenomena. Explanations to why the cows died where never established by any veterinary. This I can not really relate to anything in the empirical part, since I have not heard anything about this kind of phenomena before.

Three out of seven heard someone. In one case the woman saw a person, dead relative that spoke to her, wondering if she was awake. The woman was only six years old at the time of the experience and she got surprised and a little bit frightened. By the other two individuals both say that they heard a conversation between two persons, they did not recognize the voices. One was connected with sleep the other one was not. The one who, was not connected with sleep heard the voices repeatedly at different times. The other one just heard it one time. None of these two got frightened. They both described the explanation to phenomena as a friendly ghost. The one who heard it repeatedly even said that “they” where a part of the family. They feel that the ghosts are friendly and by some unknown reason they have stayed. They are co existing and feel that the ghost have the same right to be in the home as they do. Spiritist would explain the experiences one as a contact with a spirit, dead relative that had come to see if everything where alright. The other two would be explained as ghosts that by some reason did not follow the light and got stuck in something between.
Five out of seven describe the experience with a feeling that something was not normal, for example a feeling of not being alone in the home.

Two of seven heard steps without seeing someone. One of these two had a dog that reacted at the same place, she got frightened. The other one thought it was a friendly ghost but that she sometimes could get annoyed by the steps because it woke her up at night. This individual had the experience connected to sleep; the other one did not hear the steps connected to sleep. The one who got frightened thought of the steps as energies that had stayed in the house.

Two out of seven experienced that things disappeared and changed places. Both of them reacted by becoming irritated. Both had other experiences as well.

Feelings connected to the experience are described differently. Two did not feel afraid. Two felt afraid and insecure, one say it was a dazed experience and very difficult, two said it was positive and that it felt safe. I interpret as following: Two where not afraid, the experience did not bother them, three felt that the experience was negative and two that it was positive. Two out of the three who thought the experience was connected to negative feelings avoided certain places. The third lived in a small apartment and say that she could not avoid places but that she used to look at the places where she had experienced things to make sure that everything was “normal”. The other four claim that their movement patterns did not change in the home. One of the three who had negative feelings contacted a medium, one of the two who where not afraid contacted a medium. These two made this choice because they wanted the medium to help them get rid of the phenomena. Both said that it worked. One of the two who had positive feelings contacted a medium by curiosity, she did not want the phenomena to disappear, she just wanted to know who, the ghosts where.

Four out of seven say that the experience did not change their every day life. Three say it did. All these three had felt the feelings connected to the experience as negative. One said that she thought more about the explanation to the experience, one that it affected their economic situation (many cows died) and the working spirit at the place. One says that she got tired by the experience.
7. Discussion

As have followed the whole study, people are desperate to find explanations to everything in the world. When people feel threatened they become scared, this is a biological genetic effect that is important for our very survival. If we do not understand or can explain a phenomenon we tend to feel threatened because it might be something dangerous. That is why we in almost every case try to find explanations; if not scientifically, then others. Science is often the first choice in the interpretation because we are raised in a society where the mind of logic rules. But of course others might have beliefs as the first choice, for example the belief in an existing God.

When finding an explanation that suits our beliefs in life in general we feel a little bit safer. It is a starting point of how to handle the situation and the experience. Negative, positive depend on how we interpret the experience, in what way it affected us. If we interpret that we saw an old friend or relative that has passed away, we might feel comforted. But if we see a complete stranger in our home we might become scared. But is that not normal? If we were to expose a thief in our own home we would also get afraid. Just imagine the feeling when you interpret that it is an unknown dead person in your living room!

Independent, if negative or positive feelings are attached to the experience, it will certainly affect us in some way, also geographical. This has been my main interest in the study, human geography student as I am; to find similarities in the spatial behaviour. With the interviews my questions and problem have been answered, and even if no general patterns can be established because of the low amount of interviews, an understanding, increased knowledge and more profound insight have been developed into the interpretation of unexplainable experiences and affects of it, both in general and geographical.

I am very pleased with the result; it has ended up in something that can stimulate further research on this topic. Even if the phenomena itself, is scientifically considered as non-serious topic, it does not mean that studies of the interpretations of the phenomena must be the same. The interpretations and the experiences are as real as can be. And there are many more aspects that would be interesting to study in this subject. For example, conducting a bigger questionnaire in the county of Värmland asking people if they have had unexplainable experiences, how they interpreted them, feelings attached to them and geographical effects. I also find it interesting to map out places in Värmland where people independent of each other have had repeatedly unexplainable experiences. If conduction a similar research as the one I have made I suggest some improvement; for example using only one interview group and the precise same interview process.

I feel that the validity can be questioned because of using two interview groups. There is a probability that the individuals that answered my advert and the ones I found my self are different, for example in interest, age and culture. However I do not think that have influenced my research.

The interview technique that I used; structured open ended interview was in some cases put a side, that might have influenced the result. This means that the reliability of the study can be questioned. I, myself do not think so because I found it necessary to use my verbal ability in certain situations in the interviews where the “conversation stagnated. Despite these “wrongs” I think I have gotten reliable answers to my questions.
8. Conclusion

My intention with the study has been to answer the questions below. General laws and patterns have never been my intention to find, the interview material are too small for that. Instead similarities and differences are showed in the interview, responder’s experiences that are the foundation in my answers.

Questions to be answered

What kinds of experiences have people had in their home, or homes that they have lived in, that they think is unexplainable?

Why does she/he think it is an unexplainable phenomenon?

Why do people choose to stay in a home where they think, in their own mind, that an unexplainable phenomenon has happened/ are appearing? Alternatively, why do they choose to move away?

Have the unexplained experiences changed the movement patterns in the home, the geographical patterns?

Have the unexplainable experiences brought changes to the every day life?

Answers to the questions

In the interviews the data has been analysed and the following similarities and differences are showed.

The experiences can be sorted into seven groups, Animals that reacted, seeing a person/figure, hearing someone talk, hearing steps, feelings, death cause, materials that move, things that disappear/change places. Through the interviews it is possible to see different varying experiences; similar by the most experience is the description of a feeling, for example a feeling of not being alone, a feeling of something that's not normal.

All the interview responders think the experience is unexplainable because they can not find a logic explanation to it. Their explanation on the other hand is varying; the majority believes that a ghost was the cause for the experience.

The ones in the study that have moved from the homes where they had the unexplainable experiences did not do it because of the experience but by other external reasons such as studies, work, and economic situation. Obviously the experience did not influence/affect them so much that it made them move. The ones who still live in the homes where they experienced the phenomena (two individuals) have a positive/ either positive, negative feeling to the experience.

About half of the interviewed had negative feelings to the experience (three individuals of seven). Two of them avoided certain places in the home. The third one had a very small apartment and did not avoid places but kept an “extra eye open” on places where she had experienced unexplainable things to make sure that everything was “normal”. The ones
Interviewed that had positive feelings or did not feel afraid, did not avoid any places in the home. To say, only the ones with negative feelings to the phenomena changed their geographical patterns in their home.

The only ones that said that the experience had brought changes in their everyday life are the ones who associate negative feelings to the experience. One said that she thought more of the explanations to the phenomena, one that she got very tired because she could not sleep well in that home, and one said that it effected the economic situation and the joy of working disappeared.

Interesting was also that the individuals that felt afraid never associated it with threat towards themselves, two said that they felt that “it” was not going to hurt them, one said that that he felt threat from “it” towards others. All three individuals that felt afraid believed that a ghost/ghost foot print, energies was the source to the phenomenon
9. Summary

The purpose with this essay is to study people’s interpretation of unexplainable experiences/phenomenon that they have had in their home or a home they have once been living in. The work is concentrated in finding geographical similarities and differences, not to create general laws. The phenomena itself, is not investigated.

An inductive way to work has been used. This means that no hypothesis exist to be tested in reality; instead by studying reality, patterns have been found. A qualitative analysis has been used and data have been collected with structured open ended interviews. Eight people have been interviewed in seven interviews.

The theoretical part shows different explanations to phenomena of this character during time. It also contributes with knowledge of how people relate to place and feelings of insecurity and fear, illustrated by three examples.

The interview responders were mostly females, only one was a man. Age varied between 27-79. The type of homes where they experienced the unexplainable phenomenon is varying, also the time that they lived there. Some lived alone, some with a smaller or bigger family. The ones that have moved from the home where they experienced the phenomenon claim that they moved because of external reason such as studies, work or economy, not because of the phenomena.

The experience looked different, but seven groups could be found. The majority mention feeling as a part of the experience, for example the feeling of not being alone. All interviewed think that the experience is unexplainable because they can not find a logic explanation to it. Their explanations to it, on the other hand is varying, the majority believe that a ghost was the cause for the experience. Possible, after science, this is the easiest explanation to make.

About half of the interviewed had negative feelings to the experience. Of these three, two avoided certain places; the third lived in a small apartment and said that she kept an extra eye on places where she had experienced things just to make sure that everything was “normal”. The rest that had positive feelings to the experience or did not feel afraid did not change their movement patterns in the house. Only the three individuals with negative feelings attached to the experience said that the experience had brought changes to the every day life. The changes are different among the three individuals.

Finally, there is reason to think that unexplainable experiences affect the geographical patterns in the home, depending on negative or positive feelings attached to the experience. Even if no general patterns can be showed in this study because of the low number of interviews, similarities and differences have been established.
10. Comments from the writer

Creating this essay has been very interesting and joyful. Much of the work has depended on the interview respondents. They have brought a positive attitude and energy into the work. They have welcomed me into their homes and have been very nice to me. I thank them for taking time to meet me and tell me about their experiences.

I also would like to thank my excellent mentor Bertil Lundberg who has made valuable comments during the writing process.

The topic of the essay was created out of my curiosity. But as I have seen, it is also the curiosity of others. TV, “Värmlandsnytt” local news in Värmland contacted me when reading my advert, looking for respondents, and made a reportage about my research. Some people that saw the reportage have contacted me afterwards, asking questions and wondering where they can find the research and read it. “Värmlands Folkblad”, the second biggest newspaper in Värmland contacted my after seeing the reportage on TV and also made a reportage about the essay. This interest confirms that my research as ended up in something useful, that people are interested to read about.

As I have written before, it has never been my intention to find general laws, but to understand these people and to find geographical similarities and differences. I have not put any values in their experiences and their explanations to them. I have only been interested in their interpretations of the experiences. But what do I, myself, think of the supernatural phenomena, the experiences as such? Do I have any theories after working with this topic?

I must say, that I honestly do not. Maybe this is a subject that never will get an answer. But as the following quotation shows, that does not make it less interesting to discuss.

“….the most common mistake people make when thinking about the future, The first is to assume that the future will be entirely different from the past; the second is to believe that it will be just the same; and third, and serious, mistake is not to think about at all.” 89

89 Jönsson, Tägil, Törnqvist, 2000: 189
Sources

Literature

Andersen, H, *Vetenskapsteori och metodlära*, 1994, Studentlitteratur
Agnew, Livingstone, Rugers, *Human geography*, 1996, Blackwell Publisher
Arlebrand H, *Ny tid, Ny tro?*, 1998, GLEERUDS,
Brown, S, with Harrison, L, *Besök från andra sidan*, 2003, Egmont
Fredriksen, P, *Rasism*, 2003, Historiska Media
Jönsson, Tägil, Törqvist, *Organizing European Space*, 2000, Sage Publications Ltd
Kitchin, Tate, *Conducting Research in human geography*, 2000, Pearson Prentice Hall
Marcus, Alexander J, *Från barbarstadiet till supermedvetande*, 1993, Codeceus förlag,
Morhed, SE, *Att förklara det oförklarliga*, 2000, Uppsala universitet
Nummelin, Rundberget, Olsson, *Spökerier och sägner i norra Värmland*, 2001, Opus
Renhard, K, *Vetenskap och tro*, 1989, Libris
Sahlin, I, Åkerström, M, *Det lokala våldet*, 2000, Liber
Shine, B, *En fri själ- ett mediums berättelse*, 2004, Richters
Thure’n, T, *Vetenskapsteori för nybörjare*, 2002, Liber
Wideén, L, *Värmländsk mystik*, 1982, Pressförlag Karlstad
Wilson, C, *Beyond the occult*, 1988, Covxoton editions

Essays

Ros, Ulrika, Rumslig rädsla, C- uppsats kulturgeografi, Karlstads universitet, 2001: 853

Internet

www.presstext.se/online/display.php?set=S6&xid=FOF2004465a 2006-02-22
Interview questions

1. Age?
2. Sex?
3. In what kind of home have you experienced unexplainable phenomenon?
4. Is it in a home you live in now or have been living in?
5. Motivate why you live/lived in the home where you had the unexplainable experience?
6. How many years have you lived here/ there?
7. How many hours a day do you spend in the home/ have been spending in the home?
8. What kind of experience have you had that you think is unexplainable?
9. Motivate, why do you think it is unexplainable?
10. Where did it happen in the home?
11. Have someone else in the family experience the same thing?
12. What kind of feelings did the experience evoke?
13. What is your explanation to the experience?
14. Did the experience affect your way to move in the house, movement patterns?
15. Have the experience effected your every day life?
16. If you still live in the same home, motivate why you still live here?
17. If you have moved from the home where you had the experience, motivate why you moved?