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Veganism through an intersectional lens

A study on racial perspectives in the Swedish vegan community

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Abstract

During the past decade, veganism has increased in the global North. In current debates in the U.S., the vegan community has been accused of being a white, privileged lifestyle movement that reinforces neoliberal attitudes and colonial influences of universalism, color blindness, and capitalist consumption. Therefore, this study aims to understand and analyze veganism in Sweden through an intersectional lens. By implication, this thesis seeks to explore whether the vegan community is inadvertently perpetuating oppressive discourses where the theoretical framework postcolonial feminism and concepts such as intersectionality and whiteness will be used. The data in this study is collected from semi-structured interviews with ten vegans, five of whom self-identified as white, five self-identified as vegans of color. All respondents were aged between 23-34 years, situated in various parts of Sweden. The results indicate that there is a problem of whiteness, although rendered invisible, in the Swedish vegan community which affects both white vegans and vegans of color, albeit in different ways. This becomes manifested in the lack of understanding of how oppression based on gender, ethnicity, class etc., are interconnected. By extension, the results amplify that there is a need to diversify its representation. Examples that emerged were that the white vegans need to give space to the vegans of color instead of taking it from them; to be an ally and not just say so. However, this is not exclusive to the vegan community but applies to society as a whole.

Key words: veganism, the vegan community, whiteness, privilege, vegans of color, intersectionality, postcolonial feminism, representation, Sweden

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1. Introduction

During the past decade, veganism, the practice of abstaining from the consumption of animal products, has increased in the global North (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.; The Vegan Society 2018). Such growth has mainly been attributed to the rise of social media. Social media has made it easier to reach people and to spread positive messages about veganism (Christopher et al. 2018; Petter 2018). Some of the most visible aspects of veganism are the dietary and culinary aspects (Greenebaum 2012; Vegetarian Times 2008). Veganism is, however, more than simply a food diet, rather, it is a lifestyle, philosophy, and a social movement that centers on animal rights, environmental protection, and health concerns (Appleby & Key 2016; Rosenfeld & Burrow 2016; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.; Greenebaum 2012; 2018; Leite et al. 2019; Rosenfeld & de Boer et al. 2017). People who choose to become vegan tend to do so based on personal, social, political, and cultural beliefs (Griffin 2017, 1). Thus, veganism becomes part of one's identity, beliefs, and values (Greenebaum 2012; Rosenfeld & Burrow 2016; Wescombe 2019).

Rather than focusing on the aspects of a vegan diet and ethical consumption, I will study veganism as a social community in this thesis. While veganism is strongly associated with progressive attitudes and moral positioning, it is simultaneously a community that is by large made up of affluent people, which has a particular racial and class composition. This thesis will be exploring the vegan community from an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality is a critical tool for understanding the intersection of different forms of oppression and how identities interact (Crenshaw 1991). At first, the term referred exclusively to how race, gender, and class intersect in the lives of black women but has in recent years also come to be about nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability and so forth (Crenshaw 1991; de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005). Intersectionality problematizes and criticizes the hegemonic order of whiteness which is depicted as the dominant group (Crenshaw 1991). Furthermore, Hill Collins (2019, 1) states that intersectionality enables us to see "[...] the social problems caused by colonialism, racism, sexism, and nationalism as interconnected". Hence, using an intersectional lens is a way to understand and analyze the interconnection between identity

categories. This study is concerned with experiences of white vegans and vegans of color[1] in Sweden.

My thesis research was prompted by current debates in the U.S., where the vegan community has been accused of being a white, privileged lifestyle movement that reinforces and reproduces neoliberal attitudes and colonial influences of universalism, color blindness, and capitalist consumption (Greenebaum 2018, 680; Harper 2012). Such accusations are based on stereotypes of who is vegan, usually a white person, and who is promoted and represented in mainstream Western media when talking about veganism (Oladipo 2017). By having such narrative centered in the movement, veganism is made into "[...] an extension of whiteness and whiteness as a driving force of popularized veganism" (Polish 2016, 374). This further contributes to the assumption that the vegan movement is race, gender, and class-neutral (Greenebaum 2016, 364). In turn, it may deter BIPOCs[2] from considering a vegan diet and lifestyle, as it implies that "[...] not all vegans enter the movement from the same social and politically privileged locations" (ibid, 366). This raises questions of representation and inclusiveness of the movement, as white privilege and power relations remain accepted by and invisible to the ones benefiting from them (McIntosh 1988). Vegans of color, then, become deviant from the norm as they are overlooked and excluded from the dominant discourse. They also become a marginalized group within another marginalized group and a divide is created (Shah 2018).

In terms of the growing number of practicing vegans, Sweden is following the vegan trend. According to statistics from 2019, 2% of the Swedish population is considered to be vegan, foremost young women between ages 15-24 years (Food & Friends 2019, 4). Additionally, 5% of the Swedish population are vegetarians (ibid). Behind such an increase are health reasons, concerns for the climate and environment as well as a rise in the supply and demand for vegetarian and/or vegan products (Food & Friends 2019, 31; Djurens Rätt 2020; The Vegan Society 2020). The increase can also be understood in relation to the societal development in the country, where Sweden has a prominent self-image of thinking about and

[1] The term refers to people of color who are vegan and will be used throughout the thesis. Racialized vegans will be used simultaneously as it is the term that some of the respondents used.
[2] BIPOC is an acronym for "Black, Indigenous, and People of Color" (Collins Dictionary n.d.).

fighting against all kinds of oppression. This includes the respect of animals, the environment, climate change, feminism, and anti-racism (Veganprat 2014).

As with any social movement, the rise of an online community is visible in Sweden. Various vegan groups and forums are expanding throughout social media platforms where experiences, thoughts, recipes, and alike are shared between each and everyone (e.g. Vegetarianer och Veganer i Sverige; Vegangäris & ickebinäris; Veganism Är Bror). However, the issue of the presumed whiteness and color blindness of the vegan community in Sweden has not yet received much attention. Therefore, this thesis sets out to explore what the vegan community in Sweden looks like through an intersectional lens, "[...] as veganism is not a single-issue case, but an intersectional one" (Shah 2018).

1.1 Aim

Based on the postcolonial feminism theory and the concept of whiteness, the study aims to understand and analyze veganism in Sweden through an intersectional lens. By implication, this study seeks to explore whether the vegan community is perpetuating systems of oppression and if there is space for vegans of color in Sweden.

To achieve the aim of the study, semi-structured interviews with white vegans and vegans in Sweden will be conducted. The study will be done in order to get a deeper understanding of how the representation of, and within, the vegan community looks like. This is also done as a way to fill in the current gap in research on intersectional veganism and to encourage a more inclusive vegan community.

My hope is to raise awareness about veganism and whiteness by showing how the two intersect in the Swedish vegan community. I also hope to start conversations about representation and inclusivity, which could help to diversify the movement.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question that will guide this study is:

- Do vegans in Sweden, both white and vegans of color, feel that the vegan community has created an environment of exclusion for vegans of color and if so, why?

I will also analyze the following sub-questions:

- Do the experiences of white vegans and vegans of color differ from each other, and if so, to what degree?
- In what ways do these experiences manifest themselves?
- Do members of the vegan community feel that the representation of their community perpetuates inequality, and if so, how do they think this should be addressed?

1.3 Delimitations

In this thesis, I am to analyze the perceptions and experiences of white vegans and vegans of color in Sweden. I decided to interview both groups, as there is a gap in previous research where mainly white vegans have been the research subject. Additionally, the purpose is to understand if, and how, individuals from different backgrounds experience veganism and the vegan community differently. Spatially, Sweden is chosen as Sweden is usually at the forefront of a societal development that is assumed to be progressive and left-leaning, which is often connected to veganism. Timewise, the study is delimited to how veganism in Sweden looks like today. A historical analysis will thus not be done, as it is during the past decade that veganism in the country has gained its popularity.

Furthermore, the thesis focuses solely on veganism and does not aim to analyze vegetarianism and vegetarians as the vegan lifestyle tends to differ from the more well-known and socially accepted vegetarian lifestyle. Another reason is that when veganism has been studied, it has often been done as merely an addition to vegetarianism, and seldom exclusively.

Moreover, this thesis will not include the issues of speciesism or whether non-human animals should be given agency in an intersectional analysis of veganism (Gigliotti 2015, 1-2). My aim is not to explore the relations between non-human animals and human-animals, or how the latter "[...] interrelate with other species"(Birke 2014, 72). If I were to do so, the study would have taken another turn than its original aim. Yet, my intent is not to advocate that all vegans of color in Sweden believe that interconnected oppression is important in their vegan practice.

1.4 Relevance to Global Studies

Colonial history and its legacy are one of the most prominent processes of globalization. This has lead to a world deeply influenced by colonial and racial hierarchies where some are given more agency than others (Eriksson et al. 1991, 14; Paolini 1999, 57). Eurocentric worldviews and identities continue to set the agenda (Mohanty 2003, 51-53, 68). Thus, it is relevant to understand globalization processes from a local context and if, and how, such processes look like as inequality can be present in all levels and places. Therefore, my study explores how inequality and power relations are manifested in a contemporary Swedish context. Key themes of this study are inclusion/exclusion, conscious/unconscious racial stereotyping, and questions of representation which I link to the broad and interdisciplinary field of Global Studies. Global Studies is about big questions and big debates, but, sometimes, it is most interesting to study these big questions by zooming in on the everyday minutiae of everyday life and the nuances of in/exclusion in a self-claimed have of progressive action (veganism) in one of the most affluent and equal societies in the world (Sweden).

2. Background

This chapter aims to give a description of veganism and veganism of color in order to understand what veganism is and how it manifests itself. Then follows an overview of veganism in Sweden.

2.1 Veganism

Veganism, commonly referred as the practice of abstaining from the use of any animal products, is motivated by multiple reasons; some follow a plant-based diet for personal health reasons, some reject animal products to protect and mitigate the environment from the negative environmental impact of meat production and industrial farming (Corrin & Papadopoulos 2017; FAO, n.d.; Dyett et al. 2013; Greenebaum 2016; Greenebaum 2018; Izmirli & Phillips 2011; Ruby 2012, 143). Others choose veganism for ethical reasons as a way to reduce the exploitation of animals (Janssen et al. 2016; Greenebaum 2012; 2018).

Veganism as a term was coined by the UK Vegan Society and has achieved widespread acknowledgment throughout the years. It is used among various animal rights organizations, groups on social media, to the academic field of Critical Animal Studies (CAS) (cf. Animal Ethics 2019; Djurens Rätt n.d.b; Gigliotti 2015; Vegan Outreach n.d.) with the following definition:

> "[...] a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude - as far as is possible and practicable - all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment" (de Boo 2014, 6).

During the past decade, veganism has shifted from being seen as an "unknown, fringe vegetarian submovement" to a good and desirable way of life; a lifestyle (Castricano & Simonsen 2016, v). There are multiple reasons for such a shift, ranging from a practical dimension of veganism, including change in agricultural practices (e.g. transparency in food production), to the ethical dimension where shifts in attitudes around "[...] the *visibility* of farmed animal suffering and the *viability* of veganism as a personal and thus moral choice" (ibid, vi, emphasis in original). Another shift is how mainstream media; social media,

magazines, and newspapers, have made veganism into an important response to the ongoing environmental crisis and the rapid climate change (Pendergrast 2016). The fact that veganism is now widely publicised, has given it a degree of trendiness (Wescombe 2019, 2). The trendiness has helped veganism to gain popularity in the global North; in the U.S. around 3.4% of the adults are considered to follow a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle (Mangels 2018); in Germany about 1,5% are vegans (Strecker 2016); in the U.K. it is 1.6% (The Vegan Society 2018) and so on. In turn, the demand for vegan-friendly products at supermarkets (Strecker 2016) and rising number of people becoming members in mainstream animal rights organizations has increased. Supporting the trend is a host of profiles and celebrities, such as Al Gore, Beyoncé, Jay-Z, and Ellen DeGeneres (Doyle 2016, 777).

The mainstreaming of veganism through media and celebrities has its benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand, it has the potential to reframe a stigmatized identity and practice and make it more accessible (Doyle 2016, 777; Greenebaum 2012). On the other hand, it can, and has in some ways, lead veganism to be part of a consumer trend where the ethical aspects of it is lost (Bellemare et al. 2018). As a response, this raised questions of what constitutes "vegan" values, whether it is how media presents it (i.e. veganism as centered on food choices), or if it comes from other social values (e.g. workers rights) (Wescombe 2019, 2-3). One example of the former is the increased popularity in the consumption of avocado and quinoa in the 2010s; the environmental and economic concerns, such as the workers rights, were left out in favour of other social values (i.e. it being trendy and seen as "instagrammable") (ibid).

2.2 Vegans of color

Stereotypes such as 'the privileged hipster', 'the radical animal rights activist', and 'the free-spirited, nonconformist hippie' are commonly used when speaking about vegans and the vegan movement (Greenebaum 2018, 686). These tropes (inadvertently) imply whiteness and a white-centered vegan movement, which Greenebaum argues have made it difficult for BIPOCs to see themselves being represented in the movement (ibid, 685). The association has also made it hard for BIPOCs to embrace the vegan lifestyle as it, in a lot of black communities in the U.S., is taboo to be vegan because of its association with whiteness.

Consequently, Greenebaum posits that veganism has become a foreign and inaccessible movement for BIPOCs in the U.S. who are vegan (ibid, 690-692).
In 2007, a vegan woman of color created a blog called 'Vegans of color', and stated the following:

> "[...] This blog was started to give a voice to vegans of color. Many vegan spaces seem to be assumed (consciously or not) to be white by default, with the dialogue often coming from a place of white privilege. We're not single-issues here. All oppressions are connected." (Johanna 2007, blogpost).

The blog was the start for the movement with the same name and has spread all over the U.S. Following in a similar vein, veganism of color[3] assumes an understanding that "[...] not all vegans enter the movement from the same social and politically privileged locations" (Greenebaum 2016, 366). According to Ko & Ko (2017, 55), veganism of color is also a tool that challenges white supremacy within the movement and provides a space for vegans of color to talk about their various experiences of interconnected oppressions based on race, gender, class, age. Hence, veganism of color stems from the understanding that (mainstream) veganism is race-neutral and rejects the promotion of a 'universal vegan' and a 'universal movement' and manifests itself in various spaces, places, and practices (Harper 2012; Ko & Ko 2017). Veganism of color acknowledges speciesism[4], de-centers whiteness, and analyzes how oppression is interconnected and how to dismantle them, and views plant-based diets as a rejection of colonialism (Feliz Brueck 2018; White 2017). Or as Greenebaum (2018) states it:

> "[...] vegans of color and feminist vegans argue that when mainstream vegan and animal rights organizations promote exclusionary messages that assume a race, gender, and class-neutral vegan movement, they actually expose the racism, classism, and sexism in the movement" (Greenebaum 2018, 365).

[3] Vegans of color will throughout the thesis be used as an umbrella term for BIPOCs who are vegan.
[4] Speciesism refers to "[...] human-held belief that all other species are inferior" (PETA n.d.) and is the assumption that human-animals are superior to non-human animals (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

2.3 Veganism in Sweden

Following a similar pattern as other countries in the global North, Swedish statistics[5] show that more people are switching to either a vegetarian or a vegan diet and/or lifestyle, where approximately 5% are vegetarian and 2% are vegan (Food & Friends 2019, 4). The increase is most prominent among young women between ages 15-24 although a slight increase is shown among men as well (ibid). The reasons and motivations are overall the same as mentioned above.

As a response to the increased vegetarian and vegan lifestyle, (social) media have made it easier for Swedish vegetarian and vegans to gain information and platforms to share and exchange experiences, opinions, ideas, tips, and advice. In most Swedish vegetarian and/or vegan groups online, there is a set of rules for joining which indicates an inclusive environment (see groups Vegetarianer och Veganer i Sverige; Veganer, Vegetarianer och Flexitarianer). But according to some, there is a need to further diversify these kinds of groups. In turn, that lead to more separate groups[6] and spaces for people who exist outside of the white hetero/cis-normative society (Barnard 1998), e.g.'Vegangäris & ickebinäris', 'Veganer som rasifieras', and 'Mellanöstern veganer'.

To summarize, veganism is on the rise and has become like a lifestyle for many. Following that are some critical authors that have put the issue of vegans of color on the agenda. In Sweden, this has not yet received much attention, which is a gap that this thesis sets out to explore.

[5] The Swedish statistical bureau uses by and large traditional categories (such as the gender binary). These sit uneasily with the argument of this study, but they nonetheless provide useful background information.
[6] I decided to translate the Swedish word "separatist" to "separate" as the exact translation did not fit well with the term "separatist" in the English vocabulary.

3. Previous research

The following chapter will engage with previous research on motivations for and obstacles to a vegan lifestyle, how veganism is presented in the media, and most importantly previous literature on veganism of color. The chapter concludes with positioning this study in existing research.

3.1 Vegetarianism and veganism

Veganism has gained more and more scientific attention throughout the years, though veganism has usually been treated secondary to vegetarianism (Cole & Morgan 2011; Janssen et al. 2016, 643). Previous research on vegetarianism and veganism has focused on norms, values, motivations (Larsson 2003; McDonald 2000), the health effects of vegetarianism and/or veganism (Corrin & Papadopoulos 2016; Dyett et al. 2013; Ruby 2012), and the process of adopting a vegetarian or vegan diet, whereas only a handful have focused on vegetarianism and/or veganism as a lifestyle (Bertuzzi 2017; Cherry 2015; Lindquist 2013). However, Greenebaum (2016; 2018), Larsson et al. (2003) and Janssen et al. (2016) have all focused primarily on veganism and have researched the reasons and motives for following a vegan lifestyle and how such shift has affected the individual itself as well as their friends and family. Findings have shown that research participants have emphasized the importance and need for like-minded people, usually through social networking, to gain support and motivation to maintain the vegan identity and ideology (Cherry 2006; Cherry 2015).

Research also shows the difficulties in maintaining a vegan lifestyle in a non-vegan world, much due to the stigma surrounding vegans and veganism (cf. Bresnahan et al. 2015; Cole & Morgan 2011; Greenebaum 2012; 2018;). According to Bresnahan et al. (2015), vegans tend to experience high levels of stigma and that non-vegans (foremost carnivorous) often are unaccepting of them, as the latter has prejudices of the former, and what a vegan is. The prejudices are usually based on stereotypes such as ‘the militant vegan’ and vegans as ‘killjoys’ and judgemental people (Twine 2014). Cole & Morgan (2011) argue that such stereotypes are upheld and reproduced by mainstream media, which they refer to as ‘vegaphobia’; vegans are seen as the marginalized Other. In their research about media

representations of veganism, Cole & Morgan (2011) found how dominant discourses on meat-eating have been part of, and thereby affected, how media have talked and written about veganism, and vegans specifically. The discourse ridiculed veganism and spread misinformation about how difficult or impossible veganism is to maintain, and that the motivation of veganism is solely a consumer-choice, thus reducing the many motivations of going vegan. The stigma vegans experiences do not only come from how media perceive them, as vegans also experience negative reactions from their surroundings and their friends and family who often has diminished the vegan lifestyle as an 'alternative lifestyle' or a 'phase' (Lindquist 2013). It is not uncommon that vegans experience daily confrontations about their choices (Guerin 2014).

Furthermore, research has been done about carnivores and masculinity and how those are related to each other, and thus also the connection between feminism and vegetarianism and veganism (Adams 2000; 2010; Greenebaum & Dexter 2018; Hamilton 2016;). The research found that omnivores often equals masculinity, which in turn has reduced vegetarianism and veganism into something feminine (Adams 2010; Hamilton 2016). Not only does that exclude those who do not identify in line with the binary gender division, but it also "[...] reproduces a hierarchical ordering of Western diets that places veganism in the particular at the bottom" (Cole 2008, 707). By extension, it reproduces patriarchal structures which have viewed and continues to view what is considered feminine is not as important as what is considered masculine.

3.2 Veganism of color

As mentioned in the previous section, research has mostly been done about the motivations for a vegan diet/lifestyle. What is visible in nearly all the studies mentioned above is the fact that the "[...] research population has been limited to mostly white, heterosexual, middle-class population. This assumes a race-neutral experience of veganism, meaning that the motivations, opportunities, and experience of adopting a vegan lifestyle will be similar without regard to race, class, and gender" (Greenebaum 2018, 681). In turn, this reproduces notions of veganism as 'post-racial' (ibid). Yet, scholars such as Harper (2009; 2010; 2012), Polish (2016), and Ko & Ko (2017) have all done research on how multiple oppressions are interconnected with what they call 'white veganism'.

Critical race feminist scholar Harper is the most prominent scholar within studies on veganism and racism and explores how whiteness and white privilege takes place in vegan rhetoric and across vegan communities (Harper 2009; 2010; 2012). Harper has criticized popular vegan-literature in the U.S. as they "[...] do not deeply engage in critical analysis of how race (racialization, whiteness, racism, anti-racism) influence how and why one writes about, teaches and engages in vegan praxis" (Harper 2009, 8). Furthermore, Harper relates today's mainstream veganism rhetoric to the second wave of feminism that falsely made the white western cis-woman into the universal woman, in which all women experience the same kind of oppression and struggles, despite geographical location, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, etc. (Harper 2009, see also Mohanty 2007).

In the anthology 'Sistah vegan', Harper (2009) addresses social, economic, political, class, racial, and gender issues in the midst of the vegan lifestyle. Sistah Vegan highlights various narratives and includes critical essays and reflections from black women in the U.S., and how black vegan women, however not limited to one racial group, can use a plant-based diet and lifestyle as a tool to decolonize their bodies, minds, and spirits from a forced colonial diet which maintains institutional and structural racism (Harper 2009; Williams-Forson 2010, 17; see also Ornelas 2010). Harper's research has concluded that veganism can be a form of resistance to the "[...] geopolitically racialized labor force and consumption system" (Harper 2009, 12). Moreover, Harper makes clear that it is important to acknowledge racialization within vegan communities as a way to dismantle white supremacy that makes it possible for (white) vegans to access vegan products (e.g. avocado; cocoa; quinoa; cotton; tobacco) that continues to oppress people of color (ibid).

Similarly, Polish (2016) points to how legacies of colonialism continue to position BIPOCs as less than human; i.e. 'animals', and that mainstream discourses and practices of veganism continue to depict veganism as something unmarked, i.e. white. Polish thus assumes that veganism works "[...] as an extension of whiteness and whiteness as a driving force of popularized veganism (Polish 2016, 374). Further, Polish explores how advertising and visual images aimed at vegans, assumes a white vegan audience, such as the recipe site and book

'Thug Kitchen' and PETA[7] and their, respectively, "[...] use of images of slavery [and how that] evoke emotional responses to the violence against animals" (Polish 2016, 378). Polish (2016, 385) claims this to be part of the broader vegan rhetoric that in turn is part of the perpetuation of colonization. Another example she provides is the hashtag #AllLionsMatter that pointed to Cecil, the lion who got killed by bow and arrow. The hashtag, used by white vegans among others, depicted how the white vegan mainstream expressed "[...] more distress over Cecil's murder than the systematic state murders of people of color across the country" (ibid, 384), meaning that the hashtag ridiculed the #BlackLivesMatter-movement as it put anti-racism and anti-speciesism against each other even though racism and speciesism are inextricably linked (ibid).

Drawing upon the work of Harper and Polish, the Ko sisters (2017) have a long history of writing about veganism, anti-racism, feminism advocacy for nonhuman animals and popular culture. They provide ways of understanding interconnected oppressions and amplifies the need for a deconstruction of Eurocentric understandings of race, veganism, and species (Ko & Ko 2017, see also Harper 2017, xxii). They view veganism as "[...] privileging animal experiences over black human experiences" and that animality is a "[...] racialized weapon of white supremacy" (ibid, 11). This against the background of colonialism and the time of slavery where certain people, individually or as groups, where animalized, i.e. dehumanized in which the "[...] "the animal" is the *opposite status-marker* to "the human" (ibid, 47, emphasis in original). What is also interesting in the Ko sisters' work is how they explicitly deconstruct the common question of "what has race got to do with it [veganism]?", where they provide the simple answer that no one is universal and that a racialized background will always affect notions and conceptions about the world, or how others see racialized people and. To not be racialized is to be part of the norm, where the norm is white, which means that racialized people never can belong to the norm.

Scholars Navarro (2011) and Chatila (2018) have both written theses about the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality within food justice movements, situated in San Diego and

[7] Thug Kitchen is a book that "[...] performs digital and literary blackface while promoting veganism"; and PETA has done some controversial advertisement that "[...] uncritically use images of slaves to evoke emotional responses to violence against animals" (Polish 2016, 378).

Portland respectively. Navarro (2011) wrote about whether food justice movements are neutral in which everyone has the same opportunities and access to present consumption, regardless of intersections of race, class, and gender, and how that is connected to "[...] masculine white settler colonialist ideologies and discourses" (Navarro 2011, 1). Findings showed how mainstream justice movements in San Diego discursively excluded communities of color and how four vegans of color sites engage in a "[...] decolonial anti-oppressive framework to guide their vegan politics" (ibid). Chatila (2018) researched the diversity within the vegan community in Portland, situating it within the context of mainstream social networks. Results indicated that there is a need for a more inclusive vegan space that recognizes the challenges in becoming vegan, maintain veganism both within and outside the vegan community for vegans of color.

Scholars mentioned in this section, all have in common that they perceive veganism, whiteness, white privilege, and white supremacy as connected through the interlocking oppressions of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other enforced identities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that these scholars are first and foremost working from a U.S. context. These issues have not been studied in a Swedish contemporary context. While there are parallels, there are also differences, both concerning veganism and debates on race and intersectionality, therefore, it cannot be assumed that it will be the same, which is why I want to study it in a Swedish context. However, the research field 'Critical Animal Studies'[8] is growing, not the least in Sweden (Gålmark 1997; 2005; Andersson 2006; Pedersen 2019;), and one study by Möller & Ståhlberg (2016) focusing on the representation of veganism in Swedish media.

Previous research presented above has analyzed veganism as more of a lifestyle, rather than a diet. Furthermore, the connection between veganism and race, gender, class, sexuality, and age, is relevant to understand in what ways interlocking systems of oppressions works. This research will strengthen the results in the analysis section and achieve the aim of the study. What is also interesting is to see whether the results of this study will differ or be similar to previous literature, given obvious culturally and historically differences.

[8] Critical Animal Studies is a research field that focuses on the connection between animal liberation and human liberation (Gigliotti 2015, 1-2).

4. Theoretical framework and key concepts

This chapter will start by presenting the theoretical framework postcolonial feminism. Then the key concepts intersectionality, whiteness, and white privilege will be presented. Both the theoretical framework and the key concepts aim primarily to reveal colonial relations of power, and how these are produced and maintained.

4.1 Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonialism refers to the legacies and consequences of colonialism and the contestation of colonial domination (Loomba 2015, 32, 37). Despite its prefix 'post', which usually implies the end of a historical epoch, postcolonialism conceptualizes the continuing effects that colonialism has on previously colonized countries (Hall 1999, 82) and that colonial power relations still exist (Loomba 2015, 31). As such, colonized countries are still characterized and viewed as 'the third world' while the colonizers are characterized and viewed as 'the first world' (Hall 1999, 86, 93; Loomba 2015, 34). Throughout the history of colonialism, the first world has controlled, exploited and enslaved the third world of raw material, labor, and trading posts. Other colonial practices include plunder, settlement, warfare, and genocide. These practices continue to this day and is what postcolonialism tries to make sense of (Loomba 2015, 20-21). Despite its success in criticizing colonial power relations, mainstream postcolonial theory has received criticism for being a male-centered field that ignores women's experiences, pays little or no attention to female agency, and for claiming that there is a absolute binary opposition between East and West, man and woman, black and white. Consequently, the colonized has been reproduced as a homogenous group (Lewis & Mills 2003, 1-2; Loomba 2015, 65; Tyagi 2014, 46).

Feminism on its part aims to understand gender inequality and the male norm that permeates oppressive power structures in the society (de los Reyes et al. 2011, 17-18; Tyagi 2014, 45). Mainstream feminist theory has, however, been criticized for explicitly focusing on the experiences of white Western middle-class women and excluding women of color (Lewis & Mills 2003, 3-6; Mohanty 2003, 49-53). Common aspects between postcolonialism and feminism are that both are critical of the prevailing worldviews (e.g. social, political, and economical injustices) and to the systems, structures and dominant ideas that produce and

reproduce such injustices (Loomba 2015, 58). Injustice and prejudice are in turn upheld and legitimized through eurocentrism, racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia and so on (ibid). Both theories also problematize and analyze universalism and the notion of a universal human (de los Reyes 2011, 17-18).

Starting as a critique of both postcolonialism and feminism, 'postcolonial feminism' criticizes both men's power over women and white Western women's power and superiority of women of color. Firstly, postcolonial feminism analyzes "third world" feminists' resistance against their misrepresentation in the male-centric national discourse that subjects them to stereotypical roles and framings (Tyagi 2014, 47). Second, it explores and problematizes white Western feminists' tendency to overlook questions of race, ethnicity, class, and sex, while also ignoring the historical, social and cultural contexts that the "third world" feminists' are part of (ibid, 49). Mohanty (2003) calls this for the 'Western discursive colonization', implying that today's mainstream feminism produces the 'third-world woman' as a homogenous and monolithic subject with identical experiences, desires, goals, and thus "[...] discursively colonizes the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world" (Mohanty 2003, 50-51). Mohanty further argues that a singular "third-world woman" is created where the stereotypical average is characterized as family-oriented, tradition-bound, religious, domesticated, and victimized through Western-standards. In contrast, white Western feminists portray themselves as modern, educated, sexually liberated and in control of their own lives. Such disparity is what Mohanty calls for the 'third-world difference' where assumptions based on a eurocentric universality reinforces the notion of the "third world" as less developed as the "first world" (ibid, 51, 53, 68). Such assumptions include "[...] a paternalistic attitude towards women in the third world" (ibid, 68) where "third-world women" are constructed in opposition to white women, in which the former becomes an object and 'othered', whereas the latter becomes a subject (ibid, 67-68).

4.2 Intersectionality

A central concept within postcolonial feminism is 'intersectionality'. Intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw (1991) and maps the intersection of race and gender and specifically rejects the homogenization of women's oppression. Intersectionality is rooted in black

feminist theory as a way to explain various oppressions that African-American women experience (Crenshaw 1991, 1242-1244) and opposes the idea that black women's experiences are single-handed issues, i.e. that she is either black or a woman. Crenshaw states that there is a need to include interactions of the identity of gender and the identity of color in order to understand how power structures interact and how "[...] discourses are shaped to respond to one or the other [as] women of color are marginalized within both" (ibid, 1244). Thus, it is not possible to understand the struggle of women of color while looking at race and gender as two separate identities (ibid, 1245).

As a way to move further beyond the prevalent norms of society, identity categories such as class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and ability have been "added" to the list of intersections that needs to be understood to fully understand how power structures interact (de los Reyes & Mulinari 2005, 16; de los Reyes & Kamali 2005). Intersectionality also problematizes and criticize the hegemonic order of whiteness that is depicted as the dominant group. Hence, intersectionality advocates for the inclusion of identity categories (Crenshaw 1991).

Hill Collins (1990, 248-249) further emphasize the importance of highlighting the diversity between and within identity categories, i.e. they are not necessarily homogeneous, otherwise one risks reproducing what intersectionality is aiming at. Additionally, Hill Collins points to the importance of each context and that "[...] individuals and groups may be alternately oppressors in some settings, oppressed in others, or simultaneously oppressing and oppressed in still others" (Hill Collins 1990, 246). For example, white heterosexual women are penalized by gender but privileged by race, whereas black heterosexual women are penalized by both race and gender but privileged by sexuality. However, white homosexual women are more privileged than black heterosexual women as race "triumphs over" sexuality (ibid, 249), as white is not racialized in the same way as black is (see more in section 4.2).

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge the criticism that has emerged towards intersectionality during the last decade. Critics imply that the concept is experiencing a 'backlash' as it does not engage with its roots and that "[...] binary logic and hierarchical practices [still] endure" (May 2015, 7). It is argued that intersectionality value some identities more than others, and "[...] thereby positing one form of identity and structure of oppression not only as separate

from others but also primary" (ibid), which is not what Crenshaw aimed at. Some would also argue that there is a need to abandon the history of intersectionality to be able to use it in the context of today as the concept in some ways are vague and open-ended (Davis 2008, 69). Davis (2008, 77) although states that "[...] with each new intersection, new connections emerge and previously hidden exclusions come to light", which is why I still feel that intersectionality is a useful concept for this study.

4.3 Whiteness and racialization

Closely related to postcolonial feminism is critical race and whiteness studies. Both fields problematize and analyze the hegemonic order of whiteness. Whiteness is, simply described, the normative cultural center that society is organized upon, in which the white race is superior (Twine & Gallagher 2017, 9). Whiteness is often invisible for the dominant group inheriting it (Mattsson 2010, 8). The opposite identity then is non-white people (e.g. black, brown, mixed, white-passing) which in turn becomes racialized, i.e. the process of how race is *done* and to ascribe racial identities to individuals and groups who do not count as white (Hübinette et al. 2012, 15, 25; Mattsson 2010, 10). Although, whiteness is not monolithic as there is no 'original' whiteness, rather, whiteness is "[...] historically founded and locally rooted" (Mattsson 2010, 16, my translation), meaning that there are variations and changes in how whiteness is constructed in each locally rooted context (ibid). Racialization, then, creates systems of privileges and superiority (Hübinette et al. 2012, 25-26; Mattsson 2010, 9).

One prominent scholar talking about whiteness is Ahmed (2007). Ahmed (2007) writes about 'the phenomenology of whiteness' where she describes whiteness as unmarked, or invisible to the white body, which implies that phenomenology conceptualizes whiteness as an effect of racialization; the white body is comfortable whereas the non-white body inhabits uncomfortable feelings. The former can go through life unnoticed and unaware of the privileges that comes with a white body whereas the latter is always aware of one's body as it is stopped and needs to consider the actions it performs. Nevertheless, Ahmed states that whiteness should not be reduced only to skin color as it is not "something" we can have or be; whiteness is a phenomenological description of experiences that have been received, or become given through time (ibid, 150). Such experiences refers to inherent habits from the past and those who inhabit whiteness and those who do not are affected in various ways (ibid,

154, 157). Ahmed further argues that colonialism has made the world "white" and points to how bodies, as well as space, are shaped by colonialism and its history (ibid, 153). Space is shaped by "[...] being oriented around some bodies, more than others" (ibid, 157), thus, space excludes certain bodies by marking and stopping them from the start which is when the white space becomes visible for the white body. This is usually when white bodies realize the privileges they have inherent, even if it is more common that the non-white bodies are the ones that recognize this, as they are the ones who enters 'a sea of whiteness' (Ahmed 2007, 159; 2012; 41).

Alongside whiteness and racialization, is the term 'color blindness'. Color blindness refers to an "[...] anti-racist approach that claims that appearances/looks [based on race] do not matter, or at least *should not* matter (Hübinette et al. 2012, 14, my translation, emphasis in original). In Sweden alongside other countries in Europe, color blindness is the dominating approach when it comes to race and racism. Color blindness is usually well-intentioned, but when race is perceived as not being important to discuss, there is a risk that it diminishes discussions about race (ibid).

White privilege

McIntosh (1988) has been writing about white privilege and how it is a cultural phenomenon that upholds systems of unearned, and usually unacknowledged, advantage for the presumably white population in today's societies. This implies that when some have an unearned advantage, others have unearned disadvantages, and systems of advantage are created. White privilege manifests itself in different ways for different people, where other intersections of social identities come into play (McIntosh 1988, 2-7). White privilege is consistently hidden from those who benefit from it as white privilege is upheld through normative structures of race. As a way to get an understanding in how white privilege can look like, McIntosh (1988) created a list of examples of the daily effects of white privilege in the U.S. The list attach more to privileges based on skin color rather than gender, class, ethnicity, etc., even though such identities are intricately intertwined. The list is based on McIntosh (1988) own whiteness. A few examples:

- “I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance or feared
- If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have
- I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking
- I will feel welcomed and "normal" in the usual walks of public life, institutional and social.” - McIntosh (1988, 2-5).

McIntosh’s (1988) white privilege checklist is widely referenced and shows how superiority and/or exclusion happens in quite subtle ways. In 2014, Harper posted a photo of a checklist called “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: The White Middle-Class Vegan Value System Edition”, based on the previously mentioned checklist (Harper 2014). The checklist is also written from a U.S. context, but has two points that are of interest in the context of this study:

- “When I see mainstream images of vegan health and beauty, I can be sure to almost see images that look like me: white, thin, able-bodied, and young (i.e. PETA ads, VegNews), and products selling the vegan healthy ideal
- When I decide to ‘go vegan’, it is for the single reason of animal rights. I do not have to understand that I should be in solidarity with anti-racist organizations. To me, it is distracting and anti-white to consider being both vegan and anti-racist.” - Harper (2014).

Similarly, Jensen (2005, 7) writes about how white people are not necessarily aware of their privileges for being white, meaning that much is done by ‘unconscious processes’. Even though white privilege is complex, Jensen (2005, 8) states that “[...] all white people have some sort of privilege in some settings. There are general patterns, but such privilege plays out differently depending on context and other aspects of one’s identity”. For example, men have more power than women in today’s society and power can cross racial lines. Gender,

class, sexuality, etc., all plays a part. Jensen provides a few examples of white privilege where the most prominent one is the one that a white person can deliberately walk into a predominantly black neighborhood whereas a black person has no choice but to "deal with a predominantly white world", similar to what Ahmed (2007) argued for (ibid, 8). The privilege here is the ability to ignore and deny one's' privilege as that ignorance is protected (Jensen 2005, 10).

Alongside whiteness and white privilege are discussions of cultural appropriation (CA). CA refers to "[...] the taking - from a culture that is not one's own - of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge" (Ziff & V. Rao 1997, 1). In this context, CA refers to the stigmatization of black hairstyles (e.g. dreadlocks, cornrows, twists) and how black people wearing such hairstyles are linked to negative stereotypes and feelings of Otherness (i.e. to be Othered from what is considered to be the norm). Whereas the same hairstyles are celebrated on white people due to power structures at play; white people can wear, for example, dreadlocks without having to deal with the microaggressions and racism that black people have to deal with (Tazi 2015).

As mentioned by Loomba (2015, 31), today's society is in a postcolonial world where colonial power relations between, and within, the global North and the global South still dominates. With colonial power relations follows interlocking systems of oppression. So how do such relations and systems look like in a Swedish vegan context? First, veganism is widely seen as progressive which may or may not be the most obvious place to study power relations, oppression and the exclusion associated with it. But it is arguably precisely for that reason that we need to look into this. The exclusion mentioned at the beginning of the thesis is not simply about the big injustices of colonial legacies, rather, it is about how racial and gendered forms of knowledge, norms, and positions are present in a self-reflective, progressive, often well-educated community like the Swedish vegan community.

5. Research method

The following chapter will provide a detailed overview of the methodological approach that this study relies upon, including the choice of research method, choice of respondents, ethical considerations, and execution. Lastly, the analytical process will be presented.

5.1 Choice of the data collection method

The study's aim and research questions are both of qualitative nature, as they resonate around an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of a few people in relation to veganism and the vegan community in Sweden. Thus, the study does not account for the number of vegans in Sweden nor any generalizable results. Therefore, the choice of data collection method is 'qualitative interviews', more specifically 'semi-structured interviews'.

Semi-structured interviews are chosen instead of structured interviews, as the former emphasize the respondents' perceptions and worldviews (Bryman 2011, 413; Esaiasson et al. 2017, 262) and exposes practices that can be invisible for those involved (Kvale & Brinkmann 2015). Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewer to use a script containing relatively specific themes that are supposed to work as a guide for the interviews (Bryman 2011, 415; Bryman 2016, 471). Using a script, or an 'interview guide', is the most suitable choice as a script gives some focus and helps to make sure that the interviews cover similar themes. At the same time, it leaves the conversation open so the respondent can have his/her say (Bryman 2011, 416), see more in section 4.3. As such, a quantitative method was deselected as there already are good research papers focusing on veganism in Sweden in a quantitative way (cf. Coelho 2019; Larsson et al. 2003; Lindman 2019).

Before conducting the study, other qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups, participant observation) were taken into account as well, where focus groups seemed fitting for this thesis. Nonetheless, I concluded that focus groups will not be used as it would be hard to make sure whether or not the people in the groups would get affected by each other when giving their responses. Besides, I am more interested in how individuals perceive the issues raised, rather than as members of a group (Bryman 2016, 544; Ekström & Johansson 2019,

125). Then I reflected on whether it was better to do a survey instead of interviews, as the former is more anonymous than the latter which could be beneficial for the study as the chosen topic can be perceived as sensitive for some. However, as I wanted to go deeper and gain a greater understanding of a few individuals' perceptions and experiences, rather than produce a representative sample, semi-structured interviews were the most suitable one. Also, interviews are more valuable as there are relatively few studies on this topic with qualitative interviews as the method (cf. Chatila 2018; Greenebaum 2012; Greenebaum 2017; Navarro 2011).

At the same time, it is important to be aware of problems that may arise in applying a qualitative method as it has a social constructivist starting point, where knowledge of the world cannot be seen as objective truth, meaning that the method tends to be perceived as subjective; i.e. that the results often are based on the researcher's unsystematic understandings of what is meaningful and essential. Relevant information can, therefore, be neglected (Bryman 2011, 368). This is something that I as a researcher have tried my best to be aware of and not reproduce.

5.2 Choice of respondents

At first, I wanted to only interview BIPOCs who identify as vegans, i.e. vegans of color, due to the lack of research with BIPOCs as respondents (see Greenebaum 2012; Greenebaum 2018). Nonetheless, I found that it is relevant to also include white people who identify as vegans as a point of comparison in how each "group" experience veganism in Sweden. The sampling was carried out through various vegan-groups on Facebook where vegans, both white vegans and vegans of color, share experiences, knowledge, food recipes, and the latest vegan products. Additional respondents' were found through mutual acquaintances and friends which in turn lead to a snowball effect. The snowball effect helped the study moving further in the sense that it went relatively fast to come in contact with more people (Denscombe 2014).

Originally the interviews were to be done in Gothenburg, Sweden, face-to-face, but due to the pandemic covid -19, the interviews were instead conducted through video calls. Despite the restructuring, the new set up worked in my favor as it let me reach a more geographically

diverse group of people. The respondents' were interviewed in their homes, which is why I felt that they were quite comfortable with the situation as a whole.

I ended up interviewing 10 vegans, where five identifies as white vegans and five as vegans of color and/or racialized. The respondents all got the chance to describe themselves in whatever way they felt the most comfortable with. As a way to secure the anonymity of the respondents, all names have been changed (see section 5.5). Following is a short introduction to each respondent:

- Heidi, a white Swedish woman, 25 years old. From a city in northern Sweden, currently living in Gothenburg. Working. Vegan for seven years.
- Alexander, a white Swedish man, 25 years old. From a city in southern Sweden, currently living in Lund. Student. Vegan for four years.
- Elsa, a white Swedish woman, 27 years old. From a town in southern Sweden, currently living in Gothenburg. Working. Vegan for six years.
- Mary, a white Swedish woman, 24 years old. From a town in southern Sweden, currently living in Gothenburg. Student. Vegan for five years.
- Grace, a non-white Swedish woman, 23 years old. From a town in southern Sweden, currently living in Stockholm. Student. Vegan for six years.
- Charlie, a white queer, 28 years old. From France/Belgium, currently living in Gothenburg. Working. Vegan for two years.
- Andrea, a Kurdish/Armenian Swedish woman, 23 years old. From a town in the middle of Sweden, currently living in Stockholm. Working/student. Vegan for three years.
- Nicole, a Kurdish-Swedish woman, 26 years old. From a town in southern Sweden, currently living in Karlstad. Working. Vegan for 2,5 years.
- Miriam, Iraqi origin, 25 years old. From Iraq, currently living in Umeå. On sick leave. Vegan for six years.
- Julian, an Iranian man, 34 years old. From a city in the middle of Sweden, currently living in Stockholm. Working. Vegan for three years.

5.3 Interview process

As part of executing semi-structured interviews, it is common that the researcher does an 'interview guide'. I started by following Bryman's "preparing an interview guide" (Bryman 2016, 472-476) where I first made a mind map about the topic in relation to both aim and research questions. Then interview questions were formulated, where I emphasized on the language as I did not want it to sound too academic. According to Esaiasson et al. (2017, 274), this is a fundamental rule for the interview guide. The questions were then divided into three themes: "The respondent's perceptions and experiences of their relation to veganism in Sweden", "Representation in the vegan movement in Sweden", and "Veganism; inclusive or excluding? Or both?", as a way to further organize the interview guide. For the exact structure of the interview guide, see Appendix 1.

Before executing the interviews, two pilot interviews were carried out. Given the time frame for the study, I decided to do the pilot interviews with people I knew from before. The pilot interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents but not transcripted due to me only analyzing the validity of the interview questions, if the questions were intelligible and followed a logical scheme (Esaiasson et al. 2017, 36; Kvale & Brinkmann 2015), and the situation as a whole. Thus, these interviews are not included in the results or analysis of the study. I ended up changing and further develop some questions in the guide as they were perceived as leading.

The interview guide helped me making sure that I covered all the interview themes and where used to some extent throughout the interview process. Yet there was still space for me to ask spontaneous questions drawing upon what was being said. The same goes for the respondents as they had the opportunity to discuss issues that might not have been addressed before. The interviews were conducted in March/April 2020 and lasted between 1- 1,5 hours.

5.4 Translation and language concerns

The interviews were conducted in Swedish, as it is both mine and my respondents' native language. I decided to transcribe all interviews to Swedish and then I picked out the excerpts that I felt were useful and translated those into English. Some of the words were hard to

translate as there was no exact equivalent counterpart. To provide transparency in the translation process and being able to guarantee the quality of the collected data, I asked my native English-speaker classmates to help me translate certain words and sentences. This is a modified way of what Hennink & Liamputtong (2008, 21-22, 31-32) suggests one can do when translating interviews. It is modified in the way that I am not using a professional translator. Even so, I am aware that I can never provide exact translations, which is why I have used footnotes to help explain the meaning of certain words and concepts in Swedish, as it is important to acknowledge the role of language (ibid, 21).

5.5 Ethical considerations

When doing research, it is important to both produce knowledge ethically and to consider ethical issues throughout the research process, especially when it comes to interviews (Kvale et al. 2014; Kvale & Brinkmann 2015).

Before each interview, I started by clarifying their rights as respondents' (e.g. the possibility to withdraw their participation without having to give any specific reason why) and asked for their permission to record the interviews. Additionally, as this study focuses on intersectionality and whiteness in relation to veganism, some questions during the interview could be perceived as sensitive to some. Therefore, all respondents' were assured anonymity and confidentiality in which all names have been changed. They could also skip questions they felt were too sensitive, though no one did so. Overall, I got the feeling that the respondents happily answered all questions while being positive about the study and the attention given to the topic. Sometimes, however, it became clear that respondents' intended to answer some questions in accordance with prevailing social norms (which will be further discussed in the analysis chapter).

Furthermore, as the study's aim and choice of theory are based on analyzing perpetuating oppressive discourses, I have placed this study within feminist research. As the theory chapter already emphasized, there is always a risk of producing research that reinforces universal applicability to women and/or men and for those not wanting to be placed within the gender binary (Rose 1997, 307). To avoid reinforcing negative norms and universality, this study has aimed to contextualize the empirical findings as much as possible. Moreover, the study has strived to follow the aspects of feminist research which include attentiveness to

power, the positionality of the researcher and boundaries of exclusion, marginalization, and inclusion (Ackerly & True 2008, 696, 698-699). This was done by taking self-reflexivity and my privileged position into account. Self-reflexivity was helpful as it made me not only observe but question universal claims, the current norms, my positionality and not reinforce them (Pillow 2003, 182-183).

Regarding my position in this context, it is important to note that as a non-white but white-passing, vegetarian with an academic background, I entered this study with both an insider and outsider status. My experience with veganism was not as extensive as my respondent's. Though I had some knowledge about the challenges of being a vegan in Sweden as heard from close friends. I also understand the difficulties in being racialized and/or being "stopped", while I at the same time inherent Western privileges by passing as white. My position informed every section of this study, especially during the interview process and in the analysis of the data.

5.6 Collection of data

As mentioned in the earlier section, the data for this study were collected by semi-structured interviews in which transcription follows. The transcription of each interview was done on the same day as the interview itself. I also wrote down my thoughts, reflections, and the expressions of the respondents' after each interview as a way to ensure the quality of the data (Bryman 2016). Following Kvale & Brinkmann (2015), I decided to transcribe each interview at length which included transcribing laughter and pauses as it had an impact on what was being said. Mumbling was not transcribed as I found it irrelevant to the study. Emphasis was on the meanings rather than linguistic expressions (ibid, 204-210).

Early in the study, I knew that I wanted at least six to eight respondents as I sensed that it could be hard to achieve a higher amount of people. One challenge with finding respondents was likely due to the potential sensitivity of the topic, as I wrote about it openly in various vegan Facebook-groups while expressing emphasis on whether veganism in Sweden is inclusive, exclusive or both. Yet, I wanted to be fully open from the start of what the study was going to be about. Another aspect could be the outbreak of covid -19 as it turned a lot of lives on hold and upside down, were participating in a master thesis-study probably was not a priority. Nonetheless, 10 interviews were conducted and since the interviews were between

1-1,5 hours, I found it to be rich as the goal was not to produce a representative sample. In addition, a level of saturation was reached after 10 interviews, as no "new" information was discovered after the last one (McCracken 1998, 269).

5.7 Method of analysis

The method of analysis used for the empirical findings is a thematic analysis as provided by Braun & Clarke (2006, 6). A thematic analysis is a method used for "[...] identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". The thematic analysis is characterized by a six-step guide that is divided into phases; (1) familiarization of the data, (2) coding, (3) generating themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) writing up.

The analysis process started by getting to know the collected data (1), which was done by transcribing the audio and then I read and reread the transcribed data. The next step was coding the data (2), where phrases and sentences were color-coded in correspondence to each code. The following phase (3) was to generate themes of the coded data which is when patterns among the codes were identified. Themes are usually broader than codes and therefore, it is fruitful to use visual representations (e.g. tables, mind-map) in this phase (ibid, 19). Both overarching themes and sub-themes within them were used (ibid, 20). When each theme was generated, the next phase began; (4) reviewing themes. Reviewing and refining themes was done as a way to make sure that the themes were representative of the data. In this phase, it is important to go back to the initial data and make sure that what would make the analysis proceed is there. Next, I defined and named the themes (5), i.e. identifying the 'essence' of the theme. Naming the themes involved coming up with a concise name for each theme (ibid, 22). The last phase, (6) writing up, included writing and addressing the final results of the analysis, and overall, the thesis. The following themes were generated:

- Encounters with other vegans online and/or in real life
- The stereotypical vegan
- The notion of vegan privilege
- Representation
- The Whiteness norm

6. Findings and analysis

In this chapter, the empirical findings of the study are presented, followed by analysis. The study's research questions will be answered throughout the entire analysis. To strengthen the analysis and as a way to give voice to the respondents, quotes will be used when deemed especially important. Every section will use previous research as well as the theoretical framework and concepts to explain and analyze in what ways white vegans and vegans of color perceive and experience veganism and the vegan community in Sweden and how such experiences manifest themselves.

6.1. Common findings

To begin with, the findings reveal that all of the respondents share similar reasons for why they have chosen the vegan lifestyle; to not cause any harm to animals, to promote ethical animal agriculture, and to avoid animal oppression at any cost. The respondents stated that their veganism goes beyond the consumption of food and is visible in every part of their lives. For example, they do not consume leather, fur, or feather pillows, nor products that may have been tested on animals. Four of the respondents also pointed out that they refrain from the consumption of services such as zoos and circuses. Hence, the common denominator for all respondents is that everyone bases their veganism on an ethical position towards animals. Some also said that they include humans in their veganism and that they throughout the years of being vegan now have come to include the environmental aspect of veganism as well. All respondents have, to various extent, mentioned that they have experience from the vegan community in Sweden, or they have heard stories from other vegans. For example, the majority is, or have been, part of vegan groups online and/or members of Djurens Rätt, an animal rights organization in Sweden. Others have friends or acquaintance that is part of previously mentioned groups and organization, and/or other groups working toward animal rights, see more in section 6.2.

Overall, the majority of the respondents share feelings of being a ‘killjoy’ when it comes to situations with non-vegans. Being a ‘vegan killjoy’ refers to how vegans tend to feel like a burden for their friends, family, and in their interactions with other people (Twine 2014). For

example, some respondents expressed that the feeling of being a burden usually becomes present when they are eating in restaurants with others, especially with people that they do not know so well. They feel like they are in the way, or that they are stopping and/or interrupting others. At the same time, the respondents felt that some progress has been made since they first became vegans, for example, now there a more general acceptance, more vegan-friendly products, more restaurants with vegan dishes; people talk more about veganism now than a couple of years ago. The general acceptance and increased supply for vegan products follow the new vegan trend (Wescombe 2019). A couple of the respondents that used to live in a town or a city and now live in either Stockholm or Gothenburg, states that the ability to maintain a vegan lifestyle has become easier since they moved, because of the increased demand and popularity.

One thing that became apparent throughout each interview was that the respondents may have had an intention to answer some questions in accordance with prevailing social norms, especially when we discussed whiteness, privilege, representation, and anti-racism. Even so, I felt that the respondents did answer as truthful for them as possible and where I did not understand what they meant, I asked them to explain it further.

6.2 Encounters with other vegans online and/or in real life

This section is about what kind of encounters the respondents have had with other vegans and the vegan community in Sweden as a whole, online and/or in real life.

One of the main topics discussed during the interviews was whether or not the respondents are, or have been, participating in the Swedish vegan community online and/or in real life. The topic was brought up as a way to gain an understanding of how encounters with other vegans and like-minded people looks like. Whether online or in real life, the extent to how much interaction with other vegans the respondents have had and/or still has, varied quite a lot between the respondents and so did their experiences. All of the respondents expressed that they either have some circle of friends that is partly made up of vegans and/or that they to some extent are part of the community, or have experiences from it. When I asked Alexander, a white Swedish man, and vegan for four years, if he felt that being part of the vegan community is important to him, he said no because, for him, veganism is "[...] not a

strong identity marker". He said that he still hangs out with the same people and that he tends to meet non-vegans as well. Charlie, a white queer from France/Belgium and vegan for two years, and Julian, an Iranian man and vegan for three years, both said something similar; Charlie told me that he is pretty much surrounded by vegans all the time, but that he does not think that it is important for him in practicing his veganism. Conversely, those of the respondents that identify as women all said that being around other vegans, or to have a vegan context online, was important, however, to various extent. Three of them expressed that the feeling of belonging to something is important as it helps them to be themselves and to be taken seriously. Heidi, a white Swedish woman, and vegan for seven years said the following:

> I can ask people about a recipe and know that I'll get a serious answer. [...] Unlike other groups where you always need to defend yourself. In these groups [the vegan ones] you don't have to feel weird.

For the most part, those who regularly encounter with other vegans mostly do so in various groups on social media, foremost in vegan Facebook-groups. Practically everyone told me stories about one of the biggest vegan groups, a group that currently has over 47.000 members and is both for vegetarians and vegans in Sweden. Overall, the respondents said that the climate in this group can be quite harsh. When I asked Heidi to expand on this, she said that it usually begins with people asking a seemingly innocent question, according to themselves, that actually comes off as very problematic:

> Usually, it starts from a racist perspective [...] where the person asking the question doesn't necessarily have the purpose of learning from others. [...] Discussions get spiteful very quickly. That is my general feeling about these big vegan groups.

When I asked what she meant with "racist perspective", Heidi said that questions that can be understood as racist for some, may not be seen as such by others, or the one posing the question. Some examples she provided is how some people tends to ask "why do all Asians do this or that", or when people lump together Asia and Africa as if both continents are one and the same to "[...] base assumptions out of stereotypes about Asians and Africans".

According to her, such assumptions are based on racist stereotypes and a white-washed society. Such racist perspectives, Heidi's experience suggests, are often rooted in what has been described as cultural appropriation (CA). The problem with CA is that whenever a white person wears (or appropriate) something from black people, it becomes trendy and cool, whereas when black people do the same, it becomes something negative (Tazi 2015; see section 4.3 in this thesis).

Later on in the interviews, I asked the respondents if they had ever noticed any discussion, or lack thereof, of racialized people and groups within the vegan community. The same persons as mentioned above all disclosed that there was some discussion, albeit in different ways. For example, Heidi, Mary, and Elsa, all of whom identify as white women, told me that the most common discussion is the one about CA. The discussion about CA in this context refers to the assumption that a stereotypical vegan is someone who has hair with dreadlocks. Mary said that this kind of discussions oftentimes leads to a clash between the ones who do not see that being a white person with dreadlocks is a problem and the ones who do. She also said that if people do not listen when someone tries to explain the problem behind dreadlocks on white people, they get banned from the group. According to Heidi, such discussions arise about once a month where white vegans have asked: "why is it not okay for me as a white person to have dreadlocks?".

Mary, for one, has never participated in these kinds of discussions but reads them from time to time as she feels that she learns a lot from it. So even if it can be heated at times, Heidi, Mary, and Elsa feel that it generally ends up being a good discussion as there is a "good mix of people" in these online groups. Heidi concludes that it is good that debates like this comes to light.

Additionally, some of the respondents have witnessed a harsh climate in the previously mentioned vegan group when it comes to people being vegetarian and not (yet) vegan:

> [...] When people have tried to become vegan, they have been attacked by those who already are vegan. It has been a kind of bullying attitude towards non-vegans. [...] There's also been a

> lack of understanding that everyone is different and that not everyone has the same entry to become vegan. -Julian

The climate in these groups can thus be interpreted to be harsh when it comes to the ones who the majority feel has not fully taken the step to become vegan. The same goes for when someone is seemingly asking an innocent question that quickly turns out to be problematic and subtle forms of oppression against marginalized groups becomes visible. Greenebaum (2018) point out that such things might make more people opposed to becoming vegan, as the climate is too harsh and that personal attacks comes more frequently. Harper (2009) and Polish (2019) both state that this is part of mainstream veganism that has emerged as veganism has gained more and more popularity in the last decade.

Statistics show that more and more people are becoming vegans in Sweden and that this is part of an ongoing consumer trend throughout most Western countries (Wescombe 2019, 2). Several of the respondents expressed ambivalent feelings of veganism now being a consumer trend. At first, it was overall positive reactions but the more they thought about it, the ambivalent feelings started to emerge. Andrea, a Kurdish/Armenian Swedish woman and vegan for three years, said that she feels that it could easily become a counter-argument against vegans, as non-vegans could dismiss it as only following a trend. Research done by Bellemare et al. (2018) indicates that the ethical aspects might be lost when people adapt to something new and then goes back to "normal" as soon as a new trend emerges. Indications that this can happen becomes prominent when Andrea began to talk about what she referred to as the "health vegan":

> I'm afraid it will become the same thing as with jeans you've only used for a month, it's like "I tried to be vegan for two months and posted trendy smoothie bowls on Instagram". I think that's why people have a hard time with health vegans; they do it because it's part of a trend. I also think that health vegans are the ones who most easily abandon it [the vegan lifestyle]. The animal rights perspective, and the environmental perspective, becomes secondary. But a lot of people reach that as well, you just have to continue to be vegan until you reach it [the ethical and environmental perspective].

Separate vegan groups

As previously shown there have been tensions in the vegan community, especially online, which is, however, not exclusive for the vegan community. As a way to navigate around this, separate groups have developed in Sweden, as well as in other countries. Several of these groups are separate for racialized people and groups. As of now, there are three to four separate online vegan groups in Sweden. The motives behind them are to share experiences as well as guide and support one another; to act as a comfort zone where people can share how to handle situations that they may become part of. For example, how to handle racism and/or other forms of oppression.

Grace, Andrea, Nicole, and Miriam, all vegans of color, are all part of some of the separate vegan groups and give slightly different stories about this. Grace, a non-white Swedish woman, and vegan for six years expressed that she has seen discussion about racialized people in the vegan community which has often lead BIPOCs being questioned by white vegans. Grace, Nicole, and Miriam repeatedly told me that as soon as a racialized person voices their opinion about something, they get questioned on it. Nicole, a Kurdish-Swedish woman, and vegan for 2,5 years said that it tends to be when a racialized person posts something in the bigger groups and they get questioned and untrusted in what they are saying. Especially when a racialized person calls out something for being racist or other things that can be experienced as oppressive. Nicole says that she thinks that is one of the reasons why the separate groups were created "[...] you started to get tired of constantly being questioned". She also says that this did not necessarily have anything to do with the vegan lifestyle but that it still happens in those groups. She continues:

> [...] every time a racialized person posts something, white people question it. They do it discreetly, though not really. I think it's clear for those who are racialized while they themselves [white vegans] are blind to it.

I asked Nicole to explain this further and why she thinks that this comes about. Nicole mentions that to be questioned all the time has always happened to her, no matter the context or topic. She said that it is usually disguised as microaggressions. Both Grace and Miriam mentioned that they feel that microaggressions are a thing that white vegans tend to

frequently use in discussions about racialized people (further discussed below). Nicole continued to tell me about her experiences of this, or what she has seen in the groups. She said that a lot of white vegans have the knowledge but not the understanding of what they are doing. What is interesting is when she told me that she feels like when white people see it coming from other white people, they seem to understand, but as soon as it comes to themselves, they become defensive.

> [...] It feels like they don't want to understand, they refuse to be the bad guy instead of just apologizing. They refuse to realize that they are part of racist structures. I think a lot of people believe that they are free from it but I don't think it's possible to be free from racism. Even among people from the Middle East, among people everywhere, there is resistance to black people for instance. You can never be free of or from it.

In a similar vein, Grace feels that the microaggressions are so micro that the white vegans do not even notice it themselves. Grace said that she thinks it is this way, not because of the lack of knowledge, but of the lack of understanding of how oppression and racism happen on a daily basis for BIPOCs, as they have not experienced it themselves. Furthermore, Grace told me that she thinks that the vegan community in Sweden lacks an intersectional lens and that she experiences that more and more white vegans have prejudices about racialized vegans. Originated from black feminism, Crenshaw (1991), states that there is a need to include and shed light on how various oppressions interact and that privilege as well as oppression are existing at the same time in society. Thus, a person can be affected by several forms of oppression simultaneously. At different times in a person's life, different oppressions can be more or less prominent. Overall, the vegans of color tell stories and experiences of how the white vegans they have interacted with, do not perceive or are considerate about their feelings when it comes to representation. The same goes for when the vegans of color have expressed that they feel silenced when they share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Several of the vegans of color told me that this becomes evident when the white vegans say something and people listen, whereas when they, as non-white, says something, it is not received in the same way, or at all. Andrea says that when she meets people in real life, she feels that they are all on "the same level" and that the environment is much harsher online. She doesn't know why it is this way but speculates that it can have something to do with that people feel

safe behind a computer screen and dares to write what they actually think. Andrea also said that:

> There is a power dynamic between skin colors and when the majority is white, it becomes like a squad against a little turtle.

This metaphor draws parallels to the experiences that several of the vegans of color have shared with me throughout each interview. A few said that whenever a separate group has been formed, white vegans have had a tendency to mock the reason behind it. Miriam explained this as them not understanding why BIPOCs need and want their own separate groups. In general, the encounters with other vegans can be understood as being complex and multi-faceted, whether you are white or BIPOC. It also indicates that there is a barrier between vegetarians and vegans, especially when they interact.

6.3 The stereotypical vegan

This next part will focus on whether or not there is something called 'the stereotypical vegan' within the Swedish vegan community. If there is such a thing, what are the characteristics of such assumptions and preconceived ideas, and what does it mean for the respondents?

I started by asking the respondents if they feel that there exist any preconceived ideas of what a vegan looks like and who is assumed to be a vegan. Almost everyone laughed when I asked that and said that there is such a thing and that it tends to be "the angry militant vegan who breaks into slaughterhouses". This is also the stereotype that is most visible outside of the community and what the respondents themselves believe is the general assumption that non-vegans have. Three of the white vegans said the same thing and that a 'classic stereotypical vegan' is someone who eats beans and lentils, has dreadlocks, listens to reggae, and is a stoner. Mary and Heidi confessed that they manage to look like stereotypical vegans even though it is not on purpose. For them, colored hair, piercings, and tattoos are typical appearance traits for vegans. When I talked to the vegans of color, they all basically said the same as the white vegans except for one thing; after laughing for a few seconds, the first word most of them said was "white". Grace said that everyone assumes that someone who is

vegan is assumed by default to be white. Andrea describes it in a similar way; that there is a general assumption of who a vegan is but she also said that anyone can be vegan;

> The general assumption of a stereotypical vegan is 'Söder-veganen'[9] with a sandwich in his hand. [...] But also anyone who has an open mind and are free-thinking. That person doesn't necessarily have to be white, racialized, or whatever you are, it can be anyone.

Drawing upon this, it becomes evident that there are vegan stereotypes in Sweden, as with any kind of social movement. What is interesting is that the white vegans described the vegan stereotypes similarly to the findings in research done by Greenebaum (2018); 'the privileged hipster', 'the radical animal rights activist', and 'the free-spirited, nonconformist hippie', which all assume whiteness among vegans. Therefore, one can draw a connection to that even in a Swedish vegan context; there is an implied norm of whiteness among vegans. Nicole strengthens this as she told me how people, vegans as well as non-vegans, are "[...] shocked to see racialized people being vegan". As said earlier, the vegans of color also take notice of skin color, which the interviewed white vegans do not seem to do. This illustrates that whiteness becomes invisible to the white body whereas BIPOCs are seemingly aware of their skin colors as well as the white, 'invisible' one (Ahmed 2007; 2012). This will be discussed more closely in a future section.

Another aspect of the vegan stereotype is that they are based on prejudice about people that is not necessarily correct. When we continued to talk about this, the white vegans expressed both discomfort and recognition in the stereotypes whereas the vegans of color expressed that they feel disconnected from the community and feelings of not being welcomed or wanted. In turn, such disconnection can deter BIPOCs from veganism as well as push vegans of color further away from the community. Andrea shared her thoughts about this:

> When I tried to 'veganize' a Kurdish LGBTQ-couple, they said that they didn't want to become vegans because then they would become a minority even more. It's quite important to say because they have the image that vegans already are a minority, though a privileged one

[9] According to the respondent, the term refers to a white vegan who lives in Södermalm, a district located in Stockholm's inner city.

> for those who don't look like them. [...] If you don't look that way [i.e. white] and also is an LGBTQ-couple living in the suburbs, then there is nobody. I don't know any LGBTQ-couple who look like them and are vegan. So I can totally understand them.

The quote demonstrates that the thought of becoming vegan when you already are marginalized is creating resistance towards the vegan lifestyle and vegan community. As stated above, such resistance can be referred to the notion that veganism is "[...] linked with whiteness, affiliated with privilege, and deemed incompatible with ethnicity" (Greenebaum 2018, 680). It can also lead to visible and invisible stigmas for vegans of color because when veganism is perceived as white, it seems foreign and inaccessible for BIPOCs (ibid, 685-686; Harper 2012). The stigma is thus, partly, created by preconceived ideas, prejudices, and vegan stereotypes.

Moreover, two of the vegans of color said that both vegans and non-vegans have categorized them in a way that does not reflect the image they have of themselves. I asked Grace what kind of personal experiences she has of being vegan in Sweden and she told me that she, as a non-white Swede, has experiences that she does not think that white vegans have:

> [...] like when people assume I'm vegan for religious reasons. I'm not religious, I don't believe in any god, I don't belong to any religion. When I say that, it's like an extra blow because then you know that, that person has that prejudice about you, based only on appearance.

This kind of situation tends to happen when she asks if she can get something without pork and people tell her things like "but if you don't eat pork, there is always chicken". For Grace, it is not the pork that is the problem but that people assume that is the reason why she does not eat pig is because she is Muslim which is more likely to be correct than her being vegan. Grace says that she is sure that such assumptions are based solely on her appearance because there is nothing with her that would come off as belonging to any religion. Grace's story illustrates that when BIPOCs are vegan, they must be so because of religion. This is assumptions that promote prejudice and is thus a stereotype that assumes that all BIPOCs are religious or that BIPOCs only can be vegans for religious reasons. There are of course

BIPOCs who are vegan and for whom religion plays a significant part in how they practice their veganism (see e.g. vegans of faith) but that is not the case for every BIPOC who are also vegan (Griffin 2017, 45-56).

In sum, there are stereotypes about white vegans as well as vegans of color; stereotypes that do not correspond with how either group views themselves (as tends to be the case for stereotypes).

6.4 The notion of vegan privilege

The claim that veganism and the choice to become vegan is a privilege, is a common critique from non-vegans (Greenebaum 2016; 2018). Non-vegans tend to claim that veganism requires affluence which is something respondents Grace and Heidi agree with, however in different ways. Grace talked about the notion of vegan privilege in connection to her feelings about veganism being perceived as white and for the (upper) middle-class as she feels it is not always possible for everyone to afford the vegan lifestyle. She also said that she thinks it is easy to be a white vegan in Sweden because that is following the trend right now, and "[...] when white people do something, it becomes trendy". I asked her what she meant by that and she responded by saying that to be white is to be privileged and therefore, to be a white vegan is to have a whiteness privilege or a 'vegan privilege'.

Similarly, Heidi says:

> I think veganism is a privilege because I've been able to choose to educate myself on the issue. I also live in a country where I can get a proper education and then get a job, which means I can afford an interest [i.e. the vegan lifestyle] alongside that.
>
> [...] I also have the financial opportunity to be vegan, because, in the beginning, it's not that easy. Of course, you can be vegan super cheap by living on rice and lentils and still get all the protein, but then again, it's a matter of privilege to educate yourself you know. I have made a choice that is deviating from the norm, and in my opinion, that is a huge privilege.

At first, this indicates that veganism in itself is a privileged lifestyle which by default excludes less affluent people, or it can be as Heidi points out, "[...] it's a matter of privilege to

educate yourself". Perhaps veganism is not a privilege in itself is, rather, the ability to make choices, whether it is based on education or having the financial opportunity, is the privilege. Yet, that is not to say that the notion of vegan privilege is not there, but to point out that to be privileged is not necessarily "[...] vegan traits nor are they attitudes held exclusively by vegans" (Greenebaum 2018, 367). The critique that it stems from is more of a carnist privilege, meaning that if people have the economic privilege to make choices regarding their food diet and/or lifestyle, "[...] then they are unconsciously avoiding and minimizing the ethical dilemma of eating animals" (ibid). Thus, to criticize veganism for being a privileged lifestyle legitimize non-vegans in their choices to not practice veganism. It also "[...] ignores the broader issues that should be of concern for vegans and non-vegans alike - food justice for humans, animals, and the environment" (ibid). Even though Greenebaum's research originate from an U.S. context, there are some resemblances to the Swedish vegan context. In Sweden, food justice for people is not as big of an issue as it is in the U.S., but similarities between justice for people is, which draws parallels to the notion of white privilege within the vegan community as well as the rest of society. Going back to what Grace might have referred to, is that privileges are surrounding the vegan lifestyle which tends to overlook that everyone does not enter veganism from the same starting point. And when a white person becomes vegan, that person brings along her white privilege as well; a privilege that commonly refers to the things mentioned by Heidi. The argument goes that race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, are all systems of domination that affects people's life choices, such as the choice to become vegan or not, see more below (Harper 2012; Greenebaum 2018; Ko & Ko 2017).

6.5 Representation

Representation is vital for anyone to feel seen, heard, and represented. In an article from 2018, Shah wrote about the misrepresentation of veganism and that it only takes a quick google search to see "[...] why mainstream veganism is largely considered to be a white movement worldwide" (Shah 2018). Shah based this on how mainstream media and vegan/animal rights organizations promote thin, white, female vegans which do not only misrepresent the community, it also assumes that veganism is white. As previously shown, this could lead BIPOCs to deter from veganism altogether, as it makes it difficult for BIPOCs to envision themselves in the community (Greenebaum 2018, 686-687). Based on this lack of

representation worldwide, this section will analyze how the representation within the vegan community in Sweden is perceived.

I asked the respondents to imagine visual images found online and on social media, in cookbooks and magazines, in the branding of products, and public events, and tell me about who they envisioned that these images were supposed to portray and who they tried to reach out to. Nicole, Andrea, Miriam, and Grace, all vegans of color, thought of similar things; that the way veganism in Sweden is portrayed, is for white Swedes and white vegans and not for them:

> Everyone who releases cookbooks, for example, doesn't look like me. The representation is pretty bad in that way. [...] Representation in Sweden is bad in general. -Andrea

Miriam is following the same line of thought:

> I feel that they're trying to reach out to 'majoritetssvenskar'[10]. [...] I don't think that veganism should be so white-centered all the time, because everyone, regardless of background, religion, and that sort of stuff, can be vegan.

Moreover, Nicole says that she feels that the racialized vegan accounts are not given enough attention among white vegans and that they are most visible among vegans of color. Once again, it is illustrated that there is a divide between white vegans and vegans of color, as veganism is only presented for, and representing one kind of vegan/veganism. The divide indicates that a misrepresenting of vegans/veganism is happening which could lead to an environment of exclusion for vegans of color later on. Polish (2016, 374) referred to the similar thing as how mainstream discourses and practices of veganism is depicting veganism as something unmarked, i.e. white. Polish means that the advertisement and visual images aimed at vegans assume a white vegan audience which in a broader vegan rhetoric "[...] accompanies and/or directly perpetuates colonization" (ibid, 385). Besides, the visual images can be understood in relation to Sweden's attitude about race; i.e. color blindness which "[...] constantly reinscribes whiteness as the normative, yet unmarked, position that, for example,

[10] 'Majoritetssvenskar' is a term that refers to native white Swedes (Hübinette 2015).

effectively forecloses, silences and excludes experiences of everyday racism among non-white Swedes (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 426). Color blindness is not unique to Sweden and may or may not be intentional but the above quote shows that there is a need to talk about race and acknowledge color.

None of the vegans of color interviewed felt that the kind of presentation of the visual images is representative for them or for the BIPOCs who might want to become vegan. Andrea has somewhat ambivalent feelings about this because when we spoke about it, she told me that she do not feel represented, but at the same time, she knows that things are moving forward at a fast pace and that something is starting to happen, compared to 10 years ago. However, later she said the following:

> I think it's hypocrisy [...] they say that they are trying to reach out to everyone and to include all kinds of people but they still go through the same destructive class society as always. [...] Under the surface, they continue to exclude people, because based on all this [the visual images], you get the image of what a vegan looks like, and that is the white cis or LGBTQ-person with trendy clothes and a hip Instagram account".

When I talked to Grace, she said that she thinks of white cis-people who do not deviate in any other way than being vegans, when it comes to representation.

> When you walk around Vegovision[11], there are like 2 out of 30 exhibitors who are non-white and you want to support them when it finally is this kind of event.

These findings resonate with the general depiction of veganism in the media (Cole & Morgan 2011; Möller & Ståhlberg 2016). For instance, Cole & Morgan (2011) found that vegans are seen as the marginalized Other and that media representation of veganism is based on dominant discourses that promote meat and meat-eating. This has created a discourse that ridicules veganism in various ways. Möller & Ståhlberg (2016, 1) did a study where they analyzed how Swedish newspapers portray vegans and veganism during 2015. The findings showed that veganism by this time was underrepresented in Swedish newspapers and that the

[11] Vegovision is Sweden's biggest vegan fair, organized by Djurens Rätt Sverige (Vegovision, n.d.).

majority of their chosen material was negative towards vegans and veganism as it portraits vegans as militant, radical, and aggressive (ibid, 1, 50-55). As such, parallels are on the on hand, drawn to stereotypes of vegans as discussed in the previous section, while on the other, creating a distance not only between white vegans and vegans of color but also among white vegans as a whole.

When I discussed representation with Mary, a white vegan, she instantly said that it is mainly men who push the visual images and the cookbooks, magazines, and the branding of products forward. I asked why she thinks it is that way in which she responded that it just follows the status quo and even though more women and non-binary people, percent wise, tend to be vegans, it is like it has always been (see previously mentioned statistics from Food & Friends 2019). According to Mary, this is the way it looks like in the vegan groups online as well; more women and non-binary people are members but men are overrepresented when it comes to discussions.

Similarly, Nicole said that the face outward for veganism in Sweden right now is the vegan blog 'Jävligt Gott' by Gustav Johansson, a white male vegan. Several of the respondents know who he is and agrees that he is the most popular one as he is seen everywhere these days. When Heidi and I talked about this, she said the same thing as Mary and that she thinks it is like that because of how the patriarchy affects our society; that it is connected to who is allowed to take place in society, which tends to be white men. "[...] Because as a white man, it is easier to succeed than as a white woman". At the same time, she said that a white woman has an easier time to succeed than if you are racialized, whether you are a man or a woman.

This resonates with the postcolonial feminist diagnosis that power structures between men and women where men are the norm (de los Reyes et al. 2011, 17-18). This power structure also crosses racial lines. Postcolonial feminism criticizes such power structures and acknowledges both white women and white men's power and superiority over BIPOCs, foremost women of color (Mohanty 2003; Tyagi 2014, 47). The theory refers to how women's oppression is by no means collective oppression where all women are oppressed by all men as there are differences between and among women as well as men, which needs to be taken into account (Molina 2016, 34-35). It is important to acknowledge that oppression is

not one-sided and that the struggle of BIPOCs and women of color is based on the intersection of race and gender and not as two separate identities or categories; power structures interact (Crenshaw 1991, 1244-1245). Neither is this limited to the vegan society; BIPOCs are not well represented in the society as a whole, but as Andrea said earlier; progress is happening. One example of such progress was when four of the respondents told me about 'Zeina's Kitchen'[12]. With the growing popularity of Zeina's Kitchen and the vegetarian and vegan food she makes with influence from the Middle East, there are indications that a more inviting and holistic representation of veganism is on the horizon (cf. Chatila 2018, 21).

To diversify the representation and the inequality in the Swedish vegan community, all respondents felt that the society must change first and become more equal. Three out of the five the white vegans said that they, as white people, need to give space for vegans of color instead of taking it themselves. As a way to do that, they shared the need to be an ally; an ally who do not stay silent when people says something xenophobic and racist.

6.6 The whiteness norm

The following section will discuss and analyze the (prevailing) whiteness norm within the vegan community in Sweden. Whiteness is the normative cultural center that society is organized upon, where the white race is superior (Twine & Gallagher 2017, 9). Whiteness is often invisible for the dominant group that inhabits it (Mattsson 2010, 8) which in turn makes white bodies comfortable. The feeling of being comfortable makes the life of white bodies easy, as they can go through life seemingly unmarked. Whiteness is thus shaping white bodies "[...] experiences, practices, and views of self and other" (Frankenberg 1993, 228). The non-white body, on the other hand, will always be aware that they do not inhabit whiteness, as the non-white body will be stopped throughout life in whatever action it performs (Ahmed 2007, 150).

According to Harper (2009; 2010; 2012), whiteness and white privilege have a fixed place in vegan rhetoric and across vegan communities as it does in the rest of the society. Similarly, Greenebaum (2018) mean that white privilege has created an universal vegan, or a vegan

[12] Zeina Mourtada is a Swedish chef with roots from Lebanon, and owner of one of Sweden's biggest food and cooking blogs; Zeina's Kitchen (Zeina's Kitchen, n.d.).

stereotype that is assumed by default to be white. Since both Harper and Greenebaum's research is situated in an U.S. context, I wanted to analyze if whether or not the whiteness norm is persistent in a contemporary Swedish vegan context. Therefore, I asked my respondents' various questions about whether they felt included in the Swedish vegan community (which acts as a red thread throughout the analysis). As previously mentioned, it became evident that there is a difference in the experiences of white vegans and vegans of color and that a barrier had been built.

Closely related to whiteness and white privilege is racism, which also became evident as the interviews proceeded. Overall, all of the vegans of color had at some point either been the subject for racism, both individual and structural acts of racism, or had experienced it in some ways within the vegan community. As described in previous section, the racism they have experienced is usually disguised as microaggressions which, if it continues to be accepted by the majority will follow "The Pyramid of White Supremacy", see Appendix 2. The white vegans, on the other hand, had no personal experiences of any racism or racial tension but three of the five reported observations of it (the discussions about CA). The situations that almost every respondent told me about were situated in the vegan groups online. Four of the respondents, all vegans of color, are to various extent active in vegan groups, foremost on Facebook, while the rest are members of some groups but not particularly active. As mentioned before, the climate is sometimes perceived as harsh and it is in the groups that most of the respondents explain that there is a prevailing whiteness norm. I found this interesting, as there was no specific question about whether or not there exists a whiteness norm in the community.

One of the first questions during the interviews was "How would you identify yourself in terms of gender and ethnicity?". The intent with this question was to find out how the respondents would describe themselves and if that would play any part in their responses later on. It was also supposed to work as a way to see if there is any difference in the respondents' thoughts, feelings, and experiences based on gender identity and ethnicity. All of the respondents showed difficulties in answering the question and felt somewhat uncomfortable answering it, but after some thought and asking me to explain the question a bit more, all of them answered. As previously mentioned (see section 5.2), five of the respondents identified

as white vegans and the other five as vegans of color/and or racialized. The ones that identified as white were a bit hesitant regarding ethnicity where some said "[...] uhm, white I guess?" while the BIPOCs referred to the origin of their parents when describing their ethnicity.

Throughout the interviews, the white vegans expressed that they had both seen and sensed notions of the whiteness norm and privilege as well as a middle-class identity. Both as part of their position and identification as well as with other white vegans. However, that was only spoken of after I had asked questions of how the vegan community in Sweden looks like according to them, or if they have ever experienced any difference between themselves and other vegans in the community. What became prominent when we talked about those questions was that it seemed quite difficult for them to understand how their whiteness is also part of their identity; it seemed that it would almost pass them by unnoticed. What reinforced my feelings of how the white vegans does not seem to notice their own whiteness, was that almost every time we talked about representation in any way, the angry militant vegan was mentioned as the one doing anything disrespectful towards others. Or anyone besides themselves. Only a few times, four of the white vegans explicitly told me stories of how they are also part of the whiteness norm. Mary said that she thinks it is this way because the (white) angry militant vegan is the ones who gets to speak even though no one has yes or no to that and that it always ends up like that. Furthermore, Mary said that she thinks that all of this (e.g. representation, who gets to speak, etc.) can be part of white veganism and that

> [...] you can still reproduce that without standing for it. Sometimes it becomes forced, like when people are trying to so hard to be inclusive and then it backfires because they don't know how to uphold it.

The quote by Mary relates to what was previously mentioned; that it is hard for the white body (or the mind of a person situated in a particular body) to realize not only the inhabited whiteness but also the privileges that come with that (Ahmed 2007; 2012; Frankenberg 1993; McIntosh 1988). It comes down to how the whiteness norm is so prominent that it becomes difficult to do anything about it if not everyone is on the same track. Simultaneously, the whiteness norm indicates once again how vegan stereotypes and those who fit into such

preconceived ideas, consciously or not, also exclude the white vegans who do not recognize themselves in the vegan stereotypes. Differentiation occurs between the vegan who is outwardly militant and the vegan who is "just" vegan. As explained by Ahmed (2007, 2012), whiteness is unmarked, or invisible to the one inheriting the privileges of whiteness/the white body, which “allows” the white body to go through life seemingly unnoticed and unaware of the privileges that come with such heritage. At the same time, the one that never received whiteness is excluded from space that is shaped by ”[...] being oriented around some bodies, more than others”, i.e. a white space (Ahmed 2007, 157). Space excludes non-white bodies by marking and stopping them which is usually when the white space becomes visible for the white body and privileges based on whiteness comes to light (i.e. white privilege). However, it is more common that the non-white body realizes the white privilege inherent by white people before themselves sees, which I relate to how the interviewed white vegans do not fully see their whiteness.

Moreover, McIntosh (1988) and Jensen (2005) state that white privilege, in the same way as whiteness, is conceptualized by ‘unconscious processes’. I relate this to the way white vegans act when being called out if they have said something that is considered racist for the receiver or denies that they are part of racist structures, like to not want to be perceived as being “the bad guy”. At the same time, privilege, and racism, comes in various forms which “[...] plays out differently depending on context and other aspects of one’s identity” (Jensen 2005, 8).

Anti-racism and veganism

The last section is centered around whether the respondents see any connection between anti-racism and veganism in Sweden. I base this part on Sweden’s self-image that place Sweden outside of the European colonial history (Keskinen et al. 2016). The same self-image is based on the self-reflective, often well-educated community like the Swedish vegan community where veganism is strongly associated with progressive attitudes, moral positioning, and as part of left-leaning circles and politics, and thus also anti-racism.

The findings indicate an ambivalence where the majority of the respondents state that there is a strong connection between anti-racism and veganism in Sweden whereas others do not. Heidi for one feels like it is more acceptable to be vegan in left-leaning circles than in

right-leaning circles and that it, therefore, becomes natural. Alexander agrees as he feels that veganism tends to be associated with leftist politics and that anti-racism is a pretty strong slogan in leftist politics. Both Mary and Elsa support this statement where Mary understands it as people usually push anti-racism and veganism forward at the same time, and that vegans are generally "anti" everything that is considered to be violating anything living which includes not only animals but humans as well. She concludes, however, by saying that someone does not necessarily have to be anti-racist to be vegan and vice versa. For Grace, Miriam, and Nicole, there is no direct connection between anti-racism and veganism;

> I've never experienced that anti-racism and veganism are connected in any way. Of course, there are many people in these groups that seem and are quite left-leaning, or they say left-leaning but mean all these things like veganism and anti-racism, but I don't think that anti-racism is a thing in white vegan communities. White vegans have never been more allied than anyone else. - Grace

Miriam agrees to some extent:

> It feels like they [the white vegans] only care about things that affect themselves, for example, sexism. But racism, no. They don't care and if they do, it feels like they're just seeking confirmation, they don't do anything without being able to show it to other people. It's just empty words. [...] This is generally what it looks like in society.

Nicole and I had a long talk about this and she shared some insightful thoughts. She believes that some see a connection between anti-racism and veganism and fight for it, but she also thinks that there is a big group of vegans that "only" have it as a diet and/or lifestyle. Out of the white people that have been vegans for a long time, she believes that they are anti-racists. I asked her why she thinks so and in which way they are anti-racist. Nicole answered that it depends on what kind of online groups she has been part of (which is not exclusively vegan groups) and the way they are expressing themselves when they are explaining something. One example she gave was if a white vegan has written anything stupid and/or hurtful, then long time-vegans answer with "a good analysis", which is a postcolonial and/or intersectional analysis, according to Nicole. She did also express the following:

> For some, I think that anti-racism is genuine, whereas others are more like "look at me". But it's hard to know when you haven't met the people in question. Where I live, I know it's not genuine. Some white vegans claim to be anti-racists while they at the same time say something racist. For example, that unaccompanied minors change their date of birth and personal number.

I then asked why she thinks that someone says that they are anti-racists if they are not:

> [...] I think it works as a protection, to show that you are one of "the good guys", but also because you may have some anti-racist values in some contexts. For example, when it comes to the rights of black people in the U.S., then you might be anti-racist. But when you start talking about Sweden, they suddenly say that they are against Sweden in bringing in more migrants, and then they might not be so anti-racist after all.

These findings imply that the perceptions of what anti-racism means and whether the respondents see any connection between anti-racism and veganism differs between white vegans and vegans of color. The white vegans follow the reasoning of the Swedish self-image that thinks about and fights against all kinds of oppression (Keskinen et al. 2016; Veganprat 2014). While some of the vegans of color do not seem to share the same perception or experience as the former, where others have ambivalent feelings about the supposed connection. A similar pattern of the findings was obtained in the section about representation. Together, these findings highlight that veganism may, to an extent, work as a shield of the self-claimed have of progressive action, or that some white vegans "namedrop" anti-racism as a part of their activism, while the representation remains white. In sum, this may explain how strong whiteness and color blindness is, even in one of the most affluent and equal societies in the world.

7. Discussion and conclusion

This last chapter ties the whole study together. First, a summarized discussion of the findings will be presented. Second, conclusion and suggestions for future research will be given.

7.1 Summarized discussion

Through semi-structured interviews with five white vegans and five vegans of color in Sweden, this study aimed to understand and analyze veganism in Sweden through an intersectional lens. By extension, it also aimed to explore whether the vegan community is perpetuating systems of oppression and if there is space for vegans of color in Sweden. The main research question was "Do vegans in Sweden, both white and vegans of color, feel that the vegan community has created an environment of exclusion for vegans of color and why?". In all of the interviews, there were a few things that they all had in common; for one, all of the respondents shared similar motives for their veganism, i.e. to avoid animal oppression at any cost. All stated that their veganism goes beyond the consumption of food and that it is more of a lifestyle. The majority shared stories of feeling like a "vegan killjoy" in situations with non-vegans, while others mentioned that they have felt that some progress has been made, such as general acceptance and more vegan-friendly products.

In section 6.2, encounters with other vegans online and/or in real life were covered. All respondents shared that it was in big vegan groups online that they encountered and interacted with other vegans, albeit in varying degrees. It was also in the big groups where the majority felt that the climate was harsh from time to time. For example, some had seen threads in groups where both vegetarians and vegans were members and where some vegans tended to accuse vegetarians of not going "full out vegan". Another example was whenever a vegan of color posted something in these groups, white vegans, for what they could tell, had tendencies to reply in a way that was perceived as microaggressions. This was most visible in the discussion about whether or not it is right for white people to have dreadlocks based on its connection to CA. That, along with other similar discussions, was the reason for why some of the vegans of color joined an online community that deliberately broke away from the bigger vegan groups. All of the vegans of color are part of various separate vegan groups online to

feel a sense of belonging and to have a “free zone” from racism and other forms of oppression they encountered in the non-separate groups.

Section 6.3 analyzed the findings of whether or not there is a stereotypical vegan and if so, what the characteristics of such stereotype are. Here, it became evident that there are differences between white vegans and vegans of color and their experiences of the vegan community. The former tended to speak about other vegans than themselves when they described their perceived ideas of what a stereotypical vegan is. The stereotype the majority referred to was the angry, militant animal rights activist with dreadlocks. Neither of them identified themselves as that, which may have had something to do with that neither disclosed that they were active animal rights activists even if they said that they share similar thoughts about animal rights. A few did, however, say that they manage to look like a stereotypical vegan with their colored hair, piercings, and tattoos. On the contrary, neither one of the vegans of color felt any resemblance with the perceived idea of the vegan stereotype, more than shared ethical motives. All the vegans of color immediately thought of a white person when asked to describe a vegan stereotype. Some shared that they felt that others might think that to be vegan is to be white which had various implications for them. One implication that was given was that it could deter BIPOCs from the vegan lifestyle and push vegans of color further away from the community. By that, a connection was drawn that even in a self-claimed progressive movement such as veganism, there is an implied norm of whiteness.

Discussions about the whiteness norm, whiteness privilege, and color blindness, acted as a red thread in both the interviews and the analysis. Whiteness permeates everything and so also the Swedish vegan community, even though that is not something that was explicitly talked about. To not explicitly talk about, or be aware of, one’s privilege is how any kind of privilege works; privilege is hardly ever visible for the ones who inhabit it (cf. McIntosh 1988, Frankenberg 1993).

Even though semi-structured interviews provided a flexible framework to discuss the respondent’s views and experiences, there was some difficulty in the analysis process to maintain an objective position because I, as non-white but white-passing, recognized a lot of the oppression that the respondents shared. Nonetheless, I, as far as was possible, let the

empirical material and the theory and concepts guide the interpretations and analysis and not my understandings of what is meaningful and essential. That is also why I decided to let quotes from the interviews guide the analysis forward. Following intersectionality, the intention was never to point out that each group shares the same experiences among themselves, as not all white vegans, or all vegans of color, experience privilege and/or oppression in the same ways. The intention was neither to reproduce a representative sample as that would have demanded that I used a quantitative method. Instead, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of a few individuals' perceptions and experiences. Though if I had ended up interviewing animal rights activists, for example, the results may have pointed to something else. The same goes for if I had interviewed another age group, even if there were no specific age criteria for participating. Besides, the results indicate that there is a prevailing whiteness norm within the vegan community in Sweden as well as in society as a whole, which I believe says something about the world beyond the respondents' perceptions and experiences.

7.2 Conclusion

By taking an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1991), and by engaging with whiteness (Ahmed 2007; 2012; Frankenberg 1993), the concept white privilege (McIntosh 1998), I have scrutinized perceptions and self-perceptions among members of the vegan community in Sweden. The expressed experience and feelings lead to an analysis where some overarching conclusions can be drawn.

First, the experiences of white vegans and vegans of color differ to some extent, especially when it comes to how they experience the representation within the vegan community. Some of the vegans of color felt that the way veganism is presented in, and for whom, is for white people and/or white vegans, and thus not for them. According to the majority of the vegans of color, the misrepresentation and the lack of diversity in the community manifested itself in a way that has made veganism into a lifestyle associated with whiteness and privilege. As a result, the vegans of color felt that they had to navigate around this whiteness which lead them to become members of separate vegan groups online. In these separate vegan groups, they expressed that the environment was more inclusive, friendly, and less harsh than in other, non-separate, vegan groups that they had previously been part of.

Secondly, the whiteness norm and whiteness privilege that the white body unknowingly has, lead to implications for all of the respondents, albeit in various ways. For the white vegans, the whiteness norm and whiteness privilege implicated their thoughts. First about other white vegans, and later on, themselves and their whiteness and the privileges that come with that. Right from the start, the white vegans, prompted by a question about their ethnicity, reflected about the impact that their unmarked white body had in the vegan context, but also in society as a whole, which became more and more evident throughout the interviews. It was, however, never fully clear that they identified as white more than in terms of appearance, which amplified how whiteness is invisible to the ones who inhabit it. To not be aware, or to be able to ignore at times, one's whiteness is to be able to, unknowingly, benefit from it. To address the inequality and diversify the representation of the Swedish vegan community, all the respondents disclosed that the society must become more equal first. As for the white vegans, three of them said that white people, vegans or not, needs to give space to vegans of color and BIPOCs and to be an ally that takes a stand where it is needed the most; amongst other oppressors.

Thirdly, to look at veganism through an intersectional lens let me illustrate how various systems of oppression and power work together and what kind of implications that have on vegans, both white vegans, and vegans of color. My intersectional perspective leads me to analyze if there is any space for vegans of color in the Swedish vegan community. Findings indicate that there is space for vegans of color but that there exists a universal vegan stereotype that by default assumes a white person/vegan which has created some feelings of exclusion for the interviewed vegans of color. On the other side, the exclusion is not exclusive for the vegan community, rather, it is an indication of how society looks like. To move away from that and diversify the vegan community, there is a need to dismantle the idea of a white universal vegan, to start conversations about representation and inclusivity for all, to give space to vegans of color and BIPOCs. Then, veganism might become "[...] a structural solution to a structural problem, not just an individual lifestyle" (Greenebaum 2018, 367).

Adding to the existing work on veganism in the U.S. (Chatila 2018; Greenebaum 2016; 2018; Harper 2009; 2010; 2012; Ko & Ko 2017; Navarro 2011; Polish 2019), my thesis shows there

are some similarities in the experiences of vegans of color in the Swedish vegan community. Although the findings are neither representative or generalizable for the entire vegan community, it does, however, give an indication of how it looks like both in the vegan community and in society as a whole. I hope that this study will encourage future research on the experiences of vegans of color in Sweden and elsewhere. I also encourage future research to bring speciesism into the discussion about veganism and to insert it into the intersectional perspective.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide (translated version)

Background questions

- How would you identify yourself in terms of gender and ethnicity?
- How old are you?
- Where did you grow up?
    - Where do you live now?
- What kind of occupation do you have?
- How long have you been vegan?
- How do you define veganism?
- Why did you become vegan?
- Would you say that your veganism and/or the vegan community is important to you?

Theme 1: The respondent's perceptions and experiences of their relation to veganism in Sweden

- What is your personal experience of being vegan/practicing the vegan lifestyle in Sweden? This can be both negative and positive experiences.
- Can you please describe how the vegan community in Sweden looks like according to you?
    - Why do you think it is that way?
    - Is it a problem that needs to be addressed?
- If there such a thing as a stereotypical vegan?
    - According to you, who is the typical vegan?
- Are you active in any vegan groups/communities (either Facebook, courses, social context e.g. vegan community events, organizations, etc.)?
    - What was your motive to join these settings?
    - How long have you been involved with these settings?
    - Has this affected you in some ways? If so, how?
    - Have interactions with other members of such groups/communities been a positive or negative experience? In what way positive/negative?

- Can you tell me something about how you experience the environment in the groups/communities you are part of?

Follow-up if part/or active online or other settings:

- Do you experience any difference between yourself and other vegans in the vegan community?
  - If yes, in which ways?
- Have you ever felt excluded in the Swedish vegan context, either on the internet or in real life?
  - If so, in which ways?
- Do you know someone who ever felt excluded in such a context? Can you tell me something about it?

Theme 2: Representation in the vegan community in Sweden

- Imagine yourself being at a vegan public event. According to you, which audience (people) are the organizers reaching out to?
- In what ways do you think that this could affect how these people are portrayed?
- Do you think that such portrayals could affect the perceptions of vegans?
  - If so, why/why not?
- In which ways do you feel - or not feel - represented in the ways vegans are represented in Sweden, either in person or online (or both)?
  - Can you tell me about it?
- Do you feel that the representation of veganism and the vegan community in Sweden is equal in the sense that all kinds of people are represented?
  - If yes, how do you feel about it?
  - If no, why do you think you feel like that?

Theme 3: Veganism as inclusive or exclusive, or both

* Present example* There is research saying that veganism tends to be excluding some groups of people. For example, black vegans in the U.S. have pointed out that they experience that veganism is strongly connected to whiteness and privilege, despite that the general vegan movement portrays itself as beyond that. Based on the different historical

happenings, it looks a bit different in Sweden but I would still like to hear your thoughts and opinions about this.

- What are your thoughts about what I just mentioned?
- According to you, do you feel that the vegan community in Sweden is inclusive for all types of people?
    - If yes, in what ways?
    - If no, why is that so?
- Can you see any connection to anti-racism and veganism? If so, how/why not?
- Do you think there's a need to diversify the vegan community in Sweden?
    - If so, how?

Concluding questions

- Is there something in this interview that we haven't talked about that you would like to add?
- If I have some follow-up questions, can I contact you again?

Appendix 2: The Pyramid of White Supremacy