HOMELESS JESUS: PUBLIC RELIGIOUS ART AND PUBLIC DIALOGUES

HOMELESS JESUS: EXPLORING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUBLIC RELIGIOUS ART AND PUBLIC DIALOGUES ON HOMELESSNESS

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Lay Abstract

Public art with religious themes or inspiration can represent, promote, or challenge the concerns, values, identity, and/or history of the communities in which it is situated. Using Timothy Schmalz's bronze sculpture entitled *Homeless Jesus*, as an example of public religious art intended to generate awareness about homelessness, this dissertation explores the contribution of public religious art to public dialogues about social issues. To understand how faith-based organizations and secular media interpret and use *Homeless Jesus*, I analyze photos of replicas, online news articles that reference it, and interviews with faith leaders at organizations that have a replica or are located near the replica in Hamilton, Ontario. Findings indicate that faith-based organizations use art to contribute to public dialogues in a manner they hope is accessible to and respectful of those with differing worldviews.

Abstract

Public art with religious themes or inspiration often represents, promotes, or challenges the concerns, values, characteristics, and/or history of the community in which this art is situated. This dissertation explores the contribution of public religious art to generating dialogue about social issues, in particular homelessness. It builds on scholarship indicating that publicly engaged art is a catalyst for promoting mutual understanding among diverse stakeholders with differing worldviews and joins an ongoing scholarly debate about the place of religion in a secular democratic society. As a case study, I use Timothy Schmalz's bronze sculpture entitled *Homeless Jesus,* as an example of public art intended to generate public awareness about social marginalization and homelessness.

Situated within the critical paradigm, this dissertation uses a case study methodology to explore the ways faith-based organizations and secular media elicit and use meanings through the representation of sculpture in public and mediated spaces. To gain multiple vantage points for examining the meanings and uses of *Homeless Jesus*, this case study draws on interviews with faith leaders at organizations who have a replica or are located near the replica in Hamilton, Ontario (n=12), online news articles that reference it (n=85), and photos of replicas in six urban locations. Data analysis proceeded through three stages: an iconography, a narrative inquiry, and a thematic analysis. This case study culminates in insights on the relationship between public religious art and public dialogues on social issues, such as homelessness. Findings indicate that public religious art is a mode in which faith-based organizations seek to contribute to public dialogues about social issues in a manner that is accessible and acceptable to those with differing worldviews.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Homeless Jesus is a bronze life-size sculpture of Jesus, identifiable by the wounds on his feet, sleeping on a street bench, and appearing homeless. This sculpture is the work of Canadian artist, Timothy Schmalz. Major national news outlets have deemed installations of replicas and community reactions to it to be newsworthy. Headlines include "Tim Schmalz seeks home for his *Homeless Jesus*" (BBC), "*Homeless Jesus*' statue stopped runaway dump truck from crashing into pedestrians" (CBC), "$40,000 *'Homeless Jesus*' invites debate" (Indianapolis Star), "*Homeless Jesus* wins over Pope" (Toronto Star), and "*'Homeless Jesus'* sculpture generates emergency calls" (National Post). The sculpture's newsworthiness begs the question of 'what makes an artistic rendition of Jesus and homelessness relevant to both secular media and the faith-based organizations that have chosen to display it?' The media and community attention given to this artwork are emblematic of public interest in religion and public art within societies grappling with how to understand and address homelessness.

This dissertation brings together ongoing debates in the social sciences on the contribution of religion and the arts in social change, with specific reference to the issue of homelessness. Inquiry into the transformative capacity of the arts stems back to the writings of Plato and Aristotle in Ancient Greece (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008). Belfiore and Bennet (2008), in their intellectual history of the arts, document scholarly commentary around the capacity for art to segment or dismantle social hierarchies. If the arts have this capacity, public art, artwork created for and placed in public spaces, is especially relevant in perpetuating or dismantling social hierarchies due to its purpose of communicating a message about the public (Senie & Webster, 1998). This form of art conveys ideas about who belongs or does not belong to a public space.

Scholarly debate on how religion can promote social change likewise has a long history. Karl Marx famously challenged the role of religion in sustaining social inequality in the mid 19th century. In his 1844 *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx uses the metaphor of 'opium' to argue that religion serves to numb the masses to their social oppression, reproducing structures of economic inequality. Critics of the notion that religion reinforces social oppression point to the important social services that are motivated by religiosity and the capacity for religious beliefs, rooted in ancient teachings, to offer alternative perspectives that counter dominant and socially oppressive ideologies (see Habermas, 2006).

The Contentious Nature of Public Art, Religion, and Homelessness.

Public art discussions. I am writing this dissertation during a time when many public art pieces throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, intended to be permanent reminders of community history, are being vandalized, taken down, or altered. These public art pieces are monuments dedicated to historical events and individuals that have played a role in shaping their communities. Examples include the beheading of a monument of Christopher Columbus in Boston, Massachusetts and the vandalization of a monument to Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. McDonald in Waterloo, Ontario in June 2020 (Elliott, 2020; Nielsen, 2020). Media speculate that the individuals involved acted in protest of Christopher Columbus's connection to colonialism and Sir John A. McDonald's participation in the violence against Indigenous peoples that is inherent to Canada's history of residential school systems (Elliott, 2020; Nielsen, 2020). In the wake of widely-publicized incidences of racial violence in the United States, such as the murder of George Floyd, critics of these public art pieces argue that these monuments contribute to social inequities and racial violence by valorizing histories of colonialism and racism.

The values and ideologies intrinsic to the two public art pieces discussed above no longer align with how many in the communities in which the artworks are situated wish to construct their collective identities. In an anthology exploring the influence of public art on the American identity, Senie and Webster (1998) describe how public art, such as monuments and city murals, can depict timely topics of interest while speaking to large audiences. Nora (1997) conducted a similar project in France. Their seminal works illustrate how public art can represent, promote, or challenge the values, culture, and achievements of a given community, important elements of a collective public identity.

The task of presenting something to the public about itself often serves important societal functions, such as promoting a collective identity, community cohesion, and a shared memory of the past. The City of Berlin, for instance, installed the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* to invite community members to contemplate their history and honour the Jews who experienced and died during the Holocaust (Arandelovic, 2018). While some public art can serve important societal functions, other pieces become contentious when a public believes the art misrepresents or makes invisible their concerns, values, characteristics, or histories (Bray, 2014; Drayton, 2019). Examining cases of contentious public art, Levinson (2018) presents the notion that in diverse societies, people will likely disagree on who counts as a hero or villain in local history. The current tensions around public art in countries shaped by colonialism showcase its political nature.

These current tensions are not unique to the 21st century North American racial context. Writing within the context of post-apartheid, Minty (2006) and De Gruchy (2001) point to how public art is used by both the powerful to maintain an oppressive status quo and by those who have traditionally been marginalized to resist, counteract, and critique hegemonic and systemic

racism. Minty (2006) documents the debate occurring in the 1990s around whether to keep, discard, or recontextualize monuments to apartheid and its leaders, writing that "since the built environment in Cape Town reflects almost exclusively the histories of those with power and/or capital, the opportunities to critique or insert new narratives comes either with a recontextualization of the old or the creation of the new" (p. 432). As an alternative to discarding a public art piece and thus repressing the history and values it disseminates, recontextualizing entails adding to or altering an artwork to shift its meanings. Likewise, recontextualizing public art may entail simply adding new artworks to a public space to provide a more holistic depiction of who belongs to that space (Levinson, 2018; Minty, 2006). Within post-apartheid South Africa, public art can be a symbol of who has power or is struggling for power within a geographic area.

Levinson (2018) likewise engages in the debate around whether to keep, discard, or recontextualize contentious public art in Moscow, Russia in the 1990s. Within this context, Levison (2018) asserts that taking down sculptures and monuments, which are symbols of past regimes, is a statement about shifting political and social power. As local authorities or those in power are typically the actors who commission a public art installation, placing art in public spaces can be a form of 'marking one's territory' or propagating one's values, hopes for society, and subjective accounts of history. Local authorities, whether from an authoritarian or democratic regime, may view public art as a tool for claiming an idea about the public(s) identity.

Scholars continue to pursue knowledge about and discuss the political nature of public art and its role in promoting social change. Evans (2019) draws on political theorists, including John Rawls, Jacques Derrida, and Alain Badiou, to explore how public art can create spaces where a pluralistic community can foster a sense of unity while retaining their diversity. According to

Evans (2019), public art that promotes citizenship and democracy should invite engagement rather than mere speculation. In the 2020 issue of *Public Art Dialogue (V10. 1-2)*, scholars explore how queer knowledge is taken up or suppressed in public art practices. With a focus on sexuality in public art, each article explores cases of 'sex(uality)-inflected' public art or chronicles the development of this art theme.

Zebracki (2020), the guest editor of this volume, proposes that the concept of queer speaks both to an identity group and the act of misaligning oneself with dominant societal norms. Drawing on this broad understanding of queer and queering, Zebracki (2020) considers how the conclusions and ideas raised by authors, are relevant to discussions about public art that engages with other non-normative social identity categories. In other words, findings about how public art can aid viewers in critically deconstructing binary gender norms that have historically marginalized those who are not cisgender or heterosexual contribute meaningfully to discussions about other identities that are misaligned with those belonging to the majority or dominant group. Both this issue of *Public Art Dialogue* and Evans's (2019) work are evidence that the scholarly dialogue on public art and social change is still active. Their work engages with the notion that public art can give voice and privilege to social groups in a manner that teaches, expands, or challenges normative understandings about social life, and thereby promoting positive social transformation.

Tensions around public art are intrinsic to public dialogues about social issues, or issues that members disagree on or collectively want to solve. The capacity for public art to communicate an idea about the public(s) that leads to dialogue about core values, histories, and aspirations makes it well-suited for promoting positive social change. Many scholars have critically engaged with this notion, such as Fleming (2007), Phillips (1989), Senie and Webster

(1998), and Zebracki (2020). Writing within the 1950s, Herbert Marcuse offers a foundation for critical engagement with discussions on the role of public art in promoting positive social change. Marcuse's position on the arts concerning social change makes up a key component of this dissertation's theoretical framework. The same elements intrinsic to public art that allow it to support the maintenance of an oppressive status quo, namely its goal of representing, promoting, or challenging a community's values, culture, and achievements, may also be used to incite social transformation.

The contentious nature of religion in public dialogue. In the same way that local authorities and activists use art to maintain or challenge a status quo, faith-based organizations also engage in the arts within public settings to contribute to the ongoing shaping of society. Bielefeld and Cleveland's (2013) literature review on definitions of faith-based organizations reveals that this is a broad category of organizations that incorporate faith into their daily operations. Faith-based organizations encompass places of worship, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations that offer social services. What shapes these organizations and distinguishes them from their secular counterparts is adherence to and faith in a religious tradition. Religion is also a broad term, generally referring to systems of beliefs, worldviews, writings regarded as sacred, and communal rituals (Beckford & Demerath, 2007). While faith-based organizations can be grounded in any religion, this dissertation examines the public arts and beliefs of those that identify as Christian.

The engagement of faith-based organizations in public dialogue is contentious due to the discord between the religious nature of these organizations' engagement and the nature of a secular public sphere. Religion is at times regarded in Western democratic societies as a manipulating force that can thwart rational deliberation and can serve to maintain inequitable and

oppressive social systems (Marx, 1944). In addition to the notion that religion can thwart rationality, individuals also view religion with skepticism in public dialogues because faith-based organizations have a history of promoting social oppression and exclusion. Examples of such engagement include protests against the legalization of same-sex marriage or colonial efforts to bring Western Christianity to indigenous lands. An extreme example is the historical use of the Dutch Christian Reformed theology to justify apartheid in South Africa (Vorster, 2010). Negative religious engagement in social issues thus brings up tensions around the limits of one's freedoms of religion and speech (see Kazyak, Burke & Stange, 2018; Moon, 2020).

Religious histories of social oppression and the common portrayal of religion as a manipulating force opposed to rationality underlies the contentious nature of religion in public dialogues on social issues. Although religion is regarded with skepticism in public dialogues, many scholars, such as Jurgen Habermas, point to how faith-based organizations whose engagement is shaped by religion can enhance both public dialogues on social issues and counteract social exclusion. Due to its reliance on ancient texts and traditions, religion (similarly to art) can offer alternative or countercultural standpoints to dominant ideological systems in which to construct and address social issues.

In the late 1990s, Habermas engaged and prompted discussions about the importance of recognizing the positive contributions of religious belief to democratic societies, pointing to examples of how these beliefs can protect vulnerable members and motivate individuals to work towards social change. At the same time, Habermas emphasized the necessity of putting limits on religious influence at the formal levels of a state. Habermas's articulation of this position on the role of religion in public spheres served as a catalyst for critical engagement with the theme of religious involvement in public dialogues (See Habermas 2002, 2006, 2013). Considering public

religious art as a mode of communication and religious pedagogy, findings from this dissertation contribute to scholarly discussions on Habermas's position on the role of religion in the public sphere and his theory of communicative action.

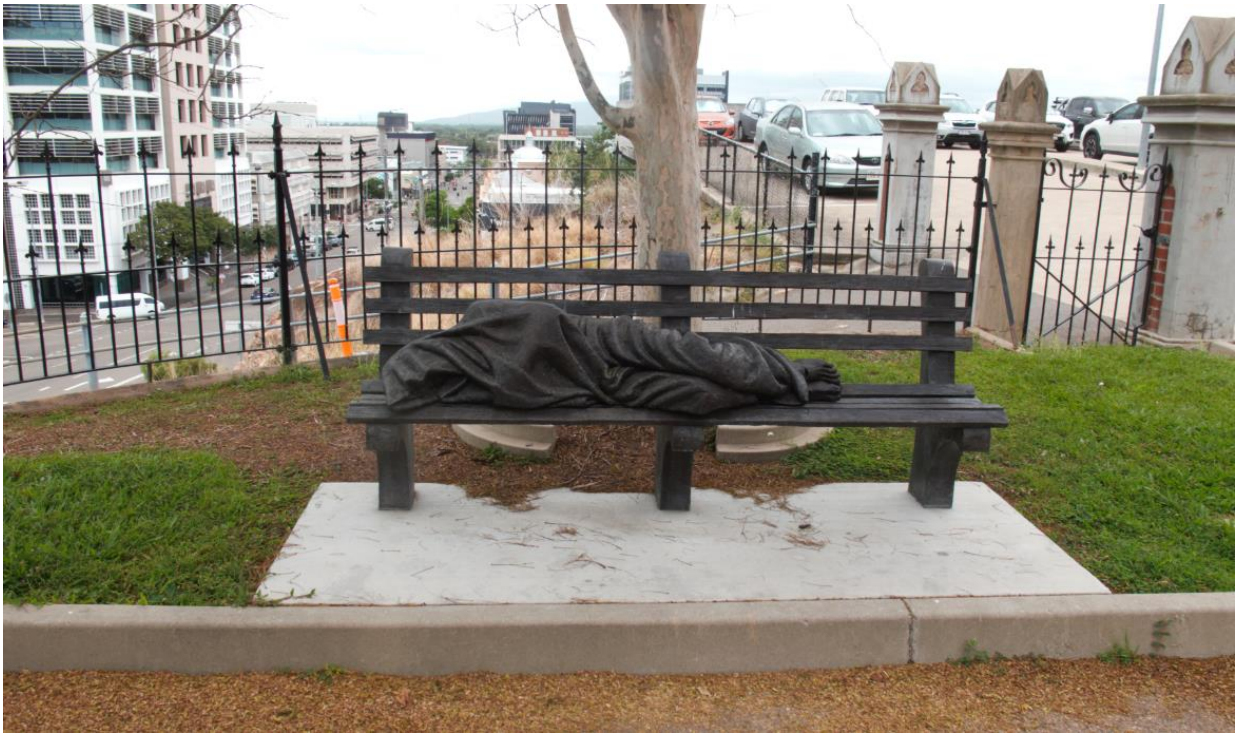
Constructions of homelessness in public art and religion. This dissertation engages in two ongoing scholarly discussions on the role of religion and public art in social change. Despite the contentious nature of both public art and religion in public dialogues, these two fields of research are shaped by an awareness of the capacity of public art and religion to support true democratic action built on social inclusion and equitable power relations. Scholars posit that public art can give voice to traditionally marginalized groups and incite dialogue about who belongs to a public space. At the same time, religion can offer insights that challenge dominant and socially oppressive ideological systems and that inspire individuals to mobilize and work towards social change. The key objective of this dissertation is to explore how these two dialogues coalesce within discussions on the issue of homelessness and its representation.

The need to critically consider dominant constructions of homelessness and their implications is underscored by its prevalence in Canada. In a report on homelessness in Canada, Gaetz, Dej, Richter, and Redman (2016) highlight how approximately 235 000 people experienced homelessness at some point in 2016. This dissertation is rooted in scholarship indicating that dominant constructions of homelessness are a source of stigma, which in turn compromises democratic action by silencing or marginalizing the voices of people who are homeless in public dialogues (Cuthill, 2019; Finley & Diversi, 2009; Gowan, 2010; Novak & Harter, 2008). Social scientists have advanced knowledge on how people who are homeless, their service providers, and policy makers can manage and/or combat negative stigmas (Jensen, 2018; Rayburn and Guittar, 2013; Roschelle & Kaufman, 2004). To examine how both public art and

religion can factor into public dialogues about constructions of homelessness, this dissertation compares dominant constructions of homelessness with those implicit to a well-known public religious work of art.

Figure 1

Photo of Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Townsville, Queensland, Australia.



Note. This photo was taken by the author and shows *Homeless Jesus* from a front eye-level perspective.

A Case Study of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*.

The contribution to these ongoing scholarly discussions on religion, public arts, and constructions of homelessness in this dissertation is centred around a case study of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus* (See Figure 1). Timothy Schmalz is a Canadian sculptor who produces both large scale religious art for faith-based organizations and artwork for community

spaces, including a sculpture to represent Canadian singer-songwriter, Gordon Lightfoot in Orillia, ON, a monument to Canadian veterans in Waterloo, ON, and a monument to the history of mining in Sudbury, ON. *Homeless Jesus* is one example of his religious works of art. It is an example of public religious art that seeks to send a message to the public about who belongs in the spaces where it is located, namely those who are homeless. It thus exemplifies artistic religious engagement in public dialogues that encourages greater social inclusion.

Schmalz produced *Homeless Jesus* as part of a series of works that visually depict the biblical passage, Matthew 25:40-45 (Schmalz, 2020). In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples that they are caring for him when they care for the sick, poor, lonely, hungry, thirsty, and imprisoned. Jesus is the central holy figure in Christianity, and a prominent prophet in Islam and Judaism, who preached during the first century. Both faith-based organizations and secular media have used this sculpture to draw public attention to the social issue of homelessness. Since 2013, Schmalz has produced numerous replicas, now located internationally in major urban centres, such as Bruges, Capernaum, Dublin, Madrid, Melbourne, Rome, Singapore, and New York. Likewise, this sculpture is in six Canadian cities; Hamilton, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver (Schmalz, 2020).

Due to its religious content, socially-engaged message, and large international and media presence, *Homeless Jesus* offers a case in which to examine how both religious ideas and public art shape public dialogues on social issues. Specifically, this case study of *Homeless Jesus* responds to the following research questions:

1) What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?

2) What do the meanings of, reactions to, and the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* reveal about the relationship between public religious art and dialogue within public spheres about homelessness?

A case study is the most appropriate means of responding to the research questions because public art can only be understood within its geographic, temporal, and cultural setting (Fleming, 2007; Zebracki, Van Der Vaart, &Van Aalst, I., 2010). Yin (2018) defines case studies as rigorous explorations of a system or social unit in its totality that is limited to a natural geographic or cultural setting. The natural settings within this dissertation are online news media and the Christian faith communities who encounter a *Homeless Jesus* sculpture regularly. It seeks to both offer an overarching description of the culturally-shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus* and an in-depth examination of the implications of these meanings within the confined geographic context of Hamilton. To provide multiple vantage points in which to examine these settings, this dissertation relies on interviews with faith leaders, photos of the sculpture, and online news articles.

This dissertation draws on scholarly works from a range of disciplines. Literature from art history and geography is pertinent to consider how findings contribute to scholarly conversations on public art and public dialogues. Scholarly ideas from religious studies, philosophy, and sociology also provide the backdrop for discussing findings relevant to the religious nature of *Homeless Jesus*. Lastly, sociology and social work literature offer a foundation for understanding perspectives on homelessness as a social issue. To ground this interdisciplinary research, I use writings situated within a critical paradigm in the social sciences.

Researchers working within the critical paradigm seek to uncover oppressive ideological systems and unequal power structures (Brookfield, 2005). Individuals become desensitized to

these unjust social systems and power structures due to their ubiquitous nature and historical roots (Guba, 1990). Within the critical paradigm, public art that is "esoteric" and "anti-collectivist" is viewed as having the potential to counteract ubiquitous and unjust ways of thinking, behaving, and speaking (Marcuse, 1998). By challenging unjust ways of thinking, behaving, and speaking, art can foster spaces where individuals contemplate both what is amiss with everyday life and cultivate an "image of a better world" (Kellner, 1998). This dissertation is 'critical' in the sense that it seeks to uncover and compare dominant ideological understandings of homelessness elicited by this sculpture. Likewise, this dissertation explores how art can be a platform for public dialogue that either maintains or challenges a status quo.

Implications

The end-product of a case study is a focused representation of the particular case and its uniqueness (Yin, 2018). This focused depiction of the influence of *Homeless Jesus* offers empirical insights into the elements of public art and its historical and cultural contexts that can promote positive social change. It exemplifies how faith-based organizations seek to use public art to elicit dialogues, which in turn can shape ways of thinking, behaving, and speaking, particularly concerning the social issue of homelessness.

Likewise, this dissertation contributes to theoretical knowledge. Due to its location within the critical paradigm, this dissertation elucidates tensions around how the social issue of homelessness should be understood and approached. How a social issue is understood and approached can shape policy efforts (Habermas, 1987). An awareness of these tensions can thus empower people to consider and converse about the most productive way of perceiving and addressing homelessness. By showcasing the relationship between public art and social change, this case study also depicts the utility of classic critical theory and the ideas of Herbert Marcuse

and Jürgen Habermas. Findings thus contribute to knowledge on the societal influence of public religious art.

Although claims about the value of public art in producing positive social change are common in scholarly literature, they are also commonly contested (Zebracki, et al., 2010). Contentions revolve around the notion that the utility of public art is taken-for-granted and empirically unsupported (Sharp, Pollock, & Paddison, 2005). A lack of scholarly research outside of the art world exists that evaluates the relationship between public art and its aesthetic, cultural, social, and economic outcomes (Zebracki, et al., 2010**).** Likewise, there is a lack of research that explores the public's perception of public art (Radice, 2018). Although this dissertation examines only how media and faith-based organizations make sense of and use *Homeless Jesus* (not whether they are successful in using this sculpture for their social change), this study addresses these literature gaps by eliciting first voice accounts from community members who actively engage with *Homeless Jesus* via interviews and by documenting and analyzing media portrayals. Findings are useful for those required to make decisions around public art and its funding.

As *Homeless Jesus* is designed with religious principles, this research also sheds light on how faith-based organizations use art to engage in public dialogues. Faith-based organizations offer a unique vantage point for exploring public issues and are engaged in many communities advocating for social change (Habermas, 2006). This research explores in depth the use of art in a religious context as a means of creating public dialogues among diverse groups that are intelligible, respectful, and inclusive. A better understanding of these processes can support efforts to strengthen the religious and cultural diversity within Canada.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation consists of eight chapters including this introduction. The research presented here is built on literature about social stigma and homelessness, art-based public engagement, and Christian public theology. Chapter 2 reviews these three literature areas and their inter-connections. As the notion of 'public' is central to an exploration of public art, public dialogues, and public theology, this chapter begins by engaging with definitions of 'the public'. This literature review then examines dominant discourses used to socially construct homelessness as a social issue. It details literature on the experiences of and political responses to homelessness stigmas, which may be a result of the social constructions discussed. In the second section of Chapter 2, I review the ongoing debate about the potential for public art to perpetuate or challenge an oppressive status quo, applying key ideas within this debate to the literature on homelessness stigmas. In the final section, I explore literature that explains how Christian public theology leads faith-based organizations to intervene in social issues, such as homelessness. Likewise, this section documents literature on the role of religious art in faith-based social engagement. Chapter 2 thereby offers a context for detailing the methodological decisions, theoretical framework, and research conclusions outlined in the subsequent chapters that make up this research endeavour.

Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical framework for this research. It first describes the critical paradigm and its underlying critical realist ontological and subjectivist epistemological assumptions. It then further elaborates on the key theoretical ideas introduced in Chapter 2 that shape discussions on the relationship between public art, religion, and public dialogue. These ideas are encapsulated in Herbert Marcuse's arguments on the role of art in social change and Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and position on religion in the public sphere. After describing these two theoretical perspectives, I outline how they are consistent with the

critical paradigm and how they inform one another to provide a fuller depiction of how public religious art might contribute to public dialogues on social issues. Chapter 4 then offers an account of this dissertation's case study methodology. It delineates how this methodology is compatible with the research questions and the critical paradigm. This chapter then outlines the data sources and analytical methods used to answer the research questions, namely iconography, narrative inquiry, and thematic analysis. It concludes by describing efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings.

Chapters 5 to 7 detail and discuss the case study findings with Habermas's and Marcuse's positions on art, religion, and positive social change. Chapter 5 offers an account of findings from the iconography of *Homeless Jesus*, directly responding to this dissertation's first research question; "What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?" After outlining the culturally-shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus*, the chapter considers how these meanings run counter to both dominant discourses of homelessness and neoliberal notions of 'goodness.' Marcuse's theory on art and social change provides the groundwork for exploring the implications of this sculpture's meanings.

Chapters 6 and 7 respond directly to this dissertation's second research question; "What do the meanings, reactions to, and the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* reveal about the relationship between public religious art and dialogue within the public sphere about homelessness?" Chapter 6 retells three stories uncovered within the thematic narrative inquiry. It then unpacks what these three stories indicate about how faith-based organizations and mass media use this sculpture's meanings and how public religious art can foster conditions for public dialogue in Habermas's notion of the public sphere. Chapter 7 lays out the overarching themes derived from the interviews with faith leaders about how their faith-based organizations use art.

It explores the implications of these themes within the context of the public theologians' requirement to engage in public issues and the scholarly debate around the boundaries of religion in public reform. The final chapter recapitulates key theoretical insights gained from this research, outlines its limitations, and proposes areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research builds off literature about social stigma and homelessness, the relationship between art and social change, and Christian public theology. To set the stage for engaging in these three literature fields, this chapter begins by exploring notions of 'the public' in relation to this dissertation's key terms. Moving on, it details literature on discourses, social constructions, and the stigmatization of homelessness. As the theme of homelessness is intrinsic to *Homeless Jesus,* an awareness of the nature, contemporary understandings, and individual experiences of this social issue are necessary when it comes to considering the implications of the meanings, responses to, and dialogues that this sculpture elicits. The literature on art and social change makes up another key component of a foundation necessary for considering these implications. This literature review explores claims about the role of public art in promoting positive social change or maintaining an oppressive status quo.

In addition to recounting literature on homelessness and social stigma and art-based social change, this literature review also explores the field of public theology. Public theology is the study of God and religious belief within the context of social, political, and environmental issues (Bedford-Strohm, 2008; Maddox, 2007). *Homeless Jesus* is a sculpture designed with religious principles and for the religious purposes of faith-based organizations. An awareness of the worldviews and activities of these organizations is thus necessary when deciphering interpretations of this sculpture. This literature review concludes by highlighting how these three literature areas intersect. By drawing attention to their intersections, I aim to both illustrate the value of this research and depict how the recounted literature has informed my methodological and theoretical decisions.

Defining 'the Public'

A clear definition of 'the public' is necessary for understanding this dissertation's key terms: 'public art', 'public dialogue', 'public perceptions of social issues', 'public space', 'the public sphere', and 'public theology'. The meaning of 'public' is fluid and often taken-for-granted, as illustrated in Rutgers' (2015) effort to define "public value" in the context of public administration, Coleman and Firmstone's (2014) research on council members' understandings of 'public engagement', and criticisms of Habermas's concept of the public sphere (see Calhoun, 1992). Coming from the field of anthropology, Cody (2011) provides an overview of literature that offers insight into the meanings of 'the public'. Based on this review and engaging with Habermas's (1984) work, Cody (2011) defines a public as "political subjects that know themselves and act by means of mass-mediated communication" (p. 38). I used this definition throughout the research process because it offers a comprehensive approach to considering how art, dialogue, perceptions of social issues, space, social spheres, and theology can belong to and have a 'public' nature.

Cody's (2011) definition of 'the public' portrays an organized collection of citizens who have an acknowledged shared identity and stake in political decisions. Likewise, this definition posits that a public has a method of communicating as a united front, and is thus "entangled in the very technological, linguistic, and conceptual means of its own self-production" (p. 47). In other words, media are not only tools for determining and advocating for collective interests but are also how a 'public' is created. Based on this notion, public art can support members of a group in recognizing themselves to be a collective with shared interests. This dissertation defines public art as aesthetic works presented in locations characterized by "open public access" and that depict questions, concerns, values, characteristics, and/or the history of the community in which they are situated (Cody, 2011, Phillips, 1989; Radice, 2018; Zebracki, et al., 2010, p. 780).

Public arts are thus distinct from other arts due to their goal of being accessible to and speaking to the identity and/or shared interests of a collective.

This dissertation likewise conceptualizes public space broadly as accessible digital or geographic areas where individuals can interact with strangers. These spaces, according to McQuire (2016), are characterized by the capacity for distinct individuals to collectively develop civility, or shared rules on how the space is used, and to appropriate it to their likings. McQuire (2016) posits that public art can play a role in shaping how individuals perceive, engage, and use a public space. This notion put forward by McQuire (2016) aligns with findings from Radice's (2018) case studies of public artworks. Due to their public locations, public art likely will have an impact on the public sphere. Radice (2018) differentiates the 'public sphere' from 'public space' by defining public space as geographic or a ground for meeting strangers and the public sphere as social. Public space is thus a pre-requisite to Habermas's (1984) concept of the public sphere, where individuals can dialogue about ideas in a politically and socially neutral environment.

Building on the discussed definition of the 'public', one can assume that public theology is a subdiscipline of the study of God and religious belief that is relevant to a collection of citizens with shared interests, that can communicate, and that recognize their connection to one another. Like 'the public', the meanings of 'public theology' vary. To overcome the conceptual confusion that marks 'public theology', Breitenberg (2003) draws on the history of this term and examines tensions within its scholarly use. Breitenberg (2003) concludes that public theology should be understood as a discipline concerned with "theologically informed discourse about public issues" which are felt by both faith-based organizations and the broader society in which these organizations are situated (p. 66). Faith-based organizations who engage in public theology

see themselves as members of a broader public, with social responsibilities. Literature on public theology and art can shed light on how faith-based organizations use religious belief and art to enter theologically-informed dialogues about social issues within the public domain. This understanding can serve as a foundation for investigating the meanings, responses, and dialogues elicited by *Homeless Jesus.*

To develop a fuller understanding of the 'public' nature of art, dialogue, perceptions of social issues, space, social spheres, and theology, a public can also be understood with the concepts of 'private' and 'counterpublic'. While 'private' generally refers to the matters that are relevant to individuals, 'counterpublic' refers to a collective that stands in opposition to the dominant public (Asen, 2000; Cody, 2011). When investigating the implications of digital media on public space, McQuire (2016) notes these spaces, although they bring strangers together, are always "situated, contested zone[s] with both visible and invisible barriers" (p. 94). Although public spaces can be accessible for multiple publics, others may feel unwelcome. Nancy Fraser (1990) uses the concept of 'counterpublics' to accommodate for what she deems to be Habermas's androcentric notion of the public sphere, which marginalizes the voices of women. Fraser reasons that 'the public' as a group of citizens with equal access to information and resources is more accurately an assembly of 'publics' or distinct interest groups (to be discussed in Chapter 3).

The concept of counterpublics draws attention to how grouping all citizens together in a 'public' can allow the powerful to speak erroneously on behalf of the less powerful. People who are homeless are an example of a group who are theorized to share in the collective interests of citizens in a given state but whose voices are controlled, manipulated, side-lined, or silenced within public communication, such as public art and the dialogue it can spark (see Kim & Wee,

2020; Neale, 1997). In the following section, I examine literature on the ways dominant publics perceive homelessness.

Homelessness and Social Stigma

To examine dominant perspectives and stigmas attached to homelessness, it is helpful to begin with a broad conception of this social issue. The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (2012) broadly defines homelessness as the "situation of those living without stable, permanent, or appropriate housing, or without the immediate prospect, means, and ability of acquiring it" (p. 2). This situation can be episodic, recurrent, or chronic, where homelessness is a temporary event or a persistent circumstance (Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010; McQuistion, Gorroochurn, Hsu, & Caton, 2014). Safe and affordable housing is a basic material resource that should be attainable in a country as wealthy as Canada and is thus likely to be indicative of social inequities.

The presence of homelessness in Canada and its growing prevalence since the 1980s has engendered significant public concern (Doberstein & Smith, 2019; Gaetz et al. 2016). Due to this public concern and its social roots and implications, this dissertation conceptualizes homelessness as a social issue related to the circumstance of being unhoused, as alluded to in the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's definition. This broad conception of homelessness as a social issue related to a lack of housing provides a point of departure for examining dominant public constructions of homelessness and their ideological underpinnings.

Literature on homelessness. Scholarly literature on homelessness tends to focus on risk factors, root causes, negative outcomes, and policy and service solutions. For example, those at risk of homelessness may lack affordable housing, be unemployed, live in a community with poor economic conditions, experience social inequalities associated with race or being from a

minority group, have a weak informal social support network, engage in substance abuse, have adverse childhood experiences, have been incarcerated, or have mental health difficulties (Caton, Dominguez, Schanzer, Hasin, Shrout, Felix, A., et al., 2005; Montgomery, Cutuli, Evans-Chase, Treglia, & Culhane, 2013; McQuistion, et al., 2014). Based on a longitudinal study on the relationship between housing vulnerability and health outcomes in Canada, Holton, Gogosis, and Hwang (2010) note that homelessness puts individuals at risk of hunger, hospitalization, and mental and physical health problems, while also creating barriers to healthcare services. Common policy interventions can range from Housing First initiatives, where individuals are provided with housing without any conditions or treatment requirements, to the criminalization of homeless-related activities such as panhandling (Gaetz, Scott, & Gulliver, 2013). Literature on policy solutions evaluates the success of these solutions, often in relation to the negative health outcomes and risk factors linked to homelessness.

In addition to focusing on risk factors, outcomes, and solutions, there is also a tendency among scholars to study this phenomenon within the contexts of identity groups. Canada's homeless population represents a diverse group comprised of both individuals and families (Gaetz et al., 2016). In their study on experiences of social connection and homelessness, Bower, Conroy, and Perz (2017) warn that viewing homeless populations as a homogenous group is unproductive for qualitative researchers because it will lead to skewed depictions of lived experiences. When considering the various identities held by individuals experiencing homelessness, Bower et al. (2017) reason that homeless populations may encounter overlapping social disadvantages that shape their homelessness experiences. Grenier, Barken, Sussman, Rothwell, Bourgeois-Guerin, and Lavoie (2016) note that these disadvantages may relate to age, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, health, geographic location, and physical ability. Scholars,

such as Zufferey (2016), have articulated a need to take an intersectional lens to understand homelessness, where the researcher, policy leader, and/or service provider seeks to recognize overlapping systems of oppression related to the identity categories of individuals.

An awareness of the heterogeneity of Canada's homeless population is necessary when considering literature about the root causes, lived experiences of stigma and homelessness, and policy responses. Dominant societal constructions and understandings of homelessness, which can perpetuate stigma (to be discussed), likely do not incorporate an awareness of this heterogeneity. This dissertation, therefore, focuses on the dominant societal constructions of homelessness and their alignment or misalignment with the culturally-shared meanings and intended uses of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*. The remainder of this dissertation relies on literature about the discourses that shape overarching social constructions of homelessness.

As highlighted above, scholarly literature tends to focus on root causes and the outcomes of living unhoused and its interventions. When homelessness is understood within neoliberal and capitalistic contexts, Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) argue that this social issue becomes reduced to "an object of knowledge" for researchers and a "discrete, calculable, and governable social problem" for policy leaders (p. 268). Although research on root causes, outcomes, and interventions is likely to be invaluable in efforts to support the wellbeing of those impacted by homelessness, Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) problematize this literature field for creating a distinction between 'successful' and 'failed' members of a state.

They preface their discussion by describing research on homelessness as highly political due to its underlining intention of informing "social policy, welfare states, and service interventions" (p.268). Farrugia and Gerrard (2016) point to how institutions that hold the most power and/or economic capacity can sway how homelessness is understood within publics by

developing targeted research funding opportunities or reinforcing dominant discourses. The resulting understandings lead researchers and policy leaders to both address this issue by combatting isolated risk factors rather than confronting systematic issues and by focussing ineffectively on the failures and successes of individuals (Farrugia & Gerrard, 2016). Belcher and DeForge (2012), Farrugia and Gerrard (2016), and Gowan (2010) all point to how research and policy on homelessness can maintain an oppressive status quo. With an awareness of the potential pitfalls of doing research on homelessness, this dissertation sought to critically consider dominant perspectives rather than focusing on isolated risk and protective factors and interventions. It compares these dominant perspectives with the perspective that is inherent to *Homeless Jesus*, while considering their implications for the status quo.

Discourses of homelessness. How the phenomenon of homelessness is understood by policy leaders, service providers, the non-homeless public, and those who are homeless likely guides responses to this social issue and may shape lived experiences with it. Jacobs, Kemeny, and Manzi (1999) argued this thesis when examining how policy leaders narrowly define the issue to sidestep fiscal responsibility. In their research on expert definitions of homelessness, Renedo and Jovchelovitch (2007) found that these definitions differed in their constructions of the homeless person's identity and notions of how they should be treated. Although common expert definitions of homelessness appeared to be incompatible with each other, Renedo and Jovchelovitch (2007) argue that health professionals use them interchangeably to meet specific goals. Their research demonstrates the importance of critically considering social constructions of homelessness and their underlying discourses.

The notion that common ways of understanding homelessness can support institutional objectives and shape institutional responses to this issue is reinforced in Gowan's (2010)

ethnographic discourse analysis within homeless subcultures. Discourses are common ways of using language within a particular social context that contain embedded ideas (Marcuse, 2015; Stonehouse, Threlkeld, & Farmer, 2015). When left unacknowledged and unquestioned, Marcuse (2015) notes that discourses can denote or suppress "meanings that would be critical if explicitly presented" (p. 125). Gowan (2010) ascertains three dominant discourses used to talk about homelessness and considers their implications for poverty reduction and policy.

Gowan (2010) names these discourses as "sin-talk, sick-talk, and system-talk", which each contain a distinct logic that leads individuals experiencing homelessness, policy leaders, service workers, and the public to different understandings of this issue. Sin-talk leads people to understand homelessness as something that is within an individual's control and thus this issue is rooted in personal failings. When using the 'sin-talk' discourse, individuals approach the issue by excluding homeless populations from public life, resources, and spaces and by supporting the punishment and criminalization of behaviours associated with being homeless, such as panhandling. This punishment in turn reinforces negative social stigmas attached to homelessness and can lead those being punished to see themselves as deviant (Gowan, 2010). Using a case study, Novac, Hermer, Paradis, and Kellen (2006) point to how the criminalization of homelessness can put those who are homeless in dangerous situations. According to Novac et al. (2006), individuals who are homeless and in a dangerous situation often avoid calling the police because they want to avoid the criminal justice system. This finding suggests that a 'sin-talk discourse' can impact the lived experiences of those who are homeless.

Gowan's (2010) sick-talk discourse leads to policies that support mental health treatment programs. This sick-talk discourse is aligned with the plethora of literature that documents health-related risk factors for homelessness and its negative health outcomes (see Baggett,

Liauw, & Hwang, 2018; Clark, Weinreb, Flahive, & Seifert, 2019; and Holton et al. 2010). As noted above, the negative health outcomes associated with homelessness are compounded when individuals who are homeless experience systematic barriers to health and social services (Gaetz et al. 2016). The 'sick-talk' discourse is reinforced in literature, policy, and non-profit and welfare state services, where homelessness is often conceptualized as something that people 'recover from'. The notion that homelessness is something that people can recover from, in the same way that they recover from an illness, is encapsulated in Clift's (2019) ethnographic inquiry into a running program for people impacted by homelessness.

Research on the health outcomes of homelessness can illustrate the gravity of this social issue and thereby be useful when it comes to advocating on behalf of this population. For example, advocates of a Housing First approach to addressing homelessness, where individuals are provided with housing without sobriety requirements, point to how this model improves health (Baxter, Tweed, Katikireddi, &Thomson, 2019; Padget, Henwood, & Tsemberis, 2016). While the sick-talk discourse is helpful in prompting greater policy support, it at times oversimplifies and thus distorts the complex lived realities of people experiencing homelessness, a point underscored by Baiocchi and Argüello (2019). By pathologizing homelessness, the sick-talk discourse can lead individuals to overlook the broader systematic issues that perpetuate poverty and marginalization, as well as diminish the homeless individual's strengths, agency, and personal history.

Gowan's (2010) system-talk discourse represents the idea that homelessness is a result of a failed social and economic system. Scholarly literature that uses this discourse claims that homelessness is a consequence of inadequate social safety nets within the context of capricious labour and housing markets (Harrison, 2020), histories of colonialism, homophobia, racism, and

sexism (Darab & Hartman, 2013; Christensen & Peters, 2016; Ecker, Aubry, & Sylvestre, 2020; Jones, 2016), and an unjust capitalist system that perpetuates social inequality (Farrugia, Smyth & Harrison, 2016). Chronicling policy responses to homelessness in the U.S, Gowan (2010) draws attention to how this discourse is most dominant during times of extreme economic downturn, such as the Great Depression and the 2008 recession, but generally is overshadowed by sick- and sin-talk. System-talk aligns well with critical perspectives that seek to challenge unjust ideological and structural systems. Likewise, it is often used to advocate for macro-level social change. Like sin-talk and sick-talk however, the system-talk discourse may oversimply the complexity of homelessness as a social issue. Its macro-level focus may lead publics to see people who are homeless as mere victims and not as a heterogeneous group of individuals with nuanced personal histories, agency, and strengths.

Gowan's (2010) discourses of 'sin-talk, sick-talk, and system-talk' are congruent with previous inquiries into constructions of homelessness. For example, Rosenthal (2000) asserted that media represented those who are homeless as 'lackers' or people who are homeless due to a lack of social skills and resources, 'slackers' or people who are homeless due to an unwillingness to help themselves, and 'the unwilling victims', those who are homeless due to hardships, such as domestic violence or an economic recession. This brief consideration of the dominant constructions of homelessness suggests that each discourse is an oversimplification, where media, popular culture, service providers, and policy leaders at times reduce the complex social problem(s) and multifaceted circumstance of homelessness to crude explanations and policy action items.

Both public theologians (to be discussed) and social scientists argue that to adequately conceptualize homelessness and to understand root causes, implications, and effective responses,

researchers, policy and community leaders, and journalists need to create platforms where people who are homeless can share their stories (Lyons & Smedley, 2020; Nixon, 2013; Renedo & Jovchelovitch, 2007; Schneider, Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2010; Zufferey, 2014). Using content analysis to investigate representations of homelessness in Canadian newspapers, Schneider, et al., (2010) posit that when media excludes homeless individuals from shaping the narratives about themselves, the media positions them "as legitimate objects of scrutiny, regulation, and control" (p. 168). Common ways of constructing homelessness, when taken-for-granted and not rooted in first voice accounts of those with lived experience, can underline political and social agendas that benefit those in power as opposed to those impacted by homelessness.

The literature reviewed here on representations of homelessness posits that dominant discourses likely bias policy and service responses and may color individual experiences with homelessness. Many scholars have documented discourses that are embedded in policy, services, literature, media, and everyday conversation. While there is a wealth of literature documenting and considering the discourses of homelessness, it is unclear the extent to which and under what circumstances they influence policy, services, and lived experiences.

Experiences of homelessness stigma. Homelessness is often a stigmatized aspect of one's identity that is rooted in negative social constructions and discourses of homelessness (Belcher and DeForge, 2012; Jensen, 2018; Omerov, Craftman, Mattsson, and Klarare, 2020). Homelessness stigmas can take the form of labelling, stereotyping, a visible separation of 'us and them', and a loss of social status (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). Both Rayburn and Guittar (2013) and Weng and Clark (2018) draw on Goffman's (1963) definition of stigma as a 'spoiled' aspect of one's identity that is based on stereotypes as opposed to the inherent qualities and experiences of individuals. By 'spoiling' or tarnishing one's identity, Rayburn and Guittar (2013), Goffman

(1969), and Weng and Clark (2018) all reason that stigmatization marginalizes and discredits individuals from participating in social life and limits their access to social resources.

Constructions of homelessness as an issue of individual culpability are likely to be rooted in the economic and social systems shaping a given community and to reinforce the stigmatization of homelessness. Belcher and DeForge (2012) and Stonehouse et al. (2015) draw a connection between homelessness stigma and capitalism. Capitalist economic and social systems foster the "mal-distribution of wealth and resources" and "create winners and losers" (p.929, 930). According to Belcher and DeForge (2012), individuals stigmatize others because they feel threatened or benefit from disqualifying "people from social acceptance" (p. 932). People who are homeless can represent a threat because they are a reminder of the inadequacy of current economic, social, and political systems. Likewise, the competition created by capitalism underlies the assumption that those experiencing homelessness are the natural 'losers' and those with a home are the natural 'winners.' Stonehouse et al. (2015) similarly conclude that the neoliberal discourses that underlie capitalist systems reinforce negative perceptions of homelessness and lead to policies that disempower those experiencing poverty.

Homelessness stigmas can have negative health outcomes. Omerov, et al. (2020) and Weisz and Quinn (2017) both point out that individuals who are homeless are more likely to avoid health and social services due to their experiences of stigma. In Schout, De Jong, and Zeelen's (2011) research on care avoidance, they draw attention to how this avoidance not only impedes service effectiveness but also can compound mental and physical health difficulties. Bower et al.'s (2017) findings reinforce the notion that individuals experiencing homelessness are at risk of loneliness and social isolation, which is connected to their marginalized status.

The negative health implications of homelessness stigma are compounded by other social stigmas commonly experienced by those who are homeless, such as stigmas associated with unemployment and mental illness. Jensen's (2018) research on the use of humour to manage homelessness and mental health stigmas in a social service agency illustrates how homelessness and mental illness are often intertwined, where one can be a risk factor for the other. When individuals experience both a mental illness and homelessness, they often experience "a dual social stigma" (Jensen, 2018 p. 21). In their ethnographic study on stigma management strategies, Roschelle and Kaufman (2004) describe stigma as a self-producing cyclical condition; a lack of resources and capital may lead the stigmatized individual to engage in behaviors that reinforce their stigmas. Their analysis reveals stigma management strategies to be a micro-level phenomenon that is rooted in macro-level economic and social conditions.

In addition to the experiences of 'dual stigmas', homelessness may also generate new occasions for stigmatization. In their qualitative exploration of social workers' perspectives on their clients' experiences with lung cancer, Conlon, Gilbert, Jones, and Aldredge (2010) present the helpful concept of "stacked stigmas." They define this term as "co-occurring stigmas that can be linked to the primary stigma event" (pg. 100). Here, homelessness would be the primary stigma event. This event may predispose individuals to experience unemployment, mental and physical health issues, and poor hygiene. These stigmatizing experiences are thus 'co-occurring stigmas' that exacerbate the difficult social experiences of homelessness.

Combatting homelessness stigma. Recognizing the negative and counterproductive health and social implications of homelessness stigmas, scholars have sought to identify ways of mitigating this stigma. As a means of combatting unjust homelessness stigmas and their negative health outcomes, Jensen (2018) found that social service workers can use humour to "create a

culture of dignity" (p. 34). Jensen (2018) writes that "a culture of dignity both provides opportunities for frank discussions of stigmatizing traits and offers opportunities for them to engage and interact regardless of stigma" (p. 34). Based on the notion that individuals experiencing homelessness likely desire inclusion in mainstream society, Bower et al. (2017) suggest that public depictions of homelessness can "reduce social stigma by positioning homelessness as a relatable, transient experience that can happen to anyone, rather than a tarnishing permanent mark on one's identity" (p. 247). Using focus groups with youth experiencing homelessness, Breeze and Dean (2012) found that this subpopulation preferred charity campaigns that "elicited empathy rather than simply aroused sympathy" (p. 138). The preferred campaigns did not choose the most pitiful or dramatic photos of homelessness to make potential donors feel sorry for this group but rather sought to represent homelessness in a manner that realistically captured its various hardships. Breeze and Dean's (2012) research on approaches to mitigating stigmas underscores the importance of critically examining public representations of homelessness and their impacts on societal perceptions of this social issue.

Public Art and Social Change

As noted in the first section of this literature review on definitions of 'the public', what distinguishes public art from non-public arts is its goal of being accessible to and speaking to the identity and/or shared interests of a public. Scholars have posited that it presents a more direct avenue to promoting public dialogue than other forms of visual arts located within galleries or private locations because it can engage a large and heterogeneous audience with its publicly-relevant messages (Radice, 2018; Sharp, et al., 2005). In their anthology of public art practices, Cartiere and Zebracki (2016) describe public art "as [contributing] to the ongoing desire to identify and understand our citizenships and belonging" (p. 9). Phillips (1989) theorizes that

public art is political due to its position in public spaces where it can raise issues and ignite dialogue between diverse groups of people. Art galleries and private locations are likely to be frequented by a more homogenous group than public spaces with public art. A common practice of public artists, according to Gérin (2009), is to intentionally create works that are political or that present a stance on a social issue or point of contention. Public artists and their funders/commissioners can capitalize on public arts' visibility and relevance to a large public audience to engage citizens in dialogue about social issues.

In this section, I explore these claims about public art and its potential social and political functions. Within this literature, there is a lack of consensus on the place of the viewer, the artist, and/or public art institutions (funders/commissioners/purchasers) in the relationship between public art and social change. To offer clarity and to ground this dissertation, I draw on Herbert Marcuse's theorizing about this relationship in Chapter 3. This section however provides an initial synthesis of literature, describing first the nature of literature on public art. It then outlines research and theory that suggests viewers, publics, and/or institutions use public art as a tool, symbol, or strategy for supporting a political and/or social purpose, which is followed by literature that proposes art itself or the interaction between the art and viewer is what promotes change. I conclude this section by highlighting how many of the claims discussed, proposing that art can support positive social and political goals, can be flipped; publics and institutions can use public art to affirm oppressive social systems and ideologies.

Researching the social and political implications of public art: Literature on the social and political implications of public art is unique from many other fields in that its claims are not grounded in generalizable social scientific evidence (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Hall & Robertson, 2001; Sharp et al., 2005; Zebracki et al.,2010, 2016). Belfiore and Bennett (2008)

explain this phenomenon by drawing attention to how claims about the social transformative or the hegemonic oppressive powers of the arts are "extremely hard to substantiate" (p. 5). Noting the lack of nomothetic explanations within the field of public art literature, Zebracki (2016, p. 66) similarly articulates that it is "inexpedient" to seek out essentialist claims about what public art does socially and politically because public art and its social and political impacts are established within "social practices that are spatio-temporally unique." Quantitative research within the arts is thereby difficult to execute due to the latent rather than observable nature of the arts and the reality that public art and its social impacts are context-specific.

Belfiore and Bennett (2008, p. 5) thereby emphasize that the arts "occupy a particularly fragile position in public policy" because quantitative research is often valued above qualitative research in Western societies influenced by empiricism. As art organizations often operate within a fragile policy landscape, they may support research that is geared towards demonstrating the value of the arts with the goal of securing funding. A key challenge, noted by Belfiore and Bennett (2008), when it comes to research and literature on the arts would thus be that much of this work is advocative. Mixing advocacy and research can lead to methodological issues, which in turn leads to questionable research findings. To avoid the undue bias associated with advocacy, in this dissertation I was compelled to consider both the potential negative and positive social implications of public art when conducting this case study of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*.

While there is a lack of generalizable research on public art and its political and social functions, there is a wealth of literature that is rooted in history, that is theoretical or philosophical, or that employs a case study methodology to understand a particular public art context. The following discussion thereby engages with idiographic explanations and claims

grounded in context-specific observations, philosophic inquiry, or historical analyses. The public art claims to follow are thereby not empirically-tested verifiable facts. By shedding light on how specific artworks have or could impact communities, this literature however provides a helpful foundation to consider the social and political implications of public religious art.

Viewers, publics, and institutions. The notion that viewers, publics, and institutions use public art to promote or hinder social change is evident in literature that describes the fluidity of public art meanings. Public art is typically classified as either temporary or permanent (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Phillips, 1989; Radice, 2018). While temporary public art is displayed for a set amount of time, institutions install permanent public art with the intention that it will have a stable presence in the selected location. Phillips (1989) points to how many hope to produce and install art that depicts the "immutable" or stable characteristics of a given society, creating art that is 'timeless'. While local authorities and artists often strive to create 'immutable' public art, a theme within relevant literature is that the meanings of permanent public art pieces will likely shift over time.

Returning to this dissertation's introduction, public art can be contentious when a public belonging to a given space no longer feels that the artwork adequately represents their collective identity. After examining two controversies around monuments to Cecil Rhodes in Britain and Lord Nelson in Barbados (public figures who promoted slavery and colonialism), Drayton (2019) argues against keeping public art that depicts a community's socially oppressive past. Drayton (2019) concludes that these monuments to the "great leaders" of the British empire are only one element of a "post-colonial heritage" with many "silenced pasts" which should now be remembered (p. 665). Controversies around these two sculptures are indicative of the artworks' shifting meanings. When installed, they were intended to honour past political leaders and the

'progressive' social systems which they helped build. With shifting ideologies and the emergence of new publics, the monuments are now symbols of "regressive social oppression" rather than historical triumphs. Investigating a controversy around a public memorial in Spain, Bray (2014, p. 223) similarly asserts that the disputes over this public art piece are grounded in differing responses to the question of "how to remember which past and which kind of collective memory to build?" Examples of public art controversies discussed by Minty (2006) and Levinson (2018) in this dissertation's introduction likewise denote that the meanings of permanent public art pieces are likely to shift alongside a changing public.

The fluidity of permanent public art meanings is also epitomized in Pierre Nora's (1997) elaborate exploration of the "construction of the French past" (p.1). In this exploration, Nora (1997) edits seventeen essays that examine how and why particular locations, symbols, and art can serve as "sites of memory" that comprise what it means to be French (p. ix). In this volume, Prost (1997) questions whether World War 1 monuments were "monuments to the dead or monuments to victory" (p. 308). Prost (1997) draws attention to how these monuments served a variety of political purposes over time, such as being sites to remember the war, to mourn the loss of soldiers, and to bring people together with a united patriotic sense of loss and victory. When they were initially installed, local authorities intended these monuments to encourage social conformity. Their purpose was thus to support the functioning of the French Republic. Prost (1997) writes that "to celebrate those citizens who had done their duty was to exhort others do theirs" (p. 329). How these monuments have been used over time by political authorities suggests that the meanings of public art pieces can be fluid.

This research on World War 1 monuments in France aligns well with the conclusions put forward by Bray (2014), Drayton (2019), Levinson (2018), and Minty (2006). In the same way

that these authors explored how public artworks can become contentious overtime with shifting norms and values, Prost's (1997, p. 316) research illustrates how publics will likely 'bestow new meanings" on public arts. These new meanings may differ from the political ends the art was originally meant to serve. By shedding light on how publics can give new meanings to public art, this literature that documents the fluidity of public art indicates that viewers and publics will likely play an active role in using art to promote or hinder social change. An awareness of the shifting nature of permanent public art meanings offers a context for considering the culturally-shared meanings and intended purposes of *Homeless Jesus,* discussed in Chapters 5,6, and 7, which may also be malleable.

In addition to the fluidity of public art meanings, Prost's (1997) work on World War 1 monuments and the scholarship discussed above exemplifies how both authorities and publics can use permanent public art installations, such as life-size bronze sculptures of Jesus, as political symbols. Due to the shifting nature of public art meanings and the political intentions that shape it, scholars have argued that the addition, removal, or altering of permanent public art installations can be indicative of shifting political power or changing social systems and ideologies (Evans, 2018; Gérin, 2009; Levinson, 2018; Phillips, 1989). Fleming's (2007) case studies of public artworks shed light on how this type of art represents decisions made within the public sphere. By tracking these decisions through public art, scholars can pinpoint historical shifts in power and ideological systems. De Gruchy (2001) also asserts that the arts tell a social history. A key theme within this literature on public art is that public responses to it can be a sign of social change. While in these instances social change is already taking place, publics can add, remove, or alter public art as a tangible act of protest against a previous system or as a supportive

gesture to its successor, and thereby fortify this change. Here again, this literature showcases the active role of publics or viewers in using art to promote or hinder social change.

This discussion on public art and its role in social change has so far predominantly focused on permanent and historic public art pieces whose meanings have shifted over time and which have been used for political ends. Contemporary permanent public art pieces are likewise used politically. Common public art claims, as noted by Hall and Robertson (2001), include how public art can initiate social change, in addition to promoting a sense of community identity, space, and pride, addressing a community need, combatting or fostering social exclusion, and disseminating educational values. For example, Bass and Houghton (2018) explore how local authorities use public art to support the process of decolonizing South Africa. While Hall and Robertson (2001), alongside other scholars such as Zebracki et al. (2010) and Sharp et al. (2005), point out that these positive claims about public art are at times biased and can lack empirical evidence, local authorities (public art commissioners/funders) often install contemporary public art with the hopes of advancing their social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic goals.

An interest in the way public art is produced is also prominent in discussions within literature on art-based public engagement and social change. When considering how public art can promote positive social change and social inclusion, Bass and Houghton (2018), Fleming (2007), Sharp, et al. (2005), and Zebracki and De Bekker (2018) emphasize the importance of considering the processes in which public art is developed. Bass and Houghton (2018, p.524) argue that the "tokenistic nature of consultation processes" hampered the effectiveness of public art interventions in Durban, South Africa. They describe tokenism in this context as ostensibly listening to diverse opinions on the art, without allowing these opinions to shape the final artistic outcome. Bass and Houghton's (2018) research supports the notion that a local authority should

foster opportunities for meaningful public involvement in the process of funding, creating, and installing public art.

Other scholars likewise point to the pitfalls of tokenism and the benefits of meaningful public engagement in public aesthetic endeavours. Comparing the public art experiences of producers (local city councils and artists) and the public (viewers) via a case study of two artworks in the Netherlands, Zebracki and De Bekker (2018) found a discrepancy regarding a city's intensions to promote social inclusion and how the viewers interpret and experience the artwork. Sharp et al. (2005, p. 1004) assert that some public art can foster "renewed reflections on community, on the uses of public spaces, or the behaviour within them" (p. 1004) when viewers "can identify themselves" in the art. Sharp et al. (2005) reason that viewers should be able to identify themselves in the art when they have been included in the creative process. According to Fleming (2007), fostering community involvement in the development of public art installations can support community members in "reclaiming both their visual environment and their community memory" (p. 288) from an oppressive social system in which they were previously complicit. When public art is produced via a "democratic and accountable process" (Fleming, 2007, p.211), a public may be more likely to find the work meaningful and impactful than if the art was produced with a top-down model. This literature on public involvement in the creation of public art suggests that art can play a stronger role in promoting social change when a 'public' plays the role of 'artist' and thereby takes the lead in shaping their collective identity.

Art-instigated change. A prevalent public art claim is that public art promotes social inclusion and positive social change by generating inclusive dialogue, critical thinking, and learning. Literature suggests that dialogues prompted by public art can precede and spark social change. For example, Senie and Webster (1998) claim that public art can be critical because it

brings to the forefront public issues and instigates discussion. Zebracki (2019) also considers how public art can be a form of 'public pedagogy.' Using the metaphor of "holding a mirror to society", Zebracki (2019, p. 1) reasons that public art can teach members of a public about non-normative identities, helping them to recognize and deconstruct restrictive and socially exclusive social norms, such as the binary of 'male and female'. Within literature that makes this claim, the art itself is what instigates social change by instigating dialogue, thinking, and learning.

Radice (2018) suggests that art can promote dialogue when elaborating on the relationship between public art and Habermas's notion of the public sphere. The public sphere represents the social spaces where individuals engage in dialogues and seek to achieve mutual understandings (Habermas, 1984). The privatization of public spaces, due to the valuing of private ownership within capitalist systems, can encumber the development of the public sphere (Habermas, 1987). A key element of public art is that it is located within a "relatively open and accessible space", and that the art renders strangers "visible to one another" (Radice, 2018, p. 51). In Radice's (2018) case study, the artworks rendered strangers visible to one another by producing negotiations within and amongst publics and by allowing individuals to contribute to the artwork. By rendering strangers visible to one another, public art can increase awareness of a public's shared interests or disinterests. This capacity was exemplified in Radice's (2018) two case studies, where the artworks put viewers in "novel situations" which compelled them to reconsider their surroundings. In this way, public art helps to create spaces for public sphere dialogue to occur.

The notion that public art can contribute to the building of the public sphere is brought forward by other scholars, such as Hewitt and Jordan (2016). After using Habermas's public sphere concept to examine how 'publicness' is taken up in three public art projects, Hewitt and

Jordan (2016) highlight how this concept helps one consider "how art can begin to politicize its publics" by creating spaces for critical thinking and dialogue (p. 43). The ability for public art to generate public discussions is also discussed in Sharp et al.'s (2005) work on public art in urban renewal. According to Sharp et al. (2005), all art is subject to the personal preferences, opinions, and artistic tastes of viewers. Due to its visibility to the public, these perspectives are magnified, and thus public art typically generates discussion. While not specifically drawing on the concept of the public sphere, Zebracki (2016, p. 66) similarly considers how public art can be a "hosting platform" for stakeholders with distinct interests and motivations to dialogue and negotiate.

In addition to being a symbol that publics can use to protest or affirm social or political systems and a catalyst for public dialogue, scholars also posit that public art can promote social change by simply prompting critical thinking. Again here, the art itself is what supports social change. This literature posits that public art, as a creative art form, can challenge or sustain dominant societal understandings of social issues and the broader social, economic, and cultural systems that these understandings support. Radice and Boudreault-Fournier (2017) maintain that art holds the power to change how individuals experience their cities. They assert that it can "reframe or subvert" the dominant meanings of public spaces (p.4). A section of Gérin and McLean's (2009) anthology on Canadian public art is dedicated to examining how public art can counter the historically oppressive and dominant discourses that have shaped a particular space by interjecting visual alternatives. Hall and Robertson (2001), Marcuse (1978), Radice and Boudreault-Fournier (2017), and Senie and Webster (1998), all use the word "disrupt" to describe the process that a public art piece can initiate when it comes to social emancipation from an oppressive social system.

The notion that art can prompt critical thinking or 'disrupt' one's acceptance of an oppressive status quo is unscored in Miles' (2018) discussion of imagination as an instrument of social change and Marcuse's critical theory of aesthetics, delineated in *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978). Marcuse (1978) reasons that aesthetics and artistic experiences can alter how individuals understand the world around them; art can prompt an individual to imagine other ways of thinking, behaving, and speaking that run counter to the often unquestioned and firmly established social, economic, and cultural systems in which one is immersed. According to Marcuse (1978), when an artist is in-tune with their authentic desires and beliefs rather than those of the dominant ideological system, they can create art that identifies and sheds light on social oppression as they have experienced it or that depicts an alternative ideal society. Based on this theorizing, by making visible taken-for-granted assumptions about reality and its alternatives, public art may have the potential to lead individuals to question oppressive social and economic systems. Marcuse's (1978) position on the role of arts in social transformation will be elaborated on in Chapter 3.

Marcuse's (1978) theory on the role of arts in social transformation aligns well with the work of Clover (2018). When investigating the potential for art museums to encourage a critical sensitivity to social inequities, Clover (2018) describes how art galleries, museums, and educational institutions can use art to support adult learners in generating new knowledge about their everyday realities. Art that contains a depiction of reality is interpreted through the lens of the individual's existing experiences (Clover, 2018). The new knowledge that results from the engagement with an art piece, in turn, aids viewers in reconsidering taken-for-granted assumptions. This process described by Cover (2018) indicates that social change vis-à-vis art occurs within a complex interaction between the artist who initially created the art, the art itself

which presents an alternative depiction of social reality, the institutions who make it available and may even facilitate or encourage the publics' engagement with it, and the viewer who reflects on, interprets, discusses it.

The literature recounted in this section so far has described how publics can shift the meanings of public art to use it as a political symbol that supports or hinders social change. Likewise, it described how publics can better promote social change when they are included in the public art process. According to the literature recounted above, institutions may also use art to advance their goals. Lastly, the literature denoted the notion that art can contain alternative depictions of reality that serve as a platform for viewers to engage in critical thinking and dialogue. The literature presented in this section on art-based public engagement thereby presents various pathways to social change vis a vis art that differs with regard to who or what is creating the change.

Public art and homelessness. A dominant theme within literature on public art and social change is that it can challenge oppressive ideological systems by raising public consciousness and inclusive dialogues. By generating discussion within public spaces and leading people to identify and question taken-for-granted assumptions about an oppressive social reality, public art is a tool for mitigating unjust social stigmas associated with homelessness. Representations of homelessness are often depicted visually through art. Gerrard and Farrugia (2015) assert that the visual image of a homeless person is a powerful discourse in Western societies that is laden with ideological messages about moral responsibilities. When examining everyday encounters with images and discourses of homelessness, Gerrard and Farrugia (2015) deem this phenomenon as "the most visible and public form of inequality and poverty" (p. 2221). Due to its visibility in public spaces, groups or individuals can easily leverage the image of a homeless person to

influence public perceptions in a manner that supports political and/or moral agendas, such as mitigating unjust homelessness stigmas.

Untea's (2018) philosophical inquiry into the use of homelessness as a theme in contemporary art also offers insight into how this art can reduce negative social stigmas associated with homelessness. Untea (2018) reasons that public art depicting homelessness can both render this social phenomenon visible to those who have written it off as an "everyday reality" (p.29) and can guide viewers in contemplating taken-for-granted attitudes and perceptions. Literature on images of homelessness, such as that of Untea (2018) and Gerrard and Farrugia (2015), is consistent with critical theories about the relationship between positive social transformation and art, to be discussed in Chapter 3. This dissertation positions *Homeless Jesus* as an image of homelessness that is shaped by a faith-based and social agenda.

Public art and the maintenance of an oppressive status quo. While some public art can be a tool that fortifies positive social change, literature also draws attention to the possible negative implications of the arts. Belfiore and Bennett's (2008) intellectual history of the arts brings to light how claims about the positive social and democratic possibilities associated with public art can easily be flipped. They chronicle claims about how the arts can threaten individual and social well-being. Drawing on foundational writings by key philosophers, Belfiore and Bennett (2008) note that the arts have been critiqued for providing a flawed imitation of reality, being misleading when considered an adequate source of knowledge, inciting immoral behaviour, corrupting by stimulating an irrational state, distracting from worthier causes, and making people unhappy.

Sachs Olsen (2018) offers a contemporary example of literature that claims public art can promote an oppressive status quo, highlighting how power relations often influence how

public art is developed and which artworks are installed. Sachs Olsen's (2019) exploration of the relationship between public artists and institutional collaborators affirmed that funding arrangements and "pre-established norms of regulations" can stifle artistic freedoms and foster public art that reinforces the neoliberal social structures endorsed by collaborators (p. 277). This research suggests that artists working with collaborators and funders in neoliberal urban settings must walk a fine line.

Sachs Olsen's (2018) findings are consistent with the ideas of Miles (2018), Fleming (2008), and Sharp et al. (2005). When public art is shaped by neoliberalism, Miles (2018) asserts that its capacity to support positive community outcomes will be reduced to supporting cultural tourism or other economically profitable markets. Although not discussed by Miles (2018), this assertion may be true for public art produced within the context of other oppressive ideological systems, such as sexism, ageism, and racism. Fleming (2007) similarly emphasizes that a public art piece can either reflect the values and history of the community in which it is situated or that of a power elite. Sharp et al. (2005) point out how many of the most critical pieces of art that challenge viewers to imagine alternatives to an oppressive social reality are "not easy to live with" (p. 1117). This is likely to be problematic for those who fund public art installations. Thus, 'critical' public art pieces that challenge an oppressive status quo can be dismissed as unprofitable.

Public Theology: The Role of Religion in Addressing Social Issues

The discipline of public theology presents an opportunity to better understand *Homeless Jesus* as both a public and religious piece of art that has generated public dialogue on the social issue of homelessness. *Homeless Jesus* is a public art piece due to its public locations and a religious piece of art, designed with religious principles and for the religious purposes of faith-

based organizations (Schmalz, 2020). Timothy Schmalz intended this sculpture to be a visual depiction of the biblical passage, Matthew 25:40-45, where Jesus tells his disciples that they are caring for him when they care for the imprisoned, sick, poor, and lonely, hungry, and thirsty. As illustrated by Rauschenbusch (1917) and Chung and Malcolm (2016), the religious obligation to address the needs of those impacted by poverty, ill health, and social isolation or exclusion is often the underlying objective of public theologians, who examine how religious belief can inform understandings of social issues. This section describes principles, examples of, and perspectives on public theology to provide a context for understanding how faith-based organizations may use and engage with public art.

The Social Gospel movement as an example of public theology. The 19th-century social gospel movement in North America and its underlying principles provide a tangible illustration of public theology and how religious belief can factor into public dialogues about social issues, such as poverty and homelessness (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013; Evans, 2018). Using the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) as an example of a by-product of the social gospel movement, Evans (2018) demonstrates how the influence of social gospel principles is entrenched in North American history. This movement was led by Christians who emphasized a religious obligation to both respond to "the social problems associated with urbanism and industrial capitalism" and "to create a society grounded in egalitarian social ideals, practices, and doctrines" (Evans, 2018, p.44). It was championed by progressive protestant Christians, such as Walter Rauschenbusch, a 19th-century Baptist pastor and theologian. Wright (2018) draws on the ideas of Rauschenbusch (1917) to illustrate how the principles of the social gospel movement can be used to re-establish Christianity as a force that strengthens "democratic engagement" in the public sphere and informs positive social change.

Evans' (2018) description of social gospel principles aligns with that of McDaniel and Miller (2018) and Wright (2018). McDaniel and Miller (2018) define the social gospel as a "religious interpretation that obliges people to care for the less fortunate and correct social inequalities" (p. 364). When describing how Christian belief fits into the political realm, Wright (2018) defines the social gospel as the belief that Christianity imbues ethical and social obligations, which are epitomised in the Bible. Scholarly discussions of the social gospel movement and its principles are tied together by their common depictions of the social gospel as social consciousness and action that is informed and prompted by Christian beliefs. The social gospel movement and its principles thus fit well within the discipline of public theology.

Theopoetics as an example of public theology. Like the social gospel, theopoetics is another theological movement that is aligned with the discipline of public theology and that seeks to give voice to marginalized members of society. This movement presents the notion that poetry, literature, and other artistic endeavours can present legitimate forms of knowledge and be a legitimate approach to studying the nature of God and spirituality (Keefe-Perry, 2009). By fostering a space where artistic modes of knowing and communicating are valued, theopoetics allows individuals (untrained in theology) to contribute personal experiences and learnings about God that advance theological discourses. In a primer to theopoetics, Keefe-Perry (2014) explains how allowing artistic modes of participating in theological discussion can sharpen scholarly debate by expanding the permissibility of perspectives and ideas in theology:

> What theopoetics suggests is that talking to one another about how God has come to be known might be better suited to a form of discourse that acknowledges and values the multiplicity of experience rather than one which tends to reify experiences of God into an absolute and rigid theology (p.6).

Theopoetics thus presents a space for artists, who may not fit within traditional academic theological spaces, to create and communicate valid theological ideas.

Theopoetics not only aligns with the public theological commitment to valuing marginalized members of society but also aligns with its commitment to communicating theological messages in a manner that is accessible to a broader public audience. This movement asserts that theological messages within art are often easier to grasp than the conclusions of logical academic inquiries (Keefe-Perry, 2014). Caputo and Keller (2007) define theopoetics as an "alternative discourse" to theology that draws on a "loose coalition of discursive resources", such as metaphors and hyperboles, to access and convey abstract knowledge about God. Based on this definition, *Homeless Jesus* is an example of theopoetics that communicates a theological idea via an artistic mode. Theopoetics can thus be a method for doing public theology or contributing ideas about God within public spaces to advance public responses to social issues.

Public theology in the North American context. Social gospel and theopoetic principles and public theology are often associated with the 'Christian Left' or 'Progressive Christians' in 21st century North American societies (Winter, 2017). In a qualitative study investigating the phenomenon of "Christian activists" and their role in social movements, Winter (2017) describes how the Christian Left, in comparison to their conservative counterparts, focuses more on acting out their faith convictions as opposed to simply holding a set of beliefs. This research also revealed that these activists cared about making an effort to follow the example of Jesus, to have authentic faith, and to have "an enlarged conception of evangelism" that is concerned with peoples' current wellbeing in addition to their spiritual salvation (Winters, 2017, p. 63). King (2012) furthermore emphasizes that the Christian Left legitimize their "subversive Christian identity" by relying on empirical and historical scholarship (p. 18).

In the 1990s, there was a resurgence of literature on the social gospel due to President Bush's policy to financially support the social services of faith-based organizations (Bauer, Brashler, Cadge, Chivakos, Fitzgerald, Garriott, et al., 2010; Ebaugh, Pipes, Saltzman-Chafetz, & Daniels, 2003; Habermas, 2006). During this time in Canada, there was also a decrease in federal and provincial support for affordable housing and thereby an increase in the need for social services that target housing (Hulchanski, Campsie, Chau, Hwang, & Paradis, 2009). The Bush administration's policy action sparked scholarly debate on the differences between faith-based organizations and their secular counterparts concerning the services they provide to those impacted by poverty. When attempting to identify the differences between faith-based and secular charities, Ebaugh et al. (2003) found that these types of organizations differ in their identity, staffing, funding sources, culture, and organizational practices. Ebaugh et al. (2003, p. 423) describe religious beliefs as an "add-on" that colours all aspects of operations, such as reliance on volunteers and choice of resources and marketing materials.

Despite this "add-on" of religious influence in faith-based organizations, Johnsen (2014) found that people experiencing homelessness and/or poverty find it difficult to distinguish between the services provided by faith-based and secular social services. According to Johnsen (2014), faith-based organizations have evolved due to their efforts to secure funding, to mirror the best practices of other successful service providers, and via the normative process of adopting cultural ideals, such as accessibility and cultural competence. Although religious belief often underpins the organizations' motivation to conduct their work with homelessness, Johnsen's (2014) research indicates that the services provided by faith-based and secular organizations are more similar than different. This notion that faith-based organizations and their secular counterparts are similar aligns with key insights from Bielefeld and Cleveland's (2013)

scoping review of literature on faith-based organizations, where they suggest that secular social services that were once faith-based often maintain their original moral convictions.

While faith-based organizations are important players in addressing poverty and homelessness, many may worry that their services exclude those who do not feel welcome or comfortable within a religious establishment (Nixon, 2013). To begin addressing this critique, Nixon (2013) develops a theology of homelessness by collecting and analyzing the stories of people who are homeless using narrative interviews. While Nixon (2013) does not explicitly locate this theology of homelessness in the field of public theology, this work details a theological approach to engaging in public realms. At the heart of this theology is the notion that faith-based organizations should listen to and value the perspectives, faiths, and stories belonging to people who are homeless. This point resembles closely Gowan's (2010) conclusion that to understand homelessness adequately, policy leaders and service providers should seek to first appreciate the strengths, capacities, and resilience of this population. A key theme within Nixon's (2013) theology is that the Christian Bible is dotted with symbols of 'home' and 'homelessness'. Nixon (2013) reasons that the stories of those who are homeless can thus provide valuable theological understandings about the nature of God and the Christian faith. Eliciting the stories of people who are homeless is an avenue to recognizing the strengths, capacities, and resilience of these individuals, improving faith-based services, and promoting theological advancement.

Critical perspectives and public theology. Similar to public art, public theology can also be taken up in ways that reinforce a status quo or an oppressive social system (Wright, 2018; Myles, 2016). This phenomenon is evident in Myles's (2016) critical analysis of the (over) use of the term "subversive" in scholarly literature on the history of Jesus as examined in light of

socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts. Subversion is defined by Myles (2016) as "the countering of established value-sets" (p. 57). Myles (2016) highlights how Jesus and his teachings have in the past been "produced, marketed, and consumed" in a manner that aligns with the neoliberal ideals of "political governance, individualism, surveillance, and the free-market" (p. 55). As neoliberal principles are hegemonic within Anglo-American cultures, scholars investigating the historical life of Jesus and his teachings often use neoliberal cultural understandings and practices to understand the subversive acts of Jesus. Rather than being calls to challenge social oppression and inequality as they appear at face-value, Myles (2016) thus argues that portrayals of Jesus as subversive are "superficial points of resistance" (p. 67) that in reality use the tools of neoliberalism to reinforce its presence. The work of Myles (2016) demonstrates the importance of maintaining a critical awareness of how religious principles, public art, and research itself can be shaped by dominant ideological systems or can be used by dominant groups to main an oppressive ideological system.

Wright (2018) describes how the social gospel was formed out of a critical awareness of this phenomenon. The social gospel movement served to challenge dominant Christian thought in the 19th century, where social gospellers deemed the institutionalized church to be complicit in the adverse social and economic conditions of their time (Wright, 2018). This group critiqued the focus within dominant forms of Christianity in North America on "the explicit goal of personal spiritual salvation" (p. 138). According to Wright (2018), this emphasis on personal spiritual salvation aligned conveniently with and reinforced dominant secular capitalist principles, such as individualism. The social gospel movement also challenged the dominant understanding of religion as "a set of metaphysical truth claims" (435). Rather than a static set of beliefs, within the context of the social gospel movement and public theology, religion is understood as having

"embodied, lived, and material dimensions" (Wright, 2018, p. 436). Wright (2018) thus argues that religion should be understood as encompassing both beliefs about truth and religious actions that inform political and social engagement.

Habermas (2006) similarly posits that religion is a force that can support political and social engagement in the public sphere. To make this point, Habermas (2006) cites examples of how religious beliefs have spurred on political debates, such as those associated with the death penalty. Habermas (2006) notes that while religion can be repressive, it "generally performs functions that are not unimportant for stabilizing and advancing a liberal political culture" by offering insight into "morally loaded issues" and "encouraging political participation" (p. 7). Religion, according to Habermas (2006), can be a positive force within the political realm, when it is used to articulate moral intuitions that protect "vulnerable forms of communal life" (p. 10). When people can practice their religion and do not encumber the ability of others to do the same, they are in a position to dialogue and reach mutual understandings on political matters (to be further discussed in Chapter 7). Based on Habermas's reasoning, religious insights, such as social gospel principles and theopoetics, can be used to inform political dialogues in a manner that promotes the development of a just and equitable society.

The notion that religion can inform political dialogues in a manner that aligns with the principle of "the separation of church and state" (Habermas, 2006), is explored in the work of McDaniel and Miller (2018). McDaniel and Miller (2018) examine the implications of the social gospel within the context of citizen perceptions of healthcare reforms in the United States. Their quantitative analysis of survey results indicated that adherence to social gospel principles was associated with greater support for strengthening social safety nets. Based on these results, McDaniel and Miller (2018) conclude that the religious principles of the social gospel can be

"fuel for activism" (p. 384). According to McDaniel and Miller (2018), when people feel that a policy is morally right, they are more likely to "be willing to make sacrifices and strong demands" (p.384) and less likely to question political actions. For better or for worse, religion can motivate groups to collectively work for social change or the maintenance of a status quo.

While Habermas (2006) emphasizes that religious ideas should be present in public dialogues because religion can provide a unique vantage point for examining social issues, this philosopher also emphasizes that they should be translated into a language that is reasonable to those with a different belief system. Public theology emphasizes that religious individuals who seek to intervene in a public issue should "be bilingual, speaking a theological and a secular language" (Bedford-Strohom, 2008, p. 145). Breitenberg (2003) likewise notes that a key element of public theology is its commitment to presenting an "intelligible and convincing" theologically informed discourse for both the religious and the non-religious.

Although past leaders and institutions have used theology to legitimize an oppressive status quo, the goals of public theology correspond with those of critical theory, which promotes positive social change. Public theology can be critical when it takes the position of the oppressed groups. Rauschenbusch (1917), a key public theologian, draws attention to how powerful elite groups in the past have paid attention to only the theological ideas that served their interests and neglected to consider those that challenged their lifestyle. Rauschenbusch (1917) names the theology of elite groups, "traditional theology" (p.16). Public theology challenges this traditional theology and prompts faith-based institutions to take social responsibility for social problems. Rauschenbusch (1917) also critiques capitalism because it leads to "a one-sided control of economic power" that is a foundation for social oppression, instrumental reasoning, and a focus on private ownership to the detriment of individual needs. In this way, Rauschenbusch (1917)

and Habermas (2006) would be on the same page; they both assert that macro-level social forces can co-opt the decision-making capacities of individuals.

Public art as a public theology tool used in faith-based organizations. Public theologians may use art produced within or for faith-based institutions as a vehicle for social change. In Jensen and Vrudny's (2009) edited book, fourteen theologians provide accounts of religious art that serve theological ends. A central theme in this book is that religious art can encourage both public theological thought and social engagement by communicating theological principles and compelling individuals to consider how biblical messages should be interpreted within contemporary political and social contexts. Jensen and Vrudny (2009) and colleagues claim that the arts can support faith-informed goals, citing several examples of when religious visual arts have been used to initiate political action or lead individuals to question oppressive power relations. For example, Vrundy (2009) discusses how the artwork of Ricardo Cinalli, an Argentinian painter, provides a theological critique of political regimes. This book makes the case that art can be simultaneously both political and theological.

De Gruchy (2001) serves as another example of a public theologian who explores how Christian art can inspire social justice and positive social change. Within the context of the post-apartheid in Cape Town, De Gruchy (2001) describes how art can be a means of maintaining the struggle against racism and can support social healing. Like Marcuse (1978), De Gruchy (2001) emphasizes that art can only promote social emancipation when it is a result of "individual intelligence, passion, imagination, and consciousness" as opposed to being a result of institutional or corporate interests (p. 199). De Gruchy's (2001) and Jensen and Vrundy's (2009) work showcases how public theologians perceive art as an instrument for faith-informed (and positive) social change.

In addition to supporting positive social change, public theologians also position religious art as a tool for teaching or communicating with large audiences in a manner that compensates for the shortcomings of written and spoken communication. Cook (2009) describes how religious art and architecture can be "a language of the church" within public spaces (p. 163). Illman (2010) also discusses how the arts can communicate sensitive or complex ideas in a manner that is likely to be better received than if these ideas were communicated through written or spoken language alone. Through a case study of a musical theatre performance designed to encourage peaceful interfaith dialogue, Illman (2010) captures how the arts can act as "an arena for inventive and holistic dialogue" (p. 180) that can generate both empathetic and rational understandings among those holding conflicting ideas. The notion that the arts can increase empathic understandings is also documented within social work literature (Sinding, Warren, & Paton, 2014; Furman, Downey, Jackson, & Bender, 2002). Literature on the public theological purposes of art was valuable when considering how the members and leaders of the faith-based organizations involved in this research use *Homeless Jesus* to carry theological questions and insights related to homelessness into the public sphere.

Researching public theology and faith-based organizations. Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) offer guidance and identify methodological considerations for researchers interested in understanding faith-based organizations and the roles they play in North American society. These researchers should consider whether spirituality, as an intrinsic element to faith-based organizations, can even be studied empirically due to its latent nature. Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) also highlight how faith-based organizations hold different value sets than researchers; While researchers focus on the pursuit of knowledge, faith-based organizations focus on their faith-informed purposes. Researchers should furthermore consider the diversity within and

between faith-based organizations regarding their expression of religion. Qualitative research, such as the research recounted here, that allows for an examination of lived experiences and that does not seek to generalize is thus an appropriate approach to exploring subject matters about spirituality and religiosity within faith-based organizations.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a synthesis of literature related to homelessness and social stigma, the relationship between art and social change, and public theology. The literature synthesized here provides a context for considering the meanings elicited by *Homeless Jesus*, the implications of these meanings for those impacted by homelessness and the faith-based organizations who have a replica, and the political and social uses of this sculpture. While there is a lack of definitive social scientific evidence, a key theme within this review is that public religious art can promote critical thinking, prompt dialogues, and communicate ideas that are difficult to express with written or spoken language alone. The capacity for the arts to communicate ideas in unique ways is particularly relevant when considering how *Homeless Jesus*, as a religious and public piece of art, is interpreted, valued, and used within faith-based organizations.

Chapter 3: Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the theoretical framework that grounds this dissertation. The literature review highlighted how constructions of homelessness can reinforce social inequalities, how public art can promote or hinder the development of an equitable society, and how faith-based institutions use (public) art to fulfill their religious obligation/desire to engage in social issues. Due to this dissertation's emphasis on identifying constructions of homelessness within a public religious art piece and considering the role of public art and religion in social change, this dissertation is situated within the critical paradigm.

Researchers working within the critical paradigm are concerned with identifying taken-for-granted assumptions that encumber efforts to create a just and equitable society. This chapter begins by defining critical realism and subjectivism, as the epistemological and ontological assumptions comprising this paradigm. I then bring forward Jürgen Habermas's theory on communicative action and Herbert Marcuse's ideas on the role of the arts in promoting positive social transformation. I combine these two theories to provide a coherent and critical explanation of the relationship between public art, public dialogues, and responses to and perceptions of social issues, such as homelessness. The theoretical framework outlined here informed this dissertation's methodology (Chapter 4) and discussion of the research findings (Chapters 5-7).

Critical Paradigm

Paradigms can be understood as the established ontological, epistemological, and methodological sets of beliefs that underlie research claims (Guba, 1990). Guba (1990) describes research within the critical paradigm as "ideologically oriented inquiry" (p.23) that aims to uncover oppressive and taken-for-granted social systems and unequal power structures. By uncovering these systems and power structures, critical researchers and theorists, hope to empower marginalized social groups to recognize the need for and to work towards positive

social transformation. This paradigm guided me in identifying and questioning dominant ideological ideas, practices, and discourses about homelessness. Likewise, this paradigm was useful when investigating the role of public religious art in challenging or affirming these ideas, practices, and discourses.

The critical paradigm is characterized by a critical realist ontological perspective. Ontological perspectives are perspectives on the nature of reality (Tracy, 2012). Realism is epitomized by the idea that an objective reality exists and can be observed. Critical realism builds on this ontological idea by asserting that researchers who seek to better understand this objective reality must acknowledge that their conclusions are reflective of only their situated perspectives and knowledge (Guba, 1990). Popekowitz (1990) highlights how the critical researcher's understanding of reality connects "ideas, thoughts, and language to social and historical conditions" (p. 48). Tracy (2012) likewise notes that researchers who hold a critical realist ontological perspective want to uncover how their perspectives on reality and those of participants are shaped by power relations and history. While critical realists acknowledge the imperfectness or incompleteness of research conclusions, Guba (1990) points out that they also emphasize that some things can still be known even though they cannot be physically observed.

The incompleteness of depictions of reality generated from critical research does not hamper its value. The value of critical research comes from the alternative perspectives that research located in this paradigm can provide. By putting forth alternative perspectives of reality, critical thinkers and researchers hope to challenge oppressive and taken-for-granted assumptions about power relationships and societal structures. Thus, research guided by a critical realist ontological perspective can foster critical consciousness within individuals and groups in a manner that promotes positive social change (Guba, 1990). Brookfield (2005) describes critical

consciousness as an awareness that arises from the questioning of hegemonic social practices, systems, discourses, relationships, and structures that benefit an elite group while oppressing others and which are self-reinforcing, historically rooted, ubiquitous, and taken-for-granted (Brookfield, 2005). Hegemony maintains "false consciousness", where individuals view injustice as normal and natural characteristics of society (Guba, 1990). In contrast, critical consciousness can inspire oppressed groups to work towards the development of a more just society. The alternative perspectives of reality generated through research can challenge false consciousness**.**

Critical research is also shaped by a subjectivist epistemological perspective, which creates a space for researchers to allow their values to influence their interpretations (Guba, 1990). In Barton and Bishop's (2014) overview of the philosophical and paradigmatic research foundations, they emphasize that researchers working within the critical paradigm recognize that methods of data collection and analysis cannot be separated from personal values. Rather than striving for pure objectivity, critical research seeks to adopt values that will promote the development of a more just and equitable society.

Jürgen Habermas and Herbert Marcuse are both key figures in the field of critical theory that offer frameworks for understanding the relationship between public art and public dialogues. I used both Habermas's theory of communicative action and Marcuse's ideas on the role of art in social transformation to guide this research. To explain this framework, I first provide a description of Habermas's theory of communicative action and Marcuse's explanation of the role of arts and aesthetic experiences in social change. When used on their own, these two theories are not capable of exploring a nuanced relationship between a public religious artwork, public dialogues, and dominant perceptions of homelessness. I thus conclude this chapter by

highlighting how these two theoretical perspectives are complementary and together provide a foundation for responding to this dissertation's research questions.

Habermas: A Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas (1984, 1987) synthesizes relevant literature related to critical theory and Western history to formulate his theory of communicative action, relying most heavily on George Herbert Mead, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. This theory depicts Western societies as being in a state of crisis. When there is a lack of social integration and consensus about core values, members of society distrust social institutions, which ideally should be built on these core values. This distrust of social institutions is a result of the colonization of the "lifeworld" (Habermas, 1987). Habermas (1987) describes the lifeworld as a space where individuals meet to "reciprocally raise claims that their utterances fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize and confirm validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at agreements" (p. 126). It can thus be understood as a shared sense of values that are developed via social consensus over time.

According to Habermas (1987), the lifeworld should entail a shared understanding of the subjective, objective, and social world. While the objective world encompasses spaces where claims can be observed to be true, the social world is where claims are validated via interpersonal relationships and the subjective world is where claims are validated by personal experience (Habermas, 1987). The lifeworld, shared assumptions about how things should be, is what legitimizes social systems. The lifeworld's existence necessitates "the separation of culture, society, and personality" so that individuals can think freely (Habermas, 1987, p.152). When social systems become disconnected from the lifeworld, they lose their legitimacy and no longer function in ways that benefit all members of society.

The lifeworld is developed, maintained, and strengthened within the public sphere. The public sphere can be understood abstractly as a bridge between the private and civil areas of society. The public sphere represents spaces where individuals freely exchange ideas and everyone has equal opportunity to participate and equal access to information (Habermas, 1984). A key concept within Habermas's theory of communicative action is the ideal speech situation. Van Manen (1977) describes Habermas's conception of the ideal speech situation as "a distortion-free model of consensus-seeking community" where there is a shared understanding of norms and roles and each member has an equal status (Van Manen, 1977, p. 222). Out of this ideal speech situation will ideally come a shared understanding of the public will, which can, in turn, shape political actions and decisions.

To premise a collection of essays on Habermas's concept of the public sphere, Calhoun, Mendieta, and VanAntwerpen (2013) posit that the ability of the public sphere to shape political actions and decisions depends upon the quality of discourses and the quality of participation. Habermas (1987) describes how the public sphere is in decline due to a societal and capitalist valuing of private property. This regard for private property leads to a decrease in the number of public spaces where the public sphere can reside. Likewise, the public sphere can also be compromised when powerful institutions and elite groups exert their influence in a manner that limits the ability of individuals to participate fully in the public sphere. The influence of these powerful institutions and elite groups thus weakens the quality of both participation and the authenticity of its discourses.

While Habermas's notion of the public sphere offers a foundation for understanding political participation as it relates to social transformation, Fraser (2013) helpfully highlights how this concept needs to be updated to fit a contemporary transnational political context.

According to Fraser (2013), the problem with Habermas's model of the public sphere is that it is rooted in bourgeois society. It is thereby no longer applicable (without modification) within fragmented and inequitable societies, where some social groups experience systematic economic, cultural, and social disadvantages. Fraser (2013) reasons that a bourgeois society privileges one form of dialogue that may not be practiced by minority or marginalized groups. For example, Fraser (2013) emphasizes how women can not fully be heard within Habermas's conception of the public sphere because patriarchal societies diminish their voices.

Both Marcuse (1969) and Fraser (2013) emphasize that when society groups together the less powerful individuals with those with power, the opinions and interests of the powerful will overshadow those who lack power. Envisioning the public sphere as a space where every member of society has equal access to information and an equal opportunity to be heard is naïve. Fraser (2013) thus expands Habermas's notion of the public sphere to be comprised of multiple counterpublics, which participate in "inter-public discursive action" (p. 68). This form of a public sphere allows for marginalized individuals to be heard and respected within their distinct publics, which in turn can inform the broader public will.

Marcuse: Art and Social Change

Herbert Marcuse is most known as a public critical philosopher who theorized about radical social movements during the 1960s (Marcuse & Kellner, 1998). He re-evaluated and applied Marxism within contemporary social conditions and scientific developments. Marcuse drew heavily on the ideas of Sigmund Freud to explain how members of society are socialized in a way where human wants and desires are repressed. A central theme that runs through the works of Marcuse is liberation from repression (Farr, 2009). Liberation for Marcuse (1998) meant "the full development of the individual in a non-repressive society" (p. 30). This notion of repression, rooted in the work of Freud, is used to explain why oppressed groups do not always work

towards emancipation from an oppressive social system. Repression can serve to meld together individual consciousness with class consciousness (Marcuse, 1978). This in turn undermines revolutions because revolutions depend on individual consciousness (Marcuse, 1978). According to Marcuse (1998, 2001), a reluctance to challenge oppressive social systems can be attributed to the repressive nature of capitalism.

When describing the work of Marcuse, Farr (2009) equates 'being civilized' with repression. In his theory of aesthetics and social change, Marcuse differentiates between basic repression and surplus repression. While basic repression equips individuals to co-exist, surplus repression allows an elite group to use language, laws, the media, and technology to maintain an oppressive status quo that desensitizes individuals to their lack of liberty (Farr, 2009). According to Marcuse (1998), the consequences of surplus repression include unnecessary labour that alienates workers from their communities and true selves, a decline in individual freedoms and expression, and the weakening of an individual's ability to think independently.

When using Marcuse's concept of surplus repression to explain the persistence of an oppressive gender system, Holland (2011) notes that elite groups acquire an unfair portion of a society's resources, which in turn leads the broader society to perceive their resources as 'scarce'. This scarcity of resources necessitates that their 'pleasures' are unattainable. Surplus repression is thus maintained and rationalized with the "performance principle" (Marcuse, 1978). The performance principle occurs when individuals channel their energies away from efforts to achieve their true desires and instead towards their alienating labour that serves someone else's purposes.

Marcuse (1978) reasons that an oppressed group is more likely to enact the performance principle and to internalize surplus repression when this repression appears rational or is

disguised as basic repression. Marcuse (1978, 1969) uses the concepts of one-dimensional thought and repressive tolerance to describe how elite groups disguise and rationalize surplus repression. One-dimensional thought is the harmonization of ideas and opinions on public issues in a manner that "prohibits the development of class consciousness" (Farr, 2009, p. 85). This harmonization renders social oppression invisible because individuals become less likely to question the status quo or come across alternative ways of understanding public issues.

Marcuse (1969) coined the concept, "repressive tolerance" to explain how an inequitable society can appear at face value to be equitable. Brookfield (2007) explains repressive tolerance as a measure to ensure that individuals "believe they live in an open society characterized by freedom of speech and expression, while in reality their freedom is being restricted" (p. 558). These individuals are being presented with ideas, perspectives, or beliefs that contradict the status quo, yet they are always biased toward accepting the dominant ideological system in which they are immersed. Repressive tolerance thus supports 'surplus repression' by placing alternative perspectives alongside those of the dominant ideological system within a dialogue. In these situations, individuals will likely be predisposed to accept the ideas in which they entered the dialogue.

While the performance principle, one-dimensional thought, and repressive tolerance maintain surplus repression, Marcuse perceived aesthetic experiences, such as those produced by the visual arts, music, and literature, as a means of countering it (Marcuse & Kellner, 1998). Marcuse (1978) problematizes Marx's claim that class relations always shape the 'inner logic' of a work of art because this claim devalues the agency and subjectivity of individuals. In contrast, Marcuse (1978, 1998, p. 203) stresses that "the goal of revolution is the free individual", reasoning that solidarity and community are comprised of free individuals rather than 'masses.'

Based on this premise, art that promotes a society where individuals experience liberation and social equality will be not be grounded in collective political, economic, social, or cultural interests.

In the *Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), Marcuse articulates a similar idea to Belfiore and Bennett's (2008) point (discussed in Chapter 2) that claims about the arts' capacity to support positive social change can be easily flipped; the same elements of art that make it suitable for supporting social change also make it suitable for supporting an oppressive status quo. However, Marcuse proposes that when art is derived from an individuals' true desires and experiences, it challenges the performance principle and thereby an individuals' complicity in an oppressive social system. Art with the capacity to promote positive social change, according to Marcuse (1978), is thereby produced by autonomous individuals who are free from the performance principle. As they are not working towards someone else's interests, they can draw on their own desires, beliefs, and experiences rather than those of a group or the current social system. In this way, individuals create art that reflects a reality that is truer for them than the taken-for-granted reality created by an oppressive social system (Marcuse, 1978). Being rooted in the artists' subjectivity, this socially transformative art provides insights into a social reality that is not governed by a powerful elite.

As the art is a derivative of an individual's subjectivity, Marcuse (1978) reasons that it will be esoteric and anti-collectivist. To be esoteric, the artwork diverges from artistic or social norms. For example, Alfie Bradley's public artwork, *Knife Angel,* uses knives confiscated by UK police to form a 27ft tall sculpture of an angel, an unconventional choice of medium for depicting a 'celestial being' (British Ironwork Centre, n.d). By diverting from norms, Marcuse (1978) proposes that art can anticipate or reflect change. Although public art by its nature is

intended to speak to a community's collective identity, it can still be anti-collectivist using Marcuse's delineation of this term. Marcuse (1978) describes anti-collectivist art as rooted in an individual's subjectivity and not the political, social, cultural, or economic interests of a collective.

Marcuse proposes that esoteric and anti-collectivist art rooted in an individual's subjectivity can strengthen critical thinking among viewers; this art creates something visual or audible in which individuals can use to identify and reflect on their own true needs as opposed to the false needs that are promulgated by industries within a capitalist system (Abromeit & Cobb, 2004). When it comes to promoting critical thinking, Marcuse (1978) emphasizes the importance of an artwork being rooted in an individual's subjectivity and not seeking to serve a group's interests. Marcuse (1978) emphasizes this important aspect of 'socially transformative' art when writing that "the more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change" (p. xiii). When art serves a political, social, cultural, or economic purpose, it serves a collective interest and thereby the performance principle.

In contrast, when art represents an individual's subjectivity it can estrange individuals from collective interests and thereby it may have the potential to estrange individuals from their everyday taken-for-granted realities. By estranging individuals from their everyday taken-for-granted realities, an artwork can produce experiences where individuals imagine liberation and a more just society (Marcuse, 1978). Considering the arts within post-apartheid South Africa, De Gruchy (2001) suggests that artists concerned with equality should first and foremost strive to create beautiful art. De Gruchy suggests that creating something beautiful is a direct counteract to social oppression. According to De Gruchy (2001) and Marcuse (1978), what is considered

subjectively by the artist to be beautiful will likely reflect an alternative to a socially oppressive reality that can help others question and recognize what is amiss and taken-for-granted within their current society.

Combining the Theoretical Ideas of Habermas and Marcuse

Habermas's theory of communicative action and Marcuse's position on art and social change can be used alongside one another as a theoretical framework due to their shared goals and philosophical orientations. Their critical realist ontological foundation is revealed in their commitment to fostering critical consciousness. Both Habermas and Marcuse are concerned with how some dominant elite groups and powerful institutions diminish individual thought and disconnect individuals from who they truly are, or their humanity. In addition to their shared ontological foundation, both Habermas and Marcuse share the same Marxist motivation to support the emancipation of oppressed groups from unjust social systems and to promote positive social change.

Furthermore, Habermas's and Marcuse's frameworks for understanding the relationship between public art and dialogues are also fundamentally about communication. Marcuse's (1978) focus on the power of art and aesthetic experiences to promote social change is rooted in the notion that the arts can communicate ideas and experiences. Habermas's (1984, 1987) theory of communicative action guides researchers in considering how language can be used as a form of political action or to reach a mutual consensus about public issues in a manner that informs the public will.

Although both Habermas and Marcuse share the same motivations and ontological positions, they differ in their understandings of the root causes of social oppression and how positive social change can come about. As noted by Fraser (2013), Habermas's theory of

communicative action emphasizes rational discussion over other forms of communication. This rational discussion represents one mode of communication that is often taught and practiced within dominant elite groups, and thus is exclusionary towards those who are less privileged. Art and aesthetic experiences, as depicted by Marcuse (1978), can also be modes of communication that can complement the use of rational discussion in a manner that makes Habermas's concept of the ideal speech situation more plausible within diverse and pluralistic societies. The power of art, according to Marcuse (1978), lies in its ability to communicate "truths not communicable in any other language" (p. 10). According to Marcuse (1978), true art is not a representation of reality but rather reality re-communicated. By using a different medium, art can contradict oppressive discourses and social systems to support individuals in perceiving taken-for-granted oppressive practices for what they are and imagining a more just alternative.

Another key difference between the frameworks offered by Marcuse and Habermas would be that Habermas offers a more concrete and tangible depiction of the processes of positive social change by explaining how individuals can reach mutual understandings within the public sphere, which in turn can inform the public will. In contrast, Marcuse emphasizes the process in which individuals become aware of their oppression. Although this awareness can create a context for social emancipation, Marcuse's (1987) position on art and social change does not elucidate how a unified group of emancipated and critically conscious individuals accomplish this transformation.

While sharing core motivations and philosophical underpinnings, Habermas's and Marcuse's theoretical ideas differ in important and helpful ways. Their differences are not conflicting but rather Marcuse's depiction of the role of arts and aesthetic experiences in social

change can inform Habermas's theory of communicative action and vise versa. Marcuse's position on art and social change can be used to extend Habermas's theory of communicative action by drawing attention to diverse ways of developing the public sphere and inspiring rational discussion. Habermas's theory can in turn provide a fuller picture of how emancipated and critically conscious individuals can work towards positive social change. Together the theoretical perspectives of both Habermas and Marcuse provided a foundation in which to explore the relationship between public religious art, public dialogues, and public perceptions of social issues via *Homeless Jesus*.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Building on the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and the critical theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter delineates the methodology used to explore the relationship between public art, public dialogues, and public perceptions of homelessness and the meanings elicited by *Homeless Jesus*. A researcher's choice of methodology sheds light on what they perceive to 'be the right way of knowing something' (Guba, 1990). This chapter begins by describing and explicating why the chosen methodology (a case study) for this dissertation is consistent with both literature review findings and the theoretical framework. I then describe the data sources and individual analysis methods used to enact this case study (iconography, narrative inquiry, and thematic analysis). This chapter includes descriptions of data collection procedures, ethics clearance, the nature of the data collected, the techniques used to analyze the data, and measures that are taken to strengthen the trustworthiness of research findings.

Research Design

As this dissertation is centred around a particular public art piece, *Homeless Jesus*, it uses a case study methodology. Key features that distinguish public art from other art forms would be that it engages a large audience by the nature of being in public space and that it presents the questions, concerns, values, characteristics, and/or the history of the community in which the art is situated (Zebracki, et al., 2010, Phillips, 1989; Radice, 2018). Grasping the meanings and responses elicited by a public art piece thus requires a thorough understanding of the geographic, cultural, and temporal context of the art (Zebracki et al., 2010). Researchers employing a case study methodology investigate a system or social unit (a case) in its totality (Yin, 2018). By generating a contextualized and nuanced depiction of the setting in which a *Homeless Jesus* replica is located, a case study methodology allowed me to critically decipher the meanings and intended uses of this sculpture.

The research recounted here proceeded in three stages: (1) an iconography of *Homeless Jesus* sculptures, (2) a narrative inquiry into the presence of *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton, and (3) a thematic analysis of interviews with faith leaders in organizations with a sculpture and with faith leaders located near a sculpture in Hamilton. The iconography culminates in a broad overview of the culturally-shared meanings derived from this sculpture using in-depth interviews with leaders in faith-based organizations with a replica, online news articles that reference it, and photos of the sculpture in six locations. This analysis was particularly relevant in responding to this dissertation's first question, "What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?" The narrative inquiry offers three stories of how this replica has been responded to, used, and dialogued about within a confined geographic area. The thematic analysis lastly explores how the religiosity and faith-informed nature of *Homeless Jesus* shapes how faith leaders may use it to enter public dialogues. These three analyses generated insights that I used to respond to this dissertation's second research question; "What do the meanings, reactions to, and the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* reveal about the relationship between public religious art and dialogue within the public sphere about homelessness?" Table 1 below summarizes this dissertation's data sources.

Table 1

Data Sources

Data Source	**Number of items or participants**
Online news articles.	85 articles
Interviews	12 interviews
Photos of *Homeless Jesus*	24 photos in six locations.

Data Collection

Purposive sampling: As outlined in Table 1, the data sources for this case study include online news articles, interviews, and photos. The unit of analysis implicit to each source is the accounts of meanings, perspectives on, and responses to *Homeless Jesus*. I used purposive sampling techniques to collect online news articles, recruit participants, and determine the locations of photos. Purposive sampling entails selecting research participants, locations, or materials based on their ability to inform an understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All data collection occurred between May 2019 and December 2020.

When determining sample size, data saturation served as a helpful concept. In their exploration of definitions and the uses of 'saturation' in qualitative research, Saunders, et al. (2018) first broadly define this term as "a criterion for discontinuing data collection and/or analysis" (p. 1894). While problematizing the use of this term as "a gold standard" in qualitative inquiry, Braun and Clarke (2019) note that a common definition of saturation is 'information redundancy,' where the collection of additional data no longer provides information that augments or contradicts previously collected data. This understanding of saturation is backed by Richard and Morse (2013, p. 233) when they assert that a researcher has reached saturation when they have obtained "rich and thick" codes which are continually reinforced or replicated through further data collection and analysis. After travelling to the six locations with *Homeless Jesus* replicas, I found that I was no longer gaining new insights from the photos. For the third stage of this dissertation, I discontinued seeking out participants for interviews when I saw the participants sharing similar accounts about how their organizations use art and *Homeless Jesus*.

While the concept of data saturation provided a useful approach to determining when to end data collection, it was not helpful when collecting online news articles. Rather than sampling, I sought to collect all online news articles that met the inclusion criteria. While there is

overlap in the interviews used in each stage of this dissertation, saturation was not the guiding principle for determining when to stop seeking out new participants in the narrative inquiry. As noted by Braun and Clarke (2019), seeking data saturation can be problematic and unrealistic in qualitative projects where the research purpose is not to 'excavate' or 'uncover' meanings in the data, but to rather develop meanings using both the data and "contextual and theoretically embedded interpretative practices" (p. 10), such as in this dissertation's thematic narrative inquiry. For the second stage of this project, I thereby did not focus on reaching data saturation but rather considered how participants' stories addressed this dissertation's research questions.

Online news articles. Online news articles as a data source provided insights into privileged perspectives on homelessness as a social issue and a depiction of Jesus as a homeless person. These media representations are privileged because they are likely to influence dominant cultural perspectives on homelessness and Jesus (Lyons & Smedley, 2019; MacKinnon, 2015; Zufferey, 2014) Likewise, these news articles shed light on the dialogues and debates that this sculpture has sparked. The practice of using news media to identify dominant culturally-shared meanings and social constructions of homelessness is well-established. For example, both Zufferey's (2014) and Lyons and Smedley's (2019) analyses of homelessness representations in Australian news media indicate that this media may maintain a status quo, representing dominant cultural ideas or the ideas of those in power.

To ensure that the news articles were relevant to the research questions, I collected all publicly accessible online print news articles that referenced both Timothy Schmalz (the artist) and *Homeless Jesus,* that were produced between January 2013 (the year *Homeless Jesus* was first made public) and December 2019, and that were written in English. To promote the likelihood that these news articles are representative of dominant societal perspectives on

Homeless Jesus, this dissertation includes only articles produced by news outlets with a readership of 80 000 or greater. Using Nexis Uni, an online database of news media (previously NexisLexis), I initially retrieved 121 online news articles written in English that referenced both '*Homeless Jesus'* and 'Timothy Schmalz'. After excluding duplicates and articles from news sources with a readership of 80 000 or less, I included 85 articles in the analysis.

Participants. In the first stage of this research (Iconography of *Homeless Jesus*), I recruited interviewees that were members of a faith-based organization with a *Homeless Jesus* replica. I used in-depth interviews to better understand the meanings and common responses elicited from the depiction of Jesus as a homeless person. Likewise, these participants provided detailed accounts of how members of their faith-based organizations and their broader communities have responded to the sculpture. I recruited them directly by phone or e-mail, using the contact information found on the websites of faith-based organizations with a *Homeless Jesus* replica. I contacted a total of thirteen faith-based organizations. Of the thirteen, five did not respond and three indicated that they did not see themselves as being able to answer the research questions. These participants explained that they were not involved in the decision to install *Homeless Jesus* or that they were not working at the organization when the *Homeless Jesus* replica was initially installed.

All six participants held a leadership role within the faith-based organization, such as the administrator in a non-profit organisation, provost in a college, and priest or pastor in a church or cathedral. The participants were from Canada (n=4), the United States (n=1), and Australia (n=1). All six participants were white. One of the six participants was a woman. Four of the interviews occurred over the phone and two occurred in person at the faith-based organization in which the participant worked. For the in-person interviews, the participants generously offered to

provide a tour of the organizations' premises and art collections. The interviews were approximately 30 to 40 minutes, excluding the three tours. I used the same interview guide for each interview (See Appendix C).

In the second stage of this dissertation, I recruited participants who were members of faith-based organizations located within a one-kilometer radius of the *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton at Saint Patrick's Roman Catholic Church or who were recommended as someone who had been involved in organizing events that centred around this particular replica. To recruit these participants, I used snowball sampling, a type of purposive sampling. Snowball sampling entails seeking out referrals of participants who can speak to the research question (Frey, 2018). Individuals, personally known to myself, introduced me to participants or recommended organizations located near the *Homeless Jesus*. If I was not personally introduced to participants, I used the contact information listed on the websites of the recommended organizations to contact participants directly via phone or e-mail. I invited seventeen individuals in total to participate. Of the seventeen, I contacted twelve directly and a member of a network of churches in Hamilton invited on my behalf the remaining five. Seven of the seventeen did not respond and three indicated that they did not see themselves as able to speak to the research questions. I successfully recruited seven participants who indicated a keen interest in this research. One of these participants invited two other members of their organization to join the interview, for a total of seven interviews with nine participants.

During the interviews, the nine participants provided accounts of the meanings, responses, and dialogues elicited by the sculpture within the context of faith-based organizations (See Appendix D for interview guide). In all seven interviews, participants also discussed an

annual prayer vigil for those who are refugees and those who are homeless. Chapter 6 describes this event in more detail. These interviews were approximately 25 to 40 minutes in length.

Similar to the first set of interviews, all participants were white (see limitations in Chapter 8). Five of the participants were women while the remaining four were men. Four of the nine participants held a pastor/ priest position in their churches. In the interview with three participants, one was a pastor and the additional two were artists temporarily employed by the church. The remaining three participants worked as (1) a freelance journalist and a social justice advisor for a network of churches in the Hamilton Niagara area, (2) a spiritual director in a non-profit organization, and (3) a missionary in the same non-profit organization. The term missionary refers to individuals who are commissioned to work on a religious undertaking, such as evangelizing or completing acts of service in a community. A spiritual director uses training in theology to support individuals in their spiritual development in a one-on-one or in a group setting. Due to the diversity of roles and experiences with *Homeless Jesus* and the nature of the in-depth interview style, the interview questions occurring during this second stage evolved and diverged slightly from the interview guide.

In the final stage of this dissertation, I used all interviews with faith leaders. Both interview guides (Appendices C and D) are similar, with the only key difference being questions about the impact of the sculpture. The similarity of these two interview guides provided the conditions necessary to identify themes, using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2012) approach to thematic analysis, across both interview data sets. While over half of the participants were from Hamilton and the other half were from varied locations, all interviewees were leaders in faith-based organizations with an affiliation to *Homeless Jesus*. This commonality equipped the participants to shed light on how faith-based organizations use and interpret *Homeless Jesus*.

Interviews in the first and second stages of this research occurred simultaneously between May 2019 and December 2020. After each interview, I used the transcription tool in MAXQDA and the recording to develop a transcript that reproduced all spoken words. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software that can be leveraged to organize, manage, efficiently retrieve, and code qualitative data. MAXQDA eased the transcription process with a tool to slow down the audio and a timestamp function that allowed me to match the audio recording with the written transcript. Transcribing each interview within a short timespan of conducting the interviews augmented the transcripts because I was able to make notes about the interview environment and the non-verbal communication shaping the conversation. Tilley (2003) notes that the act of transcribing can aid in the "interpretive and analytical process" (p. 770). When transcribing the interviews, I took an 'interpretive stance', where I viewed the transcripts as representations of the interviews that are shaped by my transcription decisions (Davidson, 2009; Tilley, 2003). Rather than viewing the transcripts as exact mirror images of the audio recordings, this interpretive stance supported me in reflexively considering my role in constructing the data. The act of transcribing the interviews also increased my familiarity with the research data. Interview transcripts served as the primary data source.

Photos. I travelled to six locations with *Homeless Jesus* replicas to photograph the sculpture. These locations included Detroit, MI, Hamilton, ON, London ON, Melbourne, AU, Toronto, ON, and Townsville, AU. The photographs offered insight into how and why this sculpture elicits the meanings and responses recounted by interview participants and in the online news articles. Furthermore, these photos shed light on how the physical surroundings of *Homeless Jesus* replicas might influence these meanings and responses.

Data Analysis

All transcripts, online news articles, and photos were uploaded to MAXQDA. The culturally shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus* identified during the iconography provided a backdrop for conducting the narrative inquiry and thematic analysis.

Stage one: Iconography. After all online news articles, interviews, and photos were collected, I used iconography to decipher the culturally shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus*. Müller (2011) defines iconography as a qualitative research method, used in both the humanities and social sciences and originating within the field of art history, to describe, analyze, and interpret the culturally-shared meanings of visuals. Panofsky (1970), a key founder of this method, describes it as the process of connecting artistic designs and patterns with culturally-shared ideas and values. The research recounted here bends away from orthodox iconography where researchers collect all visually relevant data that speaks to a broad visual topic, such as 'homelessness' or 'Jesus'. This research however focuses on a specific visual image, namely replicas of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*, while still capitalizing on the rich tradition of visual methods intrinsic to iconography.

Iconographers seek to draw out insights about a cultural, temporal, political, or religious group that are embedded within visuals. They use this method to explore what images represent and how these images represent this message. When using iconography to shed light on the 2006 political controversy over cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed, Müller (2007) points out that "visuals follow a logic by association, connecting different meanings that would not necessarily make sense if written down or communicated orally" (p. 287). An iconography of *Homeless Jesus* thus offers a unique vantage point to explore contemporary religious and political perspectives on homelessness, which would be difficult to establish with only textual sources of data.

Although visuals are the cornerstone data source in iconography, a key feature distinguishing iconography from other visual research methods is that iconographers also use textual data (such as interview transcripts and news articles) to provide additional evidence to support or refute interpretations. As iconography began as a research method used in the field of art history, textual evidence was necessary to safely make claims about culturally-shared meanings of visuals produced in the distant past (Müller, 2011). Hermeren (1969) paints alternative textual data sources as clues to how a visual is predominantly interpreted or how it was originally intended by the artist or commissioner to be interpreted. When studying contemporary images and art, Van Leeuwen (2001) and Müller (2011) reason that textual data still provides a way of augmenting claims about these meanings.

The combination of textual and visual data sources provides a comparative base in which to determine culturally-shared meanings. Van Leeuwen (2001) emphasizes that iconography "pays attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated, and to how and why cultural meanings and their visual expressions come about historically" (p. 1). Hermeren (1969) and Müller (2007) likewise draw attention to how iconography is a consideration and a comparison of the motifs within visuals, the historical, political, intellectual, artistic, and social context in which these visuals were produced, the situations and the intentions of the artist(s), and public responses to the visuals. The data sources grounding this analysis are photos of the sculpture in six locations, interviews with leaders in the faith-based organizations who have a replica (n=6), and online news articles that reference it (n=85).

When analyzing an image, an iconographer searches for three types of meanings: representational, iconographic, and iconological meanings (Hermeren, 1969; Müller 2011; Van Leeuwen, 2001). Representational meaning takes the form of the objects, places, or people

depicted in the visual(s). Müller (2011) points out that iconographers can often easily identify this type of meaning by the title of the visual, personal experience, and contextual research. When it is difficult to understand "what is in" a visual, Hermeren (1969) notes that iconographers determine culturally-shared representational meanings by pointing to the standard meanings of the visuals (what the majority of viewers would see), the intended meaning (how the artist(s) want viewers to see it), the hypothetical meaning (the way the majority of people would see the image under a set of conditions), and the normative meanings (how the visual should be seen). I explored the representational meanings of *Homeless Jesus* by first considering its title and identifying key indicators within this sculpture, such as a street bench, a human body lying down, and feet wounds.

An understanding of the representational meanings of visuals sets the stage for iconographers to survey any iconographic meanings implicit in the visuals under analysis. Iconographic meanings are the ideas and concepts attached to objects, places, and people within the visual (Müller, 2011). Iconographers consider how and what a visual 'denotes', 'signifies', 'refers to', or 'alludes to' (Hermeren, 1969). According to Hermeren (1969), visual symbols can "call attention to certain properties attributed to that which is symbolized" (p. 98). These iconographic symbols thus allow the artist to convey a more nuanced message than if the artist depicted the content of the visual literally.

When investigating the iconographic meanings of visuals, researchers thus look for both visual symbolism and allegories. Hermeren (1969) uses John Hosper's (1946) exploration of meaning and truth in the arts to differentiate between conventional and natural symbols. While conventional symbols are those that are connected to a meaning explicitly shared by a culture group, natural symbols are those where there is a causal connection between a visual element and

what is being symbolized. For example, a dove carrying an olive branch is a conventional symbol within Christianity of peace while a bird can be used as a natural symbol to conjure thoughts about flight. The meanings of natural symbols are thus more consistent across temporal and cultural contexts than that of conventional symbols. Hermeren (1969) also draws on Panofsky (1970) to differentiate between open and disguised symbolism. Open symbolism is evident when viewers are likely to interpret a visual in the same way. In contrast, disguised symbolism occurs when there is a possibility for two or more valid interpretations. Hermeren (1969) notes that visual allegories use symbolism to convey an abstract and covert teaching, story, or concept.

The last stage of iconography entails considering the iconological meanings of visuals. These meanings shed light on the ideologies, assumptions, and belief sets that shape a culture group. While the artist of a visual under analysis would likely be aware of the iconographic meanings attached to their work, they may overlook its iconological meanings (Müller, 2011). Hermeren (1969) stresses that iconological symbolism is about the capacity of art or visuals to 'reflect', 'express', 'symbolize', or 'embody' some aspect of a worldview. This iconography of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus* thus provides insights into both the dominant societal and religious understandings of homelessness and their ideological underpinnings.

The photos of *Homeless Jesus* offered a foundation for deciphering both iconographic and iconological meanings. Van Leeuwen (2001) draws a parallel between the 'lexis' or vocabulary of language to the "bits and pieces of visuals" (p. 2). An iconographer thus considers how these 'bits and pieces' make up a coherent meaning. Although each *Homeless Jesus* sculpture is the same, the physical spaces and framing of the sculpture, such as plaques that give details about its meaning or commission, likely influence how individuals engage with it. In

addition to paying attention to 'the visual lexis' comprising Timothy Schmalz's depiction of Jesus as homeless, I also paid attention to the visual cues, framing of the sculpture, and physical environment portrayed in the photos.

I further explored the iconographic and iconological meanings within Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus* by documenting the responses to and interpretations of *Homeless Jesus* as shared by the six leaders within faith-based organizations with a sculpture and recounted in the 85 online news articles. Interviews with faith-based leaders provided insight into the meaning derived from the sculpture within religious communities, while the news articles were key to considering dominant privileged interpretations within secular communities.

Stage two: A thematic narrative inquiry into Homeless Jesus in Hamilton, Ontario. To explore how *Homeless Jesus* is interpreted, responded to, used, and dialogued about within a confined geographic area, this study combined data gathered from seven interviews with members of faith-based organizations located near or involved in an event taking place at the *Homeless Jesus* sculpture in Hamilton, photos of the replica in Hamilton, and online news articles from Hamilton news outlets that reference it. The use of these three forms of qualitative data provided an avenue to examine the influence of this sculpture from distinct vantage points and contributed to a nuanced understanding of the stories told about it.

Stories about specific characters and plots fit within narratives. Narratives have a culturally determined structure that is often organized by turning points and tensions, or chronological order (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Freeman, 2015; Riessman, 1993). Narrative inquiry is a method for analysing stories about social phenomena with the purpose of understanding the effects of narratives on individuals and groups (Frank, 2010) or how people use narratives to make sense of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Riessman, 1993). Freeman (2015)

depicts the construction of narratives by individuals or groups as a "process of human meaning-making" because narratives provide individuals and groups with a sense of identity and a sense of belonging to a community, time, and/or place (p. 32). Frank (2010) conceptualizes narratives as resources that individuals can draw on and internalize, depending on their social identity and location, that can shape decisions and how one makes sense of their social worlds. This method assumes that storytellers and listeners use narratives to construct and communicate meanings about social events, experiences, and/or phenomena.

As meaning-making tools, Riessman (2008) highlights how narratives can accomplish a variety of social objectives, such as inspiring communities to recognize social oppression and to work towards positive social transformation. Frank (2010) similarly draws attention to how stories constructed via narratives can both encourage or dissuade ways of behaving, thinking, and speaking. Narrative inquiry thereby offers a means of determining what a particular story or set of stories do for or what effect they have on individuals and groups. Drawing on interviews with faith leaders in Hamilton, the research objective of this narrative inquiry was thereby to first listen to and identify stories about *Homeless Jesus* and then consider the effect of these stories on public dialogues and perspectives on homelessness. Collecting and re-telling stories about *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton presented an opportunity to examine the capacity of public religious art to build up Habermas's (1987) conception of the public sphere and/or shed light on dominant perspectives on homelessness.

Understanding narratives to be modes of meaning-making necessitates that researchers avoid fragmenting stories via traditional qualitative coding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than fragmenting stories into themes and constructs, Riessman (1993, p. 4) stresses that researchers should "preserve" the narrative and thereby how an individual or group has constructed

meanings. To preserve the narrative, Creswell and Poth (2018) describe how researchers can engage in "re-storying"; the researcher organizes information pertinent to the narrative with a chronological sequence and writing structure. The end-product of a narrative inquiry, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), will be a "story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their lived experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context" (p.73). This narrative inquiry thus culminates in stories about how individuals commonly use, make sense of, and engage with *Homeless Jesus* in the political, social, religious, and geographic contexts of Hamilton.

During the process of 're-storying' the interviewees' accounts of their experiences with *Homeless Jesus*, I identified common narratives by drawing on thematic analysis (Riessman, 2005, 2008). Braun and Clark (2006, 2012) offer a flexible and clear approach to conducting thematic analyses. They define a theme as "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and that represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data" (p. 82). The themes derived from the data in this research were thus related to the meanings, dialogues, uses, and responses to *Homeless Jesus.*

Braun and Clarke (2006) deem achieving familiarity as the first stage in a thematic analysis. During this stage, I re-listened to audio recordings of interviews, read through news articles and transcripts, and made free-hand notes about my initial thoughts about the data in relation to the research questions. Braun and Clarke's (2006) second stage entails generating initial codes or labels that denote features of the data relevant to the research questions. They use the metaphor of a brick building to illustrate the relationship between the individual codes and the completed analysis, where codes are the individual bricks and tiles that make up the floors, ceiling, and walls (themes) of the building (the completed analysis). After initially coding, Braun

and Clark (2006) direct the researcher to identify themes among the codes by reviewing and clustering similar codes together. During this stage, I considered how the various themes revealed the overlapping of coherent stories about the meanings, uses, and dialogues related to *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton.

After determining common themes within the interviews and news articles, I began the process of re-telling. A key characteristic of narrative inquiry is that it leads researchers to pay attention to how a story is told and/or the content of the story (Phoenix, Smith, & Sparkes, 2010). As this narrative analysis is a response to the question of *what* the presence and meanings of *Homeless Jesus* can reveal about the relationship between public religious art, dialogue within the public sphere, and perspectives on homelessness, when re-telling I focused primarily on the content of the narratives (what happened in the stories as a result of *Homeless Jesus*). A thematic analysis approach to narrative inquiry, according to Riessman (2005) is appropriate for narrative researchers concerned primarily with "the content of a text, 'what' is said more than 'how' it is said" (p.2). While I focus primarily on the 'what' of these narratives, I also reflect on why interviewees and journalists tell stories about this sculpture in the manner that they do. When re-telling, I take the role of storyteller. A storyteller, according to Griffin and Phoenix (2014) and Phoenix, Smith, and Sparks (2010), views eliciting and generating a story as analytical and theoretical work because the telling of stories requires the teller to interpret and theorize about experiences. After re-telling, I reflect on how Habermas's theory of communicative action can help explain these stories.

Stage three: A thematic analysis of interviews with faith leaders. In the final analysis stage, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis techniques, described in the previous section, again provided the tools necessary for systematically eliciting common themes within the 12

interviews from the first and second stage of this dissertation. However, I did not use a narrative approach to thematic analysis. In contrast to the second stage, interviewee responses to the relevant questions were not well suited to a narrative inquiry. Their responses to questions about the faith-informed purposes and uses of art within their organizations were descriptive, factual, and/or did not follow a storyline.

Likewise, the coding scheme differed from the previous stage of analysis as the goals within these two stages differed. While in the second stage, I explored what the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton indicate about how this sculpture has been interpreted, responded to, used, and dialogued about, this thematic analysis focused on eliciting insights into the religiosity of art and its relationship to public dialogues. The non-narrative codes within this third stage related to the meanings, histories, and capacities of art in faith-based organizations. This third stage builds off the second stage narrative inquiry by illuminating how the religiosity of public religious art can shape the meanings, dialogues, uses, and responses that viewers create from it.

Ethics

The research recounted here adhered to the three core principles, Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice, as put forward by the Canadian government in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. Before beginning an interview, I verbally reminded participants that they could stop the interviews at any time without repercussions, skip questions, and that with their consent I would audio record the interviews. Using a consent form that spelled out the risks and rewards of participating, the participants were able to make an informed decision about whether to partake in the interviews. I collected, stored, and reported on data in a manner that prevented or reduced the ethical risk of

confidentiality breaches and self-exposure. However, I was unable to promise anonymity due to the small size of my target population. When quoting participants, I use pseudonyms. McMaster University's Research Ethics Board granted this dissertation ethics clearance on December 6, 2018. This clearance was necessary to conduct interviews with leaders in faith-based organizations with a *Homeless Jesus* sculpture and the interviews occurring in Hamilton.

The analyses of online news articles and photos are unobtrusive and exempt from ethics review as all data was found within the public domain (Government of Canada, 2020). When taking photos, I intentionally avoided including the faces of people**.** While ethics clearance was unnecessary due to the unobtrusive and public nature of data collection, I still needed to be mindful of possible ethical implications. Hines (2011) encourages researchers using unobtrusive methods to carefully evaluate "the extent to which particular research techniques make unwarranted intrusions or may have undesirable effects on those studied" (p. 3). When reporting the findings, I considered how these findings would impact the work of faith-based organizations with a *Homeless Jesus* sculpture, those experiencing poverty, and Timothy Schmalz as the artist.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Attention to the eight tenets of trustworthy qualitative research put forward by Tracy (2010) shaped both methodological practices and how this research is reported. Tracy (2010) names these tenets: a worthy research topic, resonance, a significant contribution to the literature, rich rigor, credibility, ethical practices, meaningful coherence, and sincerity. The topic of this research, namely the relationship between public religious art, public dialogues, and public perception of homelessness, can be deemed worthy as it is relevant to both faith-based organisations seeking to intervene respectfully in public issues and efforts to mitigate the negative social stigmas associated with homelessness. To ensure that the research is resonant, I

highlight in the conclusion (Chapter 8) how the findings are transferable and contribute to literature on art-based public engagement. Cope (2014) defines transferability as the capacity for the research findings to be meaningful for those who were not directly involved in the specific phenomenon undergoing analysis.

Yin (2018) stresses that case studies should be 'rigorous' in order to fully capture the essence of the system or social unit under analysis. Tracy (2010) pinpoints rich rigor as a characteristic of good qualitative research that is evident when a study exemplifies "sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex theoretical constructs, data and time in the field, samples, contexts, and data collection and analysis processes" (p. 840). To increase rigor, Tracy (2010) stresses that researchers should document their processes and give sufficient evidence or extracts from the data set to support the dominant themes and concepts. As a means of bolstering the rigor and the credibility of this case study, this dissertation draws on a variety of data collection and analysis methods to provide an opportunity to cross-check the findings, to observe and examine responses and interpretations of *Homeless Jesus* within different modes of communication, and to generate sufficient evidence to support research claims.

I used the two concepts of methodological congruency and sincerity to reflexively consider and document my theoretical and methodological assumptions. Research characterized by methodological congruency is comprised of research questions and objectives, methods, and a theoretical framework that logically fit together (Tracy, 2010). Sincerity is characterized by both reflexivity and transparency when reporting on the methods and their challenges. Reflexivity entails critically exploring the role of personal values and biases in shaping data interpretations. Findlay (2002) depicts reflexivity as "evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself" (p. 532). Due to the critical role that reflexive

practices play in ensuring the integrity of qualitative research, Finlay (2002) suggests that these practices be incorporated into the research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting stages.

Both Finlay (2002) and Riessman (2015) highlight how the researcher's subjectivity, personal values, insights, and experiences, when made transparent, can enhance one's understanding of the data. Riessman (2015) uses the metaphor of a "hall of mirrors" to illustrate how reflexive practices can illuminate "a social phenomenon from many angles" (p. 233). Reflexivity is thus key to generating trustworthy research because it offers an opportunity to evaluate the findings in light of the researcher's role in the research process. The main modes of reflexivity here include keeping a methodological journal throughout all stages of the research process, utilizing the logbook and memo features of MAXQDA, and explicitly describing my position within the research for readers of this dissertation.

Position of the Researcher

Developing the research questions: This case study originates from my appreciation of *Homeless Jesus* and an interest in the media dialogue that it sparked. As an individual who is familiar with Christianity, I am often perplexed at how religious beliefs can be brought into public dialogues about public issues. While religious individuals and groups often engage in public dialogue via peaceful protests, advocacy campaigns, and acts of service or charity, their engagement can also take the form of colonialism, belligerence, and/or the systematic vilification of groups of people. Belligerent forms of religious public engagement and social exclusion, although at times legally permissible due to universal freedoms, seem at odds with the Christian virtues of temperance, charity, patience, kindness, and humility.

As noted by many theologians, social scientists, and philosophers, powerful groups throughout history have (mis)used theology to grant themselves the divine authority to

perpetuate social oppression (See Whitehead, Perry, & Joseph, 2018; Marx, 1844). Colonial or belligerent forms of religious engagement in social issues may be rooted in the authority that religious individuals and groups glean from zealous beliefs about God or biblical interpretations. These beliefs, regardless of whether they protect vulnerable forms of human life (Habermas, 2006), permit religious individuals to disregard the perspectives of those who might disagree.

Initially, *Homeless Jesus* struck me as an example of an avenue to both peaceful religious engagement in public dialogues and to respectfully exercising one's freedom of religion and speech. In contrast to colonial and belligerent forms of religious engagement, this sculpture relays a Christian argument about the nature of and 'right' responses to homelessness without shaming, vilifying, or demanding non-religious groups to adopt religious precepts and doctrines. This interest and appreciation of *Homeless Jesus* led me to question how religious groups can use public art to respectfully elicit meanings, communicate ideas, and initiate public dialogues about controversial and/or political issues.

I am also a resident/member of an urban neighborhood where homelessness is familiar and a phenomenon that I witness daily. My interest in this area of research thus stems from a personal investment in how poverty and homelessness are perceived at both an individual and cultural level of analysis and the implications of such perceptions. This investment led me to question whether faith-based organizations and secular media are using this depiction of Jesus as homeless to counteract negative perceptions of those experiencing poverty. While being homeless is a highly stigmatized identity, in Western nations influenced by Christianity, Jesus can be both a cultural and a religious symbol associated with goodness.

Data collection and analysis. In addition to sparking my interest in this area of research, my familiarity with Christianity and appreciation of public art influenced data collection. My

familiarity with the cultures and beliefs of Christian faith-based organizations was both a limitation and a strength that shaped this project. During the data collection phases, my knowledge of Christian beliefs and practices supported me in establishing rapport with participants. I felt at ease within the context of a church or Christian organization. Due to the established rapport, participants may have been more willing to candidly share their beliefs, ideas, and personal experiences. My Christian background also led me to naturally take a learner and listener position as the interviewer. Participants in this project are those who if I came across in daily life I would see as teachers, mentors, or people of authority. Having a Christian faith furthermore afforded me unique research opportunities. For example, in May 2019, I participated in the annual *Homeless Jesus* prayer vigil taking place at this sculpture in Hamilton. During the analysis stages, this experience offered another vantage point and a context in which to explore the meanings, stories, and responses to the participants' perspectives on homelessness, poverty, and Jesus.

My familiarity with the culture and beliefs of Christian faith-based organizations also proved to be a limitation. When re-reading through transcripts well into my analysis, I was struck by missed opportunities to probe and ask clarifying questions during the interviews. In hindsight, I see my familiarity with Christian cultures and beliefs giving me a false sense of confidence when it came to 'understanding' my participants' viewpoints. Likewise, my 'understanding' of Christian cultures and appreciation for public art together may have also prevented me from asking additional questions of the data (interview transcripts, online news articles, and photos) that could have led to more nuanced analytical insights into how faith-based organizations and secular media use and interpret *Homeless Jesus*. Throughout this project, I maintained a sensitivity to how my partiality for the sculpture might bias interpretations. My academic

supervisor, committee members, and external evaluator, who took the time to carefully review this work and discuss initial findings, acted as a safeguard against undue bias (See Acknowledgement).

In this dissertation, I inevitably present responses to the research questions that are shaped by Western culture, whiteness, the Christian faith, and privilege. All 14 interview participants are white and from Western countries. As leaders in their faith-based organizations, they are likewise people with significant social power and who naturally view *Homeless Jesus* from a spiritual and/or religious standpoint. Both the participants and I view, engage, and interpret *Homeless Jesus* from a position of privilege and are influenced by religious faith. While the online news articles originate from large secular news sources, the news articles are written by individual journalists with unique identities, lived experiences, and personal histories, which determines what and how they write about *Homeless Jesus*. Many of the journalists represented in this dissertation quote religious leaders or Timothy Schmalz, giving further voice to a religious take on this sculpture. I, a white, cisgender, able-bodied woman from a Western country with a Christian faith, also conducted and analyzed the interviews and news articles. Furthermore, my theoretical framework is comprised of theories developed by Western scholars. For example, critics of Habermas's theory of communicative action highlight its eurocentrism (see Gunaratne, 2006). I saw working with a homogenous set of data as a strength because I was able to provide a nuanced account of a narrow perspective on this sculpture. Specifically, I was able to home in on the perspective of those who are likely to influence how this sculpture is used and interpreted.

A significant limitation to be further discussed in Chapter 8, however, is that this research is lacking the perspectives of those from Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour groups, non-

English speakers, and people who have experienced homelessness or poverty. Throughout this project, I often found myself wishing that I had a foil or a fellow researcher with a different social and religious position to help identify blind spots. While I was able to focus on leveraging my position and the data to provide a more nuanced and thorough analysis of a bounded perspective on *Homeless Jesus*, having diverse perspectives on this sculpture would have equipped me to develop a richer understanding of how it is used and interpreted. Furthermore, I situated this dissertation within the critical paradigm, which is characterized by a commitment to empowering marginalized members of society. With only a privileged perspective on *Homeless Jesus*, I was not able to give voice in this dissertation to those who are marginalized.

Chapter 5

In this chapter, I outline the culturally-shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus* by first pinpointing the various symbols used in this sculpture. I then discuss the implications of combining these symbols into one piece of public art. This chapter concludes with an exploration of how the iconographic meanings of *Homeless Jesus* are aligned and misaligned with dominant stigmas and societal understandings of homelessness. I draw on Marcuse's theory of art and social transformation to argue that *Homeless Jesus* is strategically used by both Christian faith-based organizations and secular media to call for a shift in the way dominant publics understand homelessness.

An Iconography of *Homeless Jesus*

Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus* presents an image of a body lying on a street bench wrapped in a blanket. The blanket covers the face of the body. Viewers familiar with the iconography of Christianity can recognize the body as Jesus by the feet' wounds. The six sculptures that I photographed were located in front of a Christian non-profit organization, a place of worship (cathedral or church), or a Christian educational institution, such as a seminary. The key symbols presented in this image are thus a street bench, a body wrapped in a blanket, the unidentifiable face, the feet wounds of Jesus, and the backdrop of a religious institution.

When including excerpts from news articles, I reference the author, news outlet, and year of publication. When quoting or referring to the six interviewees in this stage, I use pseudonyms (see Appendix A). The six interviewees include a priest in a Roman Catholic parish in downtown Hamilton (Fr. T), a priest from a Roman Catholic cathedral in a Canadian city (Fr. P), a reverent at an Anglican Cathedral in a Canadian city (Rev. S), a chaplain at a Catholic college in Canada (Rev. W), a provost at a Catholic college in Australia (B. M), and an administrator at a non-profit organization for people who are homeless in the United States (A. T). This organization affiliated

with and attached to a Roman Catholic parish provides a range of services including a day-time warming centre, hot meals, access to hot showers, laundry services, and access to medical and legal services.

Street bench. Street benches are resting and social places that are typically paid for and installed by a local governing body. By providing urban infrastructure and by the nature of governing a geographic area, a local government or council can be understood as representing the interests of the 'public' or the people who occupy a space. According to Elet's (2002) history of street benches in 15th-century Florence, Italy, the government of the time originally installed street benches as a tool to "appear more open" and benevolent (p. 448). A street bench signals to 'the public' (residents of a local geographic area) that a space is public, or for the use of everyone.

Similar to how the government of 15th century Florence, Italy installed street benches to make a space and group appear 'more open', Fr. T emphasized that they selected *Homeless Jesus* for their parish to appear 'more open' to community members within their parish's neighbourhood. This parish is in a neighbourhood with high rates of homelessness, drug addiction, and violence. Fr. T recounted a sharp social divide between parishioners and the community members within the parish's neighbourhood; parishioners felt afraid and uncomfortable within the parish's neighbourhood and the parish's neighbours felt unwelcome and stigmatized by the parishioners. To bridge this social division, Fr. T and colleagues opted to take down a fence that they felt symbolically separated the community from the parish, to establish trusting relationships with the parish's neighbours, to provide meals and additional necessary social services to those experiencing poverty, and to create "a garden-like" sitting area

around the parish where both parishioners and community members feel welcome. This story (also recounted in Chapter 6) is captured when Fr. T noted that,

> The idea about *Homeless Jesus* and the statues and the sitting areas that we created outside of the church, basically, we did that because we wanted to create a space of beauty. Because people are, it doesn't matter who you are, people are attracted to the visual. My experience when I first came here was that many people were angry with the church. Some people were ashamed because of their situation. They felt they couldn't be a part of the church because of the shame that they felt or the marginalization that they felt. There was anger. Like there was a whole range of emotions. And I thought, since you can't really bring them into the church, many of them anyway, the church needed to come out to them (Fr. T.).

Creating 'a space of beauty' via art and landscaping was one component of this parish's strategy to establish better relationships with those experiencing homelessness in their neighbourhood. In the last line of this excerpt, Fr. T also indicates that the church is both a building that people who are homeless can come into and an abstract entity. While many may be wary of entering a church building due to previous experiences with and understandings of Christianity, Christians as a group, or specific parishioners, Fr. T anticipated that those in their broader community experiencing poverty or homelessness may be more open to the community, teachings, traditions, and values that abstractly comprise the 'church'. *Homeless Jesus* is here an avenue to bringing 'the church' to a community in a manner that they may be more comfortable with and receptive to than the traditional church practices. This parish thus intended *Homeless Jesus* to signal to its community that the parish and its resources belong to everyone.

In addition to signalling that a place belongs to the public, where everyone is welcome to sit, a street bench can also signal a resting place within an area shaped by activity. Urban planners recognize street benches as important elements of urban design that create opportunities

for rest and socialization (Handy, Boarnet, Eqing, & Killingsworth, 2002). Within the field of preventative medicine, street benches are tools that support physical activity (Handy, et al., 2002). Zhai and Baran's (2017) research on urban features that support the use of walking among seniors and Lee and Moudon's (2008) research on the connections between neighbourhood design and physical activity reinforce the notion that the placement of street benches supports physical activity by providing pedestrians with an opportunity to rest and socialize. For viewers, *Homeless Jesus* can thus conjure thoughts about public resting places where everyone is welcome.

Five of the six interviewees described how they often saw members of the public making use of the *Homeless Jesus* bench. When asked about community responses to *Homeless Jesus*, the five interviewees made observations, such as "frequently, there will be someone sitting on the bench with their arm around him, talking to him" (A. T) and "I've seen people sit at the feet of Jesus… just sit there, flowers have been left on it, someone put a blanket on it. My favorite little story is, one of the kids locked their bike to it." (Rev. S.). Rev. W commented,

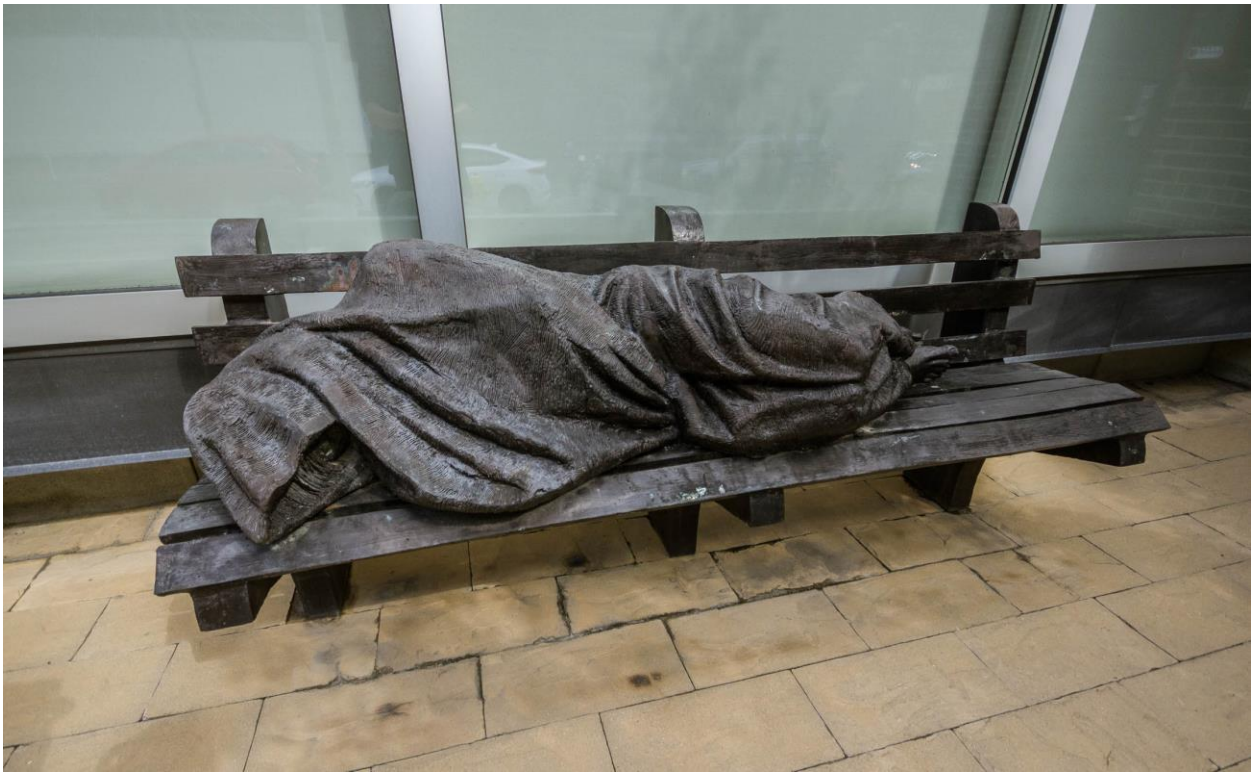
> I have seen people sitting on the statue. I'm not quite sure what they're doing or what they're thinking about, or if it's just simply a place to rest. I've also seen people stop and have conversations around the statute.

In addition to interviewees, the news articles also indicated that the street bench within *Homeless Jesus* is used by viewers to rest. For example, Crosby (2015) from the CBC quotes Timothy Schmalz when writing, "The sculpture is cast in heavy bronze with a small space at the feet of the reclining figure where a person can sit "uncomfortably," he said, adding the one in North Carolina "is already shiny where people sit." *Homeless Jesus* is intended to be used as a seat. Likewise, the above quotes showcase how the sculpture is welcoming, inviting viewers to

engage. The various ways in which local community members interact with the sculpture align with the notion that the street bench is a symbol of rest and of a public place.

Figure 2

Photo of Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz at Regis College at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.



Note. Photo was taken by the author. This photo shows the body wrapped in a blanket on a street bench, the shrouded face, and the space where viewers can sit.

A body wrapped in a blanket. The image of a body wrapped in a blanket signals to viewers that this image is about vulnerability. Blankets are associated with warmth and comfort. When someone is wrapped in a blanket, they are inactive as the blanket restricts their movement. When an individual sees an image of a person wrapped in a blanket, such as a swaddled baby, a person resting on a bed or couch, or a dead body wrapped in a morgue, they are likely to see these bodies as vulnerable, weak, tired, or disempowered. This notion aligns with how *Homeless*

Jesus has colloquially been referred to as "sleeping Jesus" (CTV, 2018). Six news articles recount how Timothy Schmalz was inspired to create *Homeless Jesus* after seeing a person sleeping, likely homeless, outdoors in Toronto. A body located outdoors and on a street bench wrapped in a blanket is thus a body that is likely cold, in need of warmth and comfort.

Participants and the news articles clearly depicted how the vulnerability of Jesus and those who are homeless is a central meaning implicit to the sculpture. Based on the title of the sculpture and visual cues, interviewees and media never questioned whether the body wrapped in a blanket is an image of homelessness and vulnerability. All six interviewees consistently equated this sculpture with a message about the human dignity of those who are homeless. Rev. S. viewed it as "giving voice to the homeless." A.T who is employed at a non-profit that provides essential services to those who are homeless similarly perceived it as "really speaking to the reality that we see every day in our work." When considering if *Homeless Jesus* would be relevant to those who are non-religious, A.T hypothesized that the sculpture would be relevant because it shows a person who is in need, which often elicits concern regardless of religious affiliation:

> I think it has a meaning, which is beyond the Christian narrative because it is a picture of a human being wrapped in a blanket on a park bench. It's clearly somebody, especially when it's cold outside, when it's snowing. We've had the emergency services called on cold nights, when it's frost-covered, and things like that. I think that it awakens compassion or horror in people.

This quote captures a universal tendency to equate a huddled body outside in the cold wrapped in a blanket to a vulnerable body, in need of care. According to A. T and other participants, witnessing such a scene can evoke a visceral reaction, such as compassion or horror, and tangible responses to such emotions, such as seeking emergency assistance.

The news articles similarly drew connections between the sculpture, vulnerability, and homelessness. Ten of the news articles recount like A. T. how people have called emergency departments when witnessing the sculpture because they have mistaken it for a real person in need. The sculpture's lifelikeness leads some viewers to act when they see its visual depiction of neediness. The following quote likewise exemplifies the connection between the body in *Homeless Jesus* and homelessness:

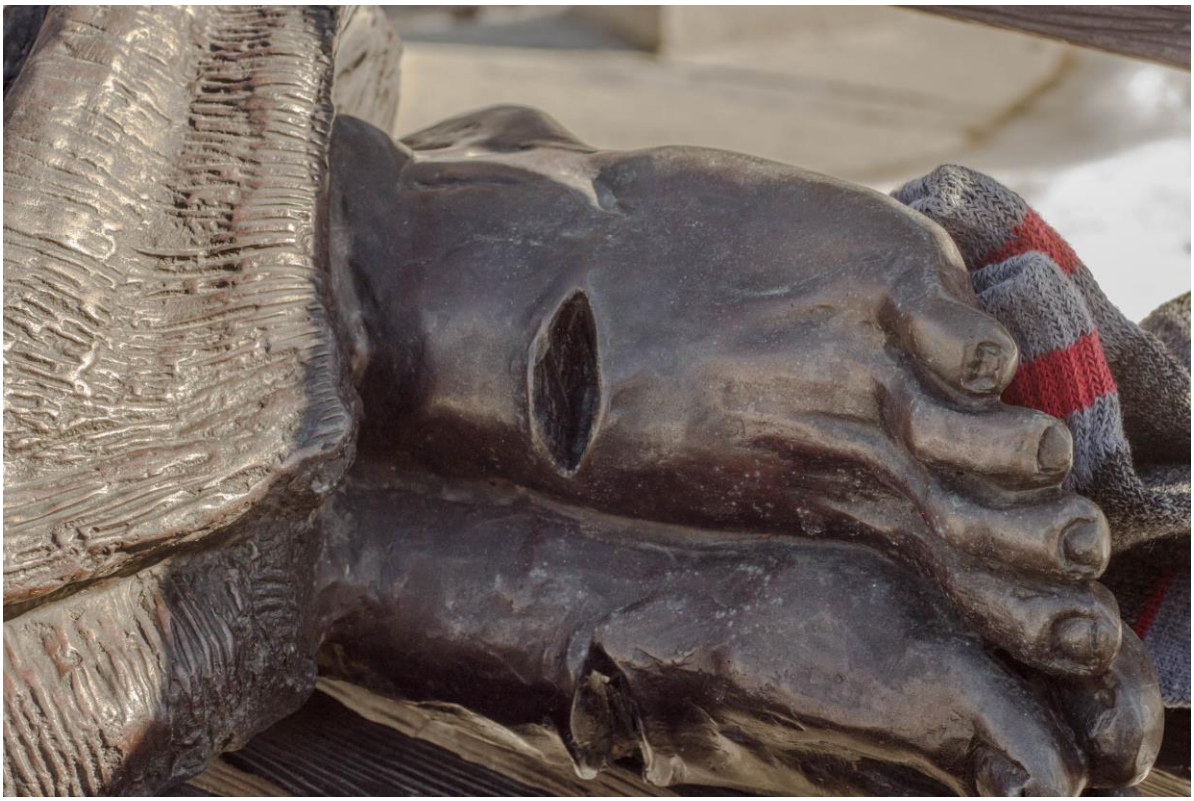
> The statue, they say, is a step in the right direction. "It makes us feel safer sleeping at night," says Ricky Damrell, 55, who wears a thick, scraggly beard and is known in the homeless community as "Spanky." … Seeing Jesus with his punctured feet and huddled figure is, for them, a sign of solidarity (Chen & Dorantes, Indianapolis Star, 2015).

By alleging that a person who is homeless feels solidarity with *Homeless Jesus*, this Indianapolis Star quote further cements the notion that the body in this sculpture is a symbol of vulnerability in public spaces.

The feet wounds of Jesus. Viewers who are familiar with the figure of Jesus recognize the body wrapped in a blanket as Jesus by the wounds on the sculpture's feet. When describing this sculpture, twenty-nine articles emphasize how the feet wounds reveal the body to be Jesus. For example, Wetselaar from the Toronto Star (2014) writes "the wounded feet that protrude from under the metallic covering are the sole sign the sculpture is meant to depict a suffering Jesus." These wounds are palpable identity markers. Jesus is a religious and historical figure known for his peaceful message about having compassion for those who are marginalized and in need (Drury, 2008; Ross, 1997). Jesus was eventually martyred through crucifixion, a form of capital punishment where the convicted individual is hung with nails on a wooden beam (Drury, 2008; John 19, NIV). By means of his crucifixion, Jesus received five wounds on his hands, feet, and side.

Figure 3

Photo of 'feet wounds' in Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Hamilton, Ontario.



Note. This photo was taken by the author. It shows a close-up of the feet wounds, where a previous viewer has left a pair of socks by the sculpture's feet.

The story of Jesus' crucifixion is internationally renowned. When considering how to mitigate religious and political conflicts occurring between Christians, Muslims, and Jews, Scheffler (2015) and Neely (2018) both point out that these three major religious groups all share an appreciation of the teachings and ministry of Jesus. While Christians uphold Jesus as the son of God, Muslims and Jews revere Jesus as a wise prophet. According to Hackett and McClendon (2017), Christians, Muslims, and Jews together make up 55.5% of the world's population. The feet wounds in *Homeless Jesus* are thereby laden with cultural, religious, and spiritual meanings.

By leading many viewers to recognize the sculpture as a representation of Jesus, the feet wounds signal that this sculpture is about Jesus's character, teachings, and/or martyrdom. All six participants presented the idea that *Homeless Jesus* inspired a sense of awe and reverence because of how it depicts Jesus and his teachings. When reflecting on how their community has responded to the sculpture, A. T noted "it definitely seems to inspire a moment of reverent awe in people passing." B. M noted how some viewers were reluctant to sit on the bench because of their reverence for Jesus; "some people think, 'well I can't sit on the bench. I'm not worthy to sit on the bench. Is it sacrilegious to sit on the bench?" As someone believed to be the son of God and as someone who dedicated his life to teaching, serving, and healing marginalized members of society, Jesus is often associated with goodness or being perfectly virtuous and compassionate.

The news articles and interviewees draw a clear connection between the feet wounds presented in the sculpture and the characteristics and teachings of Jesus. This is evident in the following excerpt where the Montreal Gazette quotes the reverend at a church where *Homeless Jesus* was recently installed, on their thoughts about the meanings and intent of this sculpture. This reverend emphasizes that the sculpture is meant to epitomize Jesus's life as a teacher who chose to spend time among marginalized and stigmatized social groups.

> While the statue was erected outside of St. James United Church, Reverend Arlen John Bonnar says it's meant to cut across religious divisions and to the heart of the word of Christ. "We always have this image of the meek and mild Jesus, but he was a radical," Bonnar said. "He preached among the sinners, the outcasts, the lepers, and the prostitutes. He came up against the powers of his day, the political power of Rome, and the religious power of the Temple. "He aligned himself with the vulnerable. That's what the mission of the church is, to be there for those who are

> suffering. Regardless of who they are, where they come from, or what their faith is." (Curtis, Montreal Gazette, 2019).

This quote from the Montreal Gazette captures how *Homeless Jesus* carries meanings about Jesus's life and teachings that are meant to challenge Christian viewers to be compassionate towards those who are homeless. Five of the news articles also highlight how *Homeless Jesus* is meant to be a "visual translation of Matthew 25" (The London Free Press, 2019). In this biblical passage (Matthew 25: 35-40, NIV), Jesus claims that when someone cares for those in poverty, this person is caring for him. Three of these five articles quote Timothy Schmalz who claims Matthew 25 as his inspiration for the sculpture, in combination with a man lying on the street in Toronto.

> If you look at the words in the New Testament, and you would ask Jesus, 'How would you like to be represented?' Well he said it in Matthew 25, He basically suggests that he wants is to be totally interchangeable with the least in our community," Schmalz, who is Catholic, said. "His words are fascinating. He doesn't say it's a good thing to help the poor. He says, 'When you help the poor, you are helping me.' That relationship is a lot stronger than a goodwill gesture." (Gorny, The Blade Toledo, 2019).

This quote by Timothy Schmalz in the Blade Toledo accentuates the connection between the sculpture and Jesus's teaching about poverty as recorded in Matthew 25.

By combining the images of a body wrapped in a blanket, sleeping in a public space, and Jesus, the sculpture presents the message that Jesus identifies with those who are marginalized. When reflecting on how the sculpture combines the symbols of homelessness and Jesus, Rev. S. asserted that the sculpture draws attention to God's compassion for this group.

> The fact that the wounds are shown on the feet, shows this was actually the resurrected Christ, you know, who's identifying this. That's a very powerful image. It's quite clear that it's extra-

> biblical in a sense. We don't have political stories of Jesus ministering to the poor after his resurrection. This is the living God identifying with the poor in our time.

The sculpture's depiction of Jesus in a contemporary context (sleeping on a 21st-century street bench) will add weight or "power" to its message about human vulnerability in public spaces for some viewers. By connecting the images of vulnerability in public spaces to Jesus, the feet wounds elicit meanings about Jesus's compassion and teachings on poverty. Those who are familiar with the story of Jesus and who identify as Christian will read this sculpture as a call to care for those who are homeless in the same manner that they would want to care for a homeless Jesus.

In addition to drawing attention to the compassionate teachings of Jesus, the feet wounds also remind viewers of benevolent sacrifice. Christians believe that Jesus (a perfect human being) died to atone for the sins of humankind, who are imperfect or undignified (Drury, 2008). When considering if the sculpture will remain relevant to future generations, Rev. S. hypothesized that the message will be relevant because this message is about Christ's willingness to suffer for the benefit of others; "But even if the name of the sculpture falls away in time, there's just a sense in which, this is a God who humbles himself to be in places where there is human suffering." The connection between the feet wounds and sacrifice as indicated by B. M in this quote, however, is less evident in the news articles in comparison to the connection these articles draw between the feet wounds and Jesus's compassionate teachings or his willingness to identify with those who are marginalized. The news articles primarily use or perceive the feet wounds as a symbol of goodness and a call to be more compassionate towards those who are homeless.

The culturally shared meanings described by the interviewees and news articles regarding Jesus's feet wounds align well with theologians' beliefs about them. For example, the connection

between Jesus's wounds and sacrifice is evident in Muessig's (2013) historical account of 'the stigmata" in the Roman Catholic Church. The stigmata are a phenomenon that occurs when individuals claim to have received the wounds of Jesus, either metaphorically or physically, after they have sacrificed or suffered to both advance and identify themselves with the ministry of Jesus (Muessig, 2013). This term is derived from a passage in the Bible, Galatians 6:17, where a faith leader shares about his suffering and sacrifice, stating "I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ" (NIV). For viewers who partake in Christianity, the feet wounds in *Homeless Jesus* guide them in reflecting on sacrifice and suffering for the benefit of others.

While the feet wounds add another layer of meaning to *Homeless Jesus* for some viewers, others will likely miss this additional layer. Likewise, viewers will likely internalize the sculpture's message that Jesus identifies with those who are homeless and that all people have dignity differently. The news articles and interviewees considered how viewers filter *Homeless Jesus*' symbols through their life experiences and experiences with Christianity. When asked about the impact of *Homeless Jesus* on their organization and community, B. M articulated,

> I think there's a timelessness in the impact, but it's not the same. Just like it would be different from you and me and we'll go out there and we will see different things, or we will feel different things because we're in a different place and space in our lives.

B. M is articulating here that on a micro-level, personal experiences and beliefs will shape how individuals are impacted by *Homeless Jesus,* in the same way that distinct generations may differ in how they encounter sculpture.

In general, however, the interviewees and news articles assumed that an image of Jesus identifying with those who are marginalized can be both a comfort for those who are experiencing homelessness and a challenge for their more privileged counterparts. When reflecting on the value of having a *Homeless Jesus* in front of their organization, A. T drew

attention to how the sculpture can benefit those who are marginalized by improving their sense of self-worth:

> It helps our guests to recognize their own dignity, to remember their own dignity. I think after you live on the streets for a long time, its hard sometimes to overcome the trauma, and the shame, and the invisibility of life on the streets. I know that our guests get meaning from it. That brings a lot to our work.

A.T. is proposing that the sculpture lends respect to those who are homeless by equating their situation with that of Jesus. Fr. T captured the idea that *Homeless Jesus* is both a challenge and comfort when explaining how their sculpture and the five explanatory plaques located around it were initially intended to inspire compassion among parishioners (see Figure 4). However, Fr. T recounted how the sculpture also began to aid those impacted by homelessness in overcoming their shame and in recognizing their marginalization as injustice.

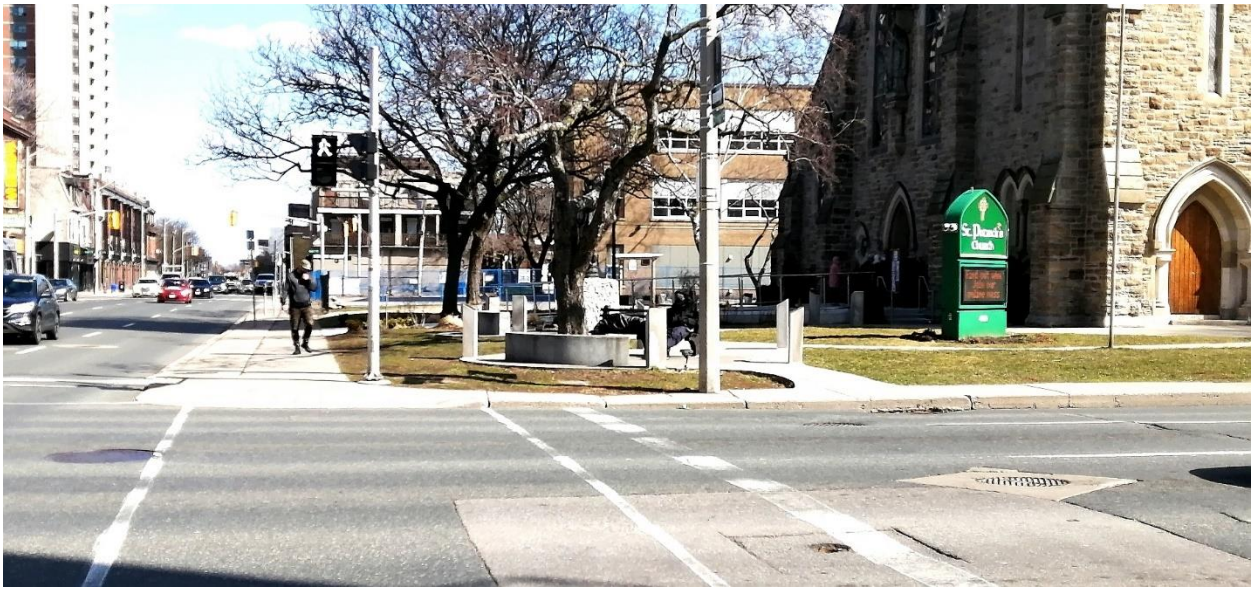
> So those five sayings were meant to remind those who tend to want to judge. To kind of change that culture. But then the other thing that happened by accident is that the homeless themselves would spend time thinking about what they were reading. And they began to put two and two together. That there is an injustice here; the haves and have nots are so far apart. It's shameful. They began to remind us again, we're not doing them a favor.

This quote suggests faith-based organizations anticipate that *Homeless Jesus* will have a distinct impact on those who are homeless in comparison to the non-homeless. Likewise, it aligns with B. M's assertion that the impact of *Homeless Jesus's* meanings will be unique to each viewer. By highlighting how *Homeless Jesus* was intended to speak to parishioners yet also had a surprising impact on those who are homeless illustrates this sculpture's capacity to be interpreted in unexpected ways. The culturally-shared meanings are experienced and internalized based on the viewers' experiences, situations, and identities. Drawing on the interviewees' reflections on and

the media accounts of the symbol of Jesus in this sculpture, whether its meaning is comforting, empowering, challenging, or inspiring will depend on the viewer.

Figure 4

Photo of Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church from a distance to show the five explanatory plaques and landscaping.



Note. This photo was taken by the author from a street corner adjacent to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church. The photo shows *Homeless Jesus* with a person sitting at the 'feet of Jesus'. Surrounding the sculpture are five explanatory plaques with biblical and theological content (the five sayings of *Homeless Jesus*), which are intended to help contextualize the sculpture. The five sayings are "All of you are impoverished", "Like the impoverished and persecuted, I suffered", "I have nowhere to lay my head", "Live what you believe", and "I loved the world, did you?"

Iconological Meanings

The shrouded face of a homeless Jesus. The six interviewees and news articles also drew meaning from the shrouded face depicted in *Homeless Jesus*. This facet of the sculpture is only meaningful in combination with the symbols of Jesus (feet wounds), vulnerability and

homelessness (a body wrapped in a blanket), and publicness (a street bench). In combination with these symbols, the unidentifiable face leads viewers to consider how a person who is homeless is dignified (like Jesus) regardless of their housing status and cultural, socioeconomic, gender, sexuality, religious, ethnic, or racial identity. This message was highlighted by each of the six interviewees. For example, A. T highlighted how *Homeless Jesus* was valuable for their volunteers because it aided volunteers in recognizing the dignity of those who use their services (a highly stigmatized group).

> We have an amazing group of people who come down and they are wonderful people. But there is often a sense of "here I am, I'm doing good, I'm dropping in from the suburbs and then I'm going to leave and I am going to feel great about myself because I am helping these poor people who are somehow less than I am". And I don't mean to criticize because I have had that same feeling myself. I come from a place of having to grapple with that issue. The *Homeless Jesus* is an amazing visual representation of what we are trying to get at. Which is that the people who are living at the very margins of society are just as sacred as everybody else.

As similarly brought forward by Fr. T in the previous section, this quote captures how faith-based organizations use *Homeless Jesus* to teach or reprimand viewers "who tend to want to judge." Its message contrasts with the logic of social hierarchies in Western nations, where the wealthier and privileged see themselves as more dignified than those who have less wealth or social esteem. The above excerpt showcases how viewers interpret *Homeless Jesus* as a call to recognize the dignity of people who are homeless, despite social norms and stigmas that marginalize this group.

The news articles similarly connected the shrouded face to the notion that it is unfair to stigmatize those who are homeless; "This sculpture exemplifies the fact that anybody, at any given time, given the right or wrong circumstances, can experience homelessness" (Chen &

Dorantes, Indianapolis Star, 2015). Two news articles highlight a similar sentiment when quoting Timothy Schmalz discussing the ambiguity of Jesus's identity; "I wanted to ensure that his face remained anonymous to highlight that this figure (although Jesus) could, in fact, be any one of us, at any given time" (BBC, 2017) and "My sculpture is suggesting that not only are you worth something, but if God came down, he would look more like you than a politician or a rich businessman. That's Christianity. All human life is sacred" (Rubinoff, Waterloo Regional Record, 2019). These quotes from Timothy Schmalz in the news articles reveal how the shrouded face is intended to be a sign that guides viewers toward seeing themselves as connected or like people who are homeless rather than superior to them.

In addition to the culturally shared meaning that everyone has dignity regardless of circumstance or identity, *Homeless Jesus* presents the logic that people who are dignified, by the nature of being associated with Jesus, should not be vulnerably sleeping in public spaces. When discussing responses to *Homeless Jesus*, the six interviewees all appreciated this sculpture for its capacity to draw attention to how homelessness is morally wrong. Rev. S. reasoned that an image of Jesus identifying with vulnerable and marginalized individuals should lead those who want to honour God to recognize and show compassion towards those impacted by homelessness:

> [The sculpture] has a bit of a hook to it; Like, "I am your God and I'm choosing to be in this place that is just not very attractive"… Reminding you that you will find your true vocation in life when you accept people who are in financial, physical, emotional, spiritual pain. They are not to be shunned, not to be discarded or ignored, but somehow engaged. Somehow, we have to enter into their experience (Rev. S).

For Rev. S, *Homeless Jesus* reminds Christian viewers to follow the teachings of Jesus when it comes to engaging with those who are vulnerable. Rev. W, working in the context of a

university, hoped *Homeless Jesus* would inspire students to care for those who are homeless, as evidenced in the following quote.

> It's easy to talk about the poor in the abstract, right. It's easy to say we're committed to social justice and peace. But I think unless we're willing to take care of the person in front of us and then to figure out ways of alleviating those barriers for the short term and also for the long term, then I believe that all of our studies are really for naught.

Rev. W likewise hoped that *Homeless Jesus* would inspire students to question the dominant cultural tendency to stigmatize those who are homeless: "When somebody is disclosing that they're frightened or rattled by the image, it's a wonderful opportunity to begin to talk, 'do you find yourself rattled or unsettled by the homeless people that you encounter in the city?'" The combination of symbols within *Homeless Jesus* may compel viewers to reflexively consider their perceptions of and actions toward those who are homeless or marginalized.

The news articles likewise appreciate this sculpture for its capacity to symbolize the wrongness of homelessness. A news article documented an individual asserting that they hoped this sculpture would "make visible and permanent what is often seen as invisible and transient" (Chen & Dorantes, Indianapolis Star, 2015). Another news article similarly drew attention to how *Homeless Jesus* can call attention to the issue of homelessness:

> The Rev. Lisa Tucker-Gray said she's been happy to see passers-by taking notice of it. "I think the irony is that people who are marginalized by their circumstances are ignored and therefore invisible," she said. "So this statue is a shocking invitation to stop and maybe rethink who we actually see and acknowledge. And then ask: What are we going to do about that?" (Gorny, The Blade Toledo, 2019).

By combining the image of a shrouded and thus unidentifiable face with images of vulnerability and homelessness, the publicness of such vulnerability and homelessness, and images of

goodness and sacrifice, the participants and news articles saw the sculpture as guiding viewers in reflecting on how homelessness is morally wrong, challenging cultural stigmas that undermine the dignity of those experiencing extreme poverty, and considering one's responsibility to be compassionate.

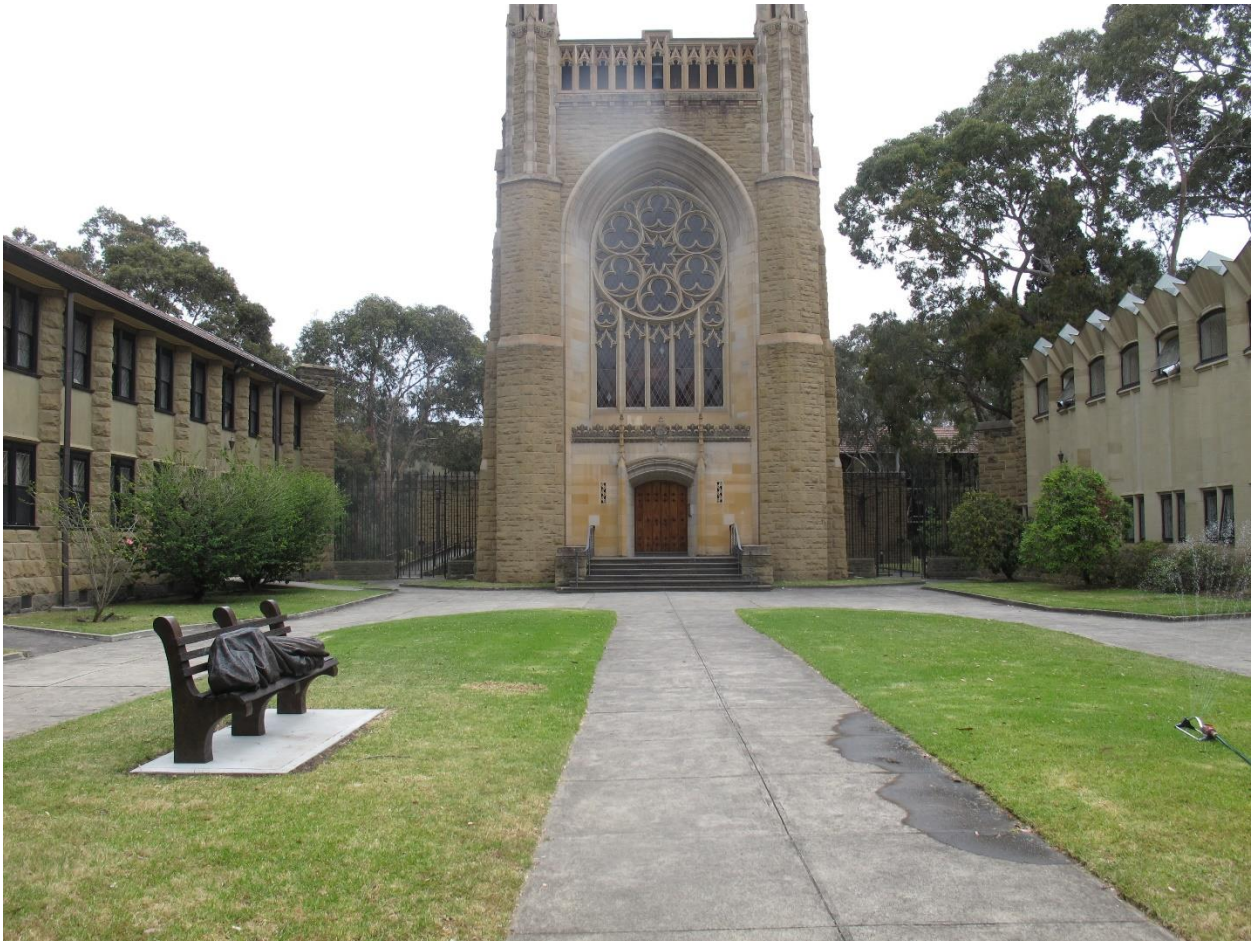
The backdrop of a Christian faith-based organization. Each of the sculptures documented in photos is in front of a Christian educational institution, non-profit organization, or a place of worship. The sculpture in Townsville, AUS, which sits in front of Sacred Heart Cathedral, was originally intended to be a gift from the Cathedral to the city and to be placed in a public area. However, the city was unwilling to install it because the sculpture is a replica rather than an original and out of fear that it might be vandalized due to its religious content (see Chadwick, Townsville Bulletin, 2017). The sculptures are also all located in urban public spaces that receive pedestrian traffic. The intersection of public and religious spaces in which most *Homeless Jesus* sculptures are located shapes how viewers engage and interpret their meanings.

Interviewees hoped that the cultural meanings implicit to *Homeless Jesus* would help non-Christians better understand their organizations' purposes and core values. Each of the locations documented was a cultural landmark with impressive architecture. When discussing other works of art within their organization, B. M emphasized that "the greatest art here of course is the building". Due to their cultural significance and architectural grandeur within public urban spaces, *Homeless Jesus* viewers will likely hold preconceived ideas of these organizations based on their religious and spiritual beliefs and experiences with religiosity and faith-based institutions. Interviewees used the cultural meanings implicit to *Homeless Jesus* to present their organizations as "humbled and merciful" (B. M) and to give community members "a place to feel safe and loved and respected" (Fr. T). *Homeless Jesus* sculptures can be visual statements

about the purposes and core values of the faith-based organizations where these sculptures are located.

Figure 5

Photo of Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz and chapel at Newman College, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia



Note. This photo was taken by the author at the main entrance to Newman College. The central focus of the photo is the chapel.

The backdrop of a religious institution is also meaningful for viewers familiar with the ministry of Jesus. As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), Christians who are heavily engaged in social justice work, often referred to as 'progressive', 'leftist', or 'Christian activists', generally assert that their concern for marginalized members of society is rooted in a desire to

follow the example of Jesus (Winter, 2017). Myles (2018) likewise draws attention to how Jesus' teachings are commonly described as being 'subversive' of the dominant religious teachings of his day. The location of *Homeless Jesus* outdoors with the backdrop of a religious institution reminds viewers that Jesus was a spiritual and religious teacher who chose to minister both within and outside the confines of a religious institution. B. M appreciated how their *Homeless Jesus* contrasted with the architectural style of their building because this drew attention to the ministry of Jesus.

> She said, "it upsets the symmetry outside the chapel'. And I said, 'yes'. And that's the answer. I mean, if Jesus turned up today, he'd upset the symmetry again, which he did 2000 years ago. We would probably crucify him again.

While viewers may expect art to complement a church's architectural design, B. M is highlighting here how *Homeless Jesus* instead accentuates a social issue in a manner that mirrors the life and teachings of Jesus. It reminds viewers that Jesus chose to align himself with and care for marginalized members of society and thus to subvert the ideological systems of dominant religious and cultural institutions at that time. *Homeless Jesus* thereby empowers viewers familiar with this facet of Jesus's story to question dominant perspectives on homelessness. In addition to potentially leading non-Christian viewers to better understand the teachings of the Christian faith, the backdrop of a religious institution also reminds Christian viewers of their core values, which are implicit in the ministry of Jesus.

Discussion

Overview of Homeless Jesus's culturally shared meanings. This iconography offers a response to this dissertation's first overarching research question; "What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?" It indicates that viewers experience culturally shared meanings differently based on their exposure to the various

symbols conveyed in the sculpture and their socioeconomic status. This overarching finding aligns with Zebracki's (2013) survey research on publics' perceptions of public art in Dutch cities. Zebracki (2013) asserts that public art experiences are shaped by the viewers' cultural backgrounds, knowledge of its intended meanings, familiarity with the location of the art, whether the artwork creates social opportunities, and the meaningfulness of the art piece within its context.

In particular, viewers experience *Homeless Jesus* differently because this sculpture uses both natural symbols, which hold meaning based on a natural connection between an object and idea, and conventional symbols which hold meanings tied to a specific culture (Hermeren, 1969). The natural symbols include a street bench, a body wrapped in a blanket, and a shrouded face. Reliance on these symbols indicates that this image will likely hold meaning for those unfamiliar with Christianity. The conventional meanings of Jesus's feet wounds and the backdrop of a religious institution add another layer of meaning for those who are familiar with the biblical account of Jesus's ministry. Regardless of socioeconomic status and experience with Christianity, however, my iconographic analysis suggests that *Homeless Jesus* is interpreted as a call to see all people as worthy of respect and as having dignity. Likewise, this analysis suggests *Homeless Jesus* implies to viewers that people should not be marginalized or stigmatized due to their poverty or suffering and that people should care for those who are homeless.

A challenge to stigma. My analysis portrays *Homeless Jesus's* culturally-shared meanings as a challenge for viewers to recognize and question the presence of homelessness and poverty amid privilege. *Homeless Jesus* thereby may present a means of combatting negative and unfair stigmas associated with homelessness. Social stigmas associated with homelessness can compound the negative and social health outcomes often experienced by those living in poverty

(Belcher and DeForge, 2012; Jensen, 2018). This sculpture however communicates meanings that align with Breeze and Dean's (2012) and Bower et. al's (2017) criteria for images of homelessness that do not further stigmatize.

Both Breeze and Dean (2012) and Bower et al. (2017) assert that images of homelessness that mitigate harmful social stigmas should portray this phenomenon as something that can happen to anyone or that leads individuals to empathetically imagine the difficult experiences associated with living without a home. *Homeless Jesus* reminds Christian viewers of a spiritual obligation to care for those who are homeless with humility, or a recognition that they are not more dignified than those who they are serving and/or stigmatizing. The shrouded face can lead viewers to consider how homelessness can happen to anyone and subsequently to see themselves as personally connected to this issue. For viewers familiar with the ministry of Jesus, the feet wounds signal that they should treat those who are homeless with the same respect and care as the "son of God" or a perfect human being who speaks on behalf of God. Viewers experiencing homelessness and who are familiar with the ministry of Jesus may take comfort from *Homeless Jesus*. These viewers may elicit the notion that Jesus, believed to be a perfect human being and the 'son of God' within Christianity, identifies with and understands their suffering. *Homeless Jesus* thus both prompts privileged viewers and those experiencing poverty to reject or question homelessness stigmas.

Homeless Jesus also challenges the stigmatization of those who are homeless by presenting a social construction of homelessness that runs counter to Gowan's (2010) 'sin-talk discourse'. This discourse presents the logic that homelessness is a result of personal failure and something that should be discouraged via criminalization. The prevalence of this discourse and the tendency to criminalize poverty is showcased within Gustafson's (2009) and Steffen's (2012)

historical explorations of the American welfare system, market economy, and criminal justice system. Gowan's 'sin-talk' discourse can also be equated to Stonehouse et al's (2015) concept of responsibilisation. They define this term as the neoliberal tendency to assign the responsibility of social risks, such as homelessness, to individuals. By depicting a respected figure as homeless and by leading people to consider how this phenomenon can happen to anyone, viewers who accept and appreciate the meanings implicit in *Homeless Jesus*, based on my data interpretations, are likely to dismiss the notion that those who are homeless are culpable for their own suffering.

A challenge to a "client-based society". While the meanings implicit to *Homeless Jesus* counter the 'sin-talk' discourse, they do not align with Gowan's (2010) opposing discourses of 'sick-talk', a discourse that presents mental illness as the root cause of homelessness, or 'system-talk', a discourse that presents homelessness as a symptom of failed social and cultural systems. Rather than presenting a message about the root causes of homelessness, my analysis indicates that *Homeless Jesus* simply conveys a message about how people should respect others and respond to this issue on an individual basis. The cultural meanings of *Homeless Jesus* brought forward by participants and news articles thus do not place blame on individuals, natural causes, or social systems.

While not placing blame on individuals, natural causes, or social systems may limit the capacity for this sculpture to support macro-level systematic change that supports social equality (to be discussed further in Chapter 6), this facet of the sculpture may challenge viewers to reimagine their relationship with society. Deborah Stone (1989) uses the concept of a causal story to explain how policymakers often seek to construe a story about social issues, such as homelessness, in a manner that attributes "cause, blame, and responsibility" to an individual or group, natural cause, or social system (p. 282). With causal stories, or "rhetorical explanations of

policy problems", policymakers can assign responsibility or claim control over an issue (p. 282). By not placing blame or telling a causal story about the root causes of homelessness, *Homeless Jesus* (and the institutions that have invested in this art piece) may intend to call individual viewers to take personal responsibility for this issue.

Leading individuals to see themselves as personally connected to the issue of homelessness renders this sculpture a challenge to 'a client-based society' (Fraser, 2013). Fraser (2013) distinguishes a truly democratic society that is grounded in the principle of citizenship from the modern capitalist welfare state grounded in the principles of clients. While a citizenship-based democratic society necessitates that members take on social responsibility above and beyond that of tax payments, a client-based society requires members to simply pay taxes and abide by laws in exchange for social goods (Fraser, 2013). A client-based society, in turn, reinforces 'sin-talk discourses'; those who are homeless are at fault due to their lack of participation in this exchange relationship between a state and its members. While members of a client-based society see themselves as justified in avoiding or marginalizing those who are homeless, this analysis indicates that *Homeless Jesus* compels viewers to actively engage in supporting the wellbeing of this group.

A challenge to surplus repression. Marcuse's theory on art and social transformation proved useful in exploring the implications of *Homeless Jesus's* culturally-shared meanings. *Homeless Jesus* led interviewees to critically consider their ideas about, experiences with, and responses to homelessness on an emotional and spiritual level rather than just intellectually. In this way, *Homeless Jesus* is an example of art that challenges 'surplus repression', or the use of language, laws, media, and technology to maintain an oppressive status quo (Farr, 2009). My interpretations of the data are that *Homeless Jesus* can lead non-homeless viewers to recognize

and question a tendency to stigmatize and view people experiencing homelessness as less dignified or worthy of basic respect than themselves.

As neoliberal market economies frame those who are homeless as 'the natural losers', this tendency to stigmatize may be rooted in capitalism (Belcher & DeForge, 2012). Belcher and DeForge (2012) reason that the existence of homelessness indicates to members of a capitalist society that their economic and social system is faulty because it does not benefit all members of society equally. Those who profit and who have benefited from a free-market capitalist economy may fear and stigmatize those who are homeless. The exchange relationship between a state and its members, governed by the logic of capitalism, justifies homelessness stigmas. The stigmatized status of those in poverty can in turn lead individuals to see those who are homeless as unimportant members of society.

Marcuse (1998) emphasizes that surplus repression can limit an individual's capacity for independent thinking. By rendering the stigmatization of those who are homeless as natural, rational, and just, capitalism enacts the 'performance principle', leading both those who are homeless and non-homeless to view homelessness stigmas as basic repression (Farr, 2009). When viewed as basic repression, people understand stigma to be a necessary form of maintaining social order. Furthermore, Untea (2018) reasons that the stigmatized status of poverty and the familiar commonplace nature of homelessness together can numb individuals to the injustice of homelessness. By making this injustice more visible to viewers, as indicated in this analysis, *Homeless Jesus* could challenge viewers to recognize the stigmatization of homelessness as a mechanism of 'surplus repression'.

Marcuse (1998) suggests that aesthetic experiences, which do not serve political interests, can help individuals become aware of surplus repression. According to Marcuse (1998), these

aesthetic experiences should be esoteric and depict alternatives to the status quo. By not telling a causal story or placing blame, paradoxically combining the images of Jesus and homelessness, and by challenging the dominant 'sin talk' discourse of homelessness, *Homeless Jesus* meets these criteria.

Conclusion. This chapter sought to answer the question, "What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?" My interpretations of the data are that viewers elicit from the image of a homeless Jesus meanings of compassion and dignity. This sculpture compels them to both contemplate and honor the inherent value of human beings regardless of their circumstances or identity. Iconography offered a helpful approach to uncover these culturally-shared meanings. This approach accentuated the distinct connotations attached to each symbol within the artwork and the implications of merging these symbols within one image.

This approach to uncovering meaning in images also accentuated the relevance of considering how the sculpture itself and its surroundings influence what culturally-shared meanings viewers take from it. My analysis indicated that the placement of this sculpture in downtown urban areas and in front of grandeur church architecture can interrupt viewers from their everyday realities and can help them imagine alternative ways of understanding homelessness. In my analysis, *Homeless Jesus* presented an image of homelessness artistically, and thus in an avant-garde, but also sanitized or an 'easier to digest' manner than everyday human experiences of homelessness. Bronze sculptures are typically reserved for monuments to historic, heroic, or momentous people and events. Using this medium to depict homelessness likely heightened this sculpture's capacity to interrupt viewers' sense of normalcy. Although *Homeless Jesus* is developed with religious purposes and thus serves the interests of a large

institution, the meanings derived from the medium, placement, and symbols comprising this artwork may have the capacity to prompt individuals to imagine a more equitable society.

Chapter 6: *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton

In May 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in an annual prayer event taking place at the *Homeless Jesus* replica in Hamilton. Participating entailed signing up online for an hour time slot to sit and pray for people who are homeless or who are refugees seeking to make Canada their home. The Hamilton replica is located at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church and an affiliated non-profit organization that provides meals and other essential services for people who are homeless. During my hour time slot, people from the surrounding area began lining up to receive breakfast. One man struck up a conversation with me. Our short conversation made a sharp turn from the spring weather when he asked about what I was doing. After this point, he openly shared about his experiences with homelessness.

While speaking with me, he did not seem to notice that I was sitting on a large bronze sculpture of a street bench with Jesus. I was struck by how our conversation about homelessness was not about *Homeless Jesus* despite our proximity to it, yet directly shaped by the opportunities it instigated. The conversation would never have occurred if the prayer vigil were not centred around this replica. To consider how this sculpture has been used in public dialogues and responses to homelessness in Hamilton, this chapter retells three stories about *Homeless Jesus* that were first told in online news articles and by faith leaders at organizations located near the Hamilton replica or involved in events taking place at it.

Chapter 5 outlined the meanings generated from a depiction of Jesus as a homeless person in a contemporary context. This chapter dissects the implications of these meanings with Habermas's theory of communicative action. The iconography of *Homeless Jesus* presented in Chapter 5 provides a backdrop for understanding the results of the second stage of this project. This narrative study of *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton culminated in a description of how faith-based organizations use *Homeless Jesus* and its implicit cultural meanings to engage in public

dialogues about homelessness. Likewise, it culminated in a description of how faith-based organizations use this sculpture to work at overcoming social divisions between the privileged and marginalized members of their communities, between themselves and the communities in which they are located, and between different Christian denominations, or institutionalized Christian groups that share core doctrines but differ in theology and tradition.

When retelling the three stories, I quote participants by referencing their pseudonyms (see Appendix A). I first recount the story of *Homeless Jesus* within St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church. This story is largely based on Fr. T's stories. Fr. T is a priest at St. Patrick's and a member of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a congregation of priests and brothers dedicated to serving marginalized members of society. Using the seven interviews, I then recount the story of the annual prayer vigil which I referenced in the introduction to this chapter. This story is primarily told by a spiritual director (R. G) and a missionary (O. C) at a non-profit organization that seeks to promote prayer in Hamilton and an Anglican pastor (K. S.). These three individuals were all key players in organizing the 2019 prayer vigil event. Lastly, I tell the story of *Homeless Jesus* presented in online news articles originating from Hamilton. The remaining five participants shared stories that augmented each of the three that are retold in this chapter. These participants include a pastor (K. C) and two artists (M. A and Q. B) at a non-denominational church, a pastor at a Canadian Reformed Church (P. J), and a program consultant focused on social justice and outreach for a network of Anglican churches who also works as a freelance columnist (D. W).

Homelessness in Hamilton

The three stories reported in this chapter occur within and are thereby shaped by Hamilton's history, geography, social, cultural, religious, and economic contexts. To preface

these stories, I recount here a brief overview of Hamilton's context, specifically concerning the state of homelessness and policies that target this social issue.

With the belief that a competitive deregulated housing market would meet the housing needs of Canadians, Canada's federal and provincial governments dramatically withdrew support for affordable housing during the 1990s (Hulchanski, et al., 2009). The City of Hamilton drafted its first strategic plan for addressing homelessness in 2004, titled *Keys to Home: A Housing Strategy in Hamilton*. Today, the city is the central entity that coordinates and delivers services designed to mitigate homelessness (City of Hamilton, 2019). Over the past seventeen years, Hamilton's strategy has shifted from being primarily focused on emergency response, addressing the immediate needs of people who are homeless, to focusing on long-term outcomes. Their long-term goals include "to end chronic homelessness by 2025, reduce homelessness by 5% overall annually, reduce new inflow into homelessness by 10% per year, [and to ensure that] less than 15% of individuals or households return to homelessness each year" (City of Hamilton, 2019, p. 33). To support these goals, the City of Hamilton (2019) dedicates approximately 32M annually to homeless services, with the largest portions of this fund being allotted to prevention measures which entail connecting those at risk of homelessness with financial support (22%), permanent supportive housing (21%), shelter services (26%), and intensive case management which supports individuals with coordinated services for approximately one to two years (11%).

In addition to the City of Hamilton, charities and non-profits spend approximately 500M on services that directly target homelessness (City of Hamilton, 2019). These charities include faith-based organizations. A search for "homeless drop-in centres" in Hamilton Public Library's Redbook in February 2021, an online directory of community resources and services, produced six results, where five of the six services were offered by a Christian church. Likewise, of

Hamilton's six organizations that provide emergency shelter for people who are homeless, all are either currently or began as a Christian charity (City of Hamilton, 2021). The prevalence of religious influence in Hamilton's charitable homeless services and resources aligns with Hamilton's historic Christian roots and the core tenets of Christian public theology (City of Hamilton, 2014; Rauschenbusch, 1917).

Despite financial investment and lofty policy goals, this social issue persists. A 2018 Point-in-Time count revealed that 386 people were homeless, with the next count scheduled for 2021 (Homeless Hub, 2020). Of these 386 individuals, 22% identified as being indigenous (City of Hamilton, 2019). Using Canada's 2016 Census, however, the City of Hamilton (2019) projects, that 16 400 individuals of a total population of 536,915 are at risk of homelessness because they spend over 50% of their income of $20 000 or less on rent. Likewise, the city projects that 1900 have experienced short-term homelessness and 820 are experiencing chronic homelessness. The City of Hamilton (2019) defines short-term homelessness as being homeless for less than six months and chronic homelessness as having experienced homelessness for longer than six months or as having recurrent experiences of homelessness that cumulate to be longer than 18 months over 3 years.

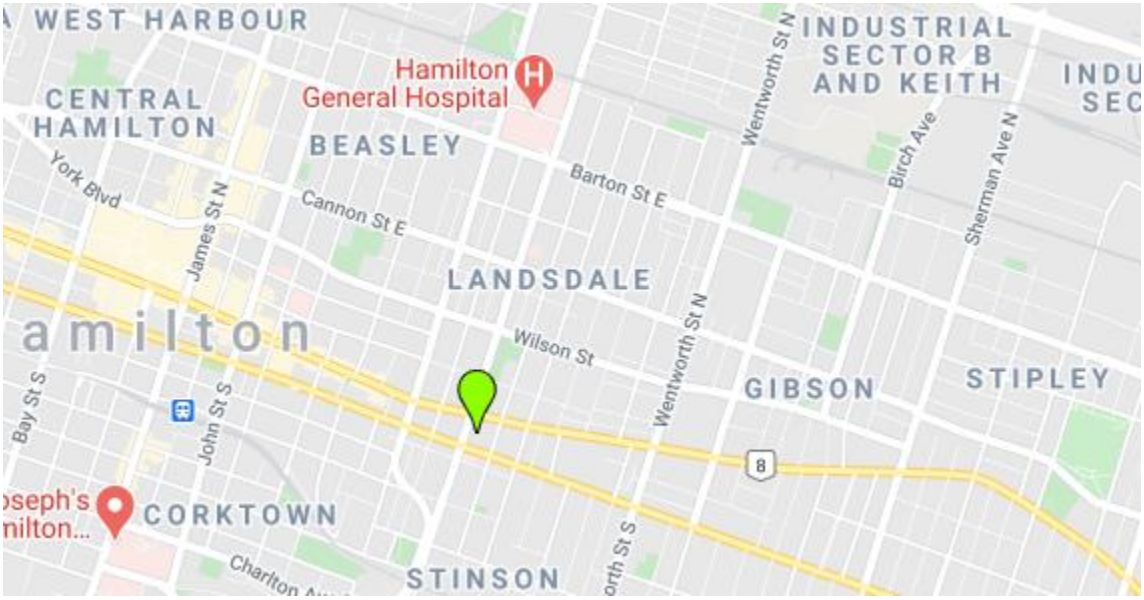
Homeless Jesus at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church

When recounting the story of how *Homeless Jesus* came to be at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Fr. T first described the context of this parish's neighbourhood when he was initially invited to become the pastor in 2012. St. Patrick's is in the Landsdale neighbourhood of downtown Hamilton, a neighbourhood known for its violence, crime, and poverty. Due to several recent drug overdoses, Fr. T referred to this neighbourhood as 'ground zero.' When reflecting on the location of *Homeless Jesus*, K.C similarly deemed the intersection of St.

Patrick's to be "one of the most impoverished in the city." At arrival in 2012, Fr. T also observed a sharp social divide between parishioners and community members; "There was a lot of aggressive panhandling in the neighborhood, which was scaring the parishioners. Their response at the time was to keep the gates locked." Within this context, Fr. T went on to recount how the installation of *Homeless Jesus* at St. Patrick's was part of a strategic effort to overcome this enmity and address the impoverished nature of their neighbourhood.

Figure 6

Map showing Landsdale neighbourhood in Hamilton, Ontario.



Note. The green marker indicates where St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church is located. Maps Data © Google 2021.

As a first step in bridging the social divide between parishioners and their neighbours, Fr. T and colleagues chose to take down a fence around the circumference of the church property. For the parish, this fence was a protective mechanism that separated them from their neighbours. At the same time, they began to engage their neighbours in conversation:

> Within the first week of being here, we ordered the fence to be taken down completely. We very quickly got out onto the streets and started talking to the people in the neighborhood about what was going on. Why it was going on (Fr. T).

Taking down the fence surrounding the church's property and eliciting feedback about the tensions and issues within their neighbourhood served as tangible steps to improving the relationship between parishioners and their surrounding community. Through these conversations, Fr. T discovered that their neighbours felt stigmatized by the parishioners while the parishioners felt that their neighbours were aggressive and dangerous:

> Some of the things that became clear were that for the most part, [our neighbours] were angry because of the situations that they find themselves in. They felt very marginalized by 'the-holier-than-thou' and the 'holier-than-thou' were very afraid and very angry that [their neighbours] were causing such disruption. So then we thought, 'okay, well, let's figure out what we can do about this. Like, how can we bring both sides together?' We had to work on both sides of it (Fr. T).

The initial community conversations revealed the depth of the social divide between parishioners and the neighbours. Fr. T described how this community-level social division was experienced on an individual-level viscerally, where individuals on both sides of the divide felt angry, marginalized or left-out, or afraid. Likewise, the quote above indicates that Fr. T believed that overcoming this social division would require 'work' or intentional effort.

To overcome this deep and emotional division between these two groups, this parish sought to address first the physical and aesthetic needs of their neighbours.

> The very first thing [the neighbours] would say to us is, 'we're thirsty, we're hungry'. We started with the most basic needs. So if you're hungry and thirsty, there is something we can do about that. So we would give them a sandwich, a piece of fruit, water, whatever we had, and whatever we could get our hands on (Fr. T).

Since 2012, these ad hoc efforts to meet basic needs have evolved into a non-profit organization affiliated with and located next to the parish, known as De Mazenod Door. This organization serves meals to over 100 000 individuals each year. With the desire to make De Mazenod Door guests feel welcome on parish property, the parish began landscaping and equipping the outside of the church with public seating. Fr. T wanted their neighbours to "feel that they were in a garden". *Homeless Jesus* was thereby installed alongside other works of art, landscaping, and an outdoor seating area.

In addition to these efforts to make their neighbours feel welcome within the parish, Fr. T described how the church leadership encouraged parishioners to view and engage with their neighbours compassionately. They encouraged the parishioners through teaching:

> From the inside, we began to explain to the parishioners again about the beatitudes; that we have to start approaching these people very differently and we have to start putting our faith into action by making sure that we pull together as much as possible the resources that are going to help them in the situations that they find themselves in.

When referring to 'the beatitudes', Fr. T is referencing a biblical passage where Jesus blesses and comforts those who are 'poor in spirit', grieving, meek, hungry or thirsty, merciful, pure in heart, peaceful, and persecuted because of their righteousness and/or affiliation to Jesus (Matthew 5:3-12, NIV). Biblical teaching and theology prompted parishioners to view their neighbours compassionately. This teaching likewise complimented the church's efforts to create an outdoor space for and to address the immediate needs of the neighbours, helping the neighbours to see themselves as less marginalized by and angry toward parishioners.

Homeless Jesus was intended to enhance the beatitude theme in the messages presented at mass. According to Fr. T, *Homeless Jesus* explains what was being taught within the parish visually; "often we use too many words and then it gets boring. It gets complicated. People get

lost in it. Sometimes a piece of art, will say a lot better, address the situation a lot better than written words" (Fr. T). To accentuate *Homeless Jesus's* meanings, the parish chose to frame it with five plaques engraved with biblical and theological content. These plaques, or "the five sayings of *Homeless Jesus*", are meant to encourage parishioners to engage with people who are marginalized in a manner that aligns with biblical teachings about poverty. The five sayings are "All of you are impoverished", "Like the impoverished and persecuted, I suffered", "I have nowhere to lay my head", "Live what you believe", and "I loved the world, did you?" As discussed in Chapter 5, Fr. T observed how these "five sayings" in turn helped some who are homeless within the parish's neighbourhood to recognize the injustice of their situations.

When reflecting on the parish's effort to bridge the social division between parishioners and their neighbours, Fr. T noted several positive responses to *Homeless Jesus*. Although not solely due to the sculpture, he noted that some of their neighbours have begun to feel welcome inside the church; "they finally feel that they will be welcomed and that they will not be judged or marginalized inside" (Fr. T). Fr. T also proposed that the sculpture heightens a sense of the injustice of homelessness within Hamilton, an issue that many want to avoid.

> It's a marvelous way to use art to draw attention to these situations that are often ugly, that we tend to want to push out of the mainstream so that everything looks clean. That's what we do in all of our cities, particularly when pertaining to homelessness and marginalization, drugs, etc. We want to shove it off where we can't see it. What we're trying to do is the opposite of that.

For Fr. T and his parish, *Homeless Jesus* is a visual marker that accentuates homelessness as a social issue. As evidence of this, Fr. T pointed to the sculpture's media attention and how people have called emergency services when mistaking the sculpture for a person in need.

In addition to making neighbours feel more welcome within the parish and drawing attention to the injustice of homelessness, Fr. T also pointed out that *Homeless Jesus* and other

forms of art can be a means of communicating a message that is often difficult for people to grasp emotionally or spiritually. Fr. T articulated that "art speaks beautifully over the written word, over the spoken word, because it transcends language and culture." According to Fr. T, the ability to communicate without the written/spoken word is especially important when it comes to connecting with the parish's neighbours because many are refugees and new immigrants to Canada with limited English. Due to its accessible message about human dignity and one's social and spiritual responsibility to show compassion to those in need, *Homeless Jesus* within the context of St. Patrick's appeared to support parishioners and their neighbours in overcoming stigmas and shifting negative perceptions of each other. Fr. T thus suggested that the installation of *Homeless Jesus* was a step towards overcoming the enmity that coloured the relationship between St. Patrick's parishioners and their neighbours back in 2012.

The eight other participants in Hamilton likewise discussed the value of this sculpture when it came to bridging social divisions, such as those between privileged members of society (often those attending and leading faith-based organizations) and those who are marginalized and/or impacted by homelessness. Participants made claims such as, "art is really powerful, I realize, in communicating in not an intellectual way but in an emotional way" (P.J) and "there's certain things that poems and visual things can communicate that I think if we just use normal words it doesn't have the same impact" (R. G). K. C similarly reflected on how art can be a form of 'prophecy', which this participant defined as 'telling truth' or communicating a message from God:

> Art doesn't try to get through your brain to get to your heart. It just skips it and goes right to your guts… The *Homeless Jesus* sculpture is a prophetic piece of art, 100%, because it's saying you might think that Jesus looks like these other statues of Jesus that you've seen, where he's got a

> crown, he looks amazing, he's got great abs but actually, Jesus is homeless and he is unrecognizable except for the scars and the wounds he carries (K. C).

This quote from K. C captures the notion that *Homeless Jesus*, as an artistic mode of communication, presents a message viscerally that encourages individuals to critically reconsider their perceptions of homelessness and Jesus. The participants shared the belief that *Homeless Jesus* can help people recognize the dignity of those who are marginalized. Their reflections on the role of art in communicating ideas align well with Fr. T's proposition that *Homeless Jesus* has played a role in prompting two divided groups to reconcile.

The *Homeless Jesus* Prayer Vigil

In addition to bridging social divisions between the privileged and their more socially marginalized counterparts and between a parish and its surrounding community, this narrative analysis also showcased how *Homeless Jesus* has been used to bridge divisions between Christian denominations within Hamilton. Six of the nine participants discussed being involved in an annual prayer vigil taking place at St. Patrick's *Homeless Jesus.* Three participants were involved in orchestrating this event (R. G, O. H, and S. K). When discussing this prayer vigil, they highlight how a shared appreciation for the sculpture's message and the act of praying beside *Homeless Jesus* with other Christians from different organizations and denominations led to a sense of unity with those who they initially perceived as different or with whom they felt disconnected.

The prayer vigil, occurring over two weeks in the spring, entails individuals signing up for one-hour slots to pray for those who are homeless. The two overarching purposes of this vigil, as described in promotional materials are (1) "to bring awareness to the homeless and marginalized people of Hamilton and all those struggling throughout our world" and (2) "to bring Christians from all denominations together to pray in solidarity for all our brothers and

sisters in Christ." At the sculpture, participants in the prayer vigil find a prayer guide with information on the state of homelessness in Hamilton and are encouraged to sit by the feet of the sculpted Jesus.

R. G. was a key player in establishing this prayer vigil. This interviewee recounted how the idea for the event occurred within a casual conversation about *Homeless Jesus* and its relevance to both Catholic and Protestant communities. The individual who originally suggested the idea of having a prayer vigil centred around the sculpture recently converted to Catholicism after spending much of their religious life in an Anglican church. This individual was looking to illustrate commonalities between Catholic and Protestant faiths and to create a sense of unity between Christian denominations. Due to R. G's previous involvement within both Catholic and Protestant communities, this individual invited R. G to be involved in organizing the event. After the first prayer vigil, occurring in 2016, R. G took over as a coordinator.

As this prayer vigil takes place at *Homeless Jesus*, this event is shaped by a concern for those who are homeless, a recognition of the dignity of all human beings, and an appreciation of Jesus. This was evident when K.C discussed how the location of the prayer vigil at the sculpture aided them in focusing on the needs of those who are marginalized during their one hour of prayer:

> We are embodied creatures…I think when you are sitting next to *Homeless Jesus,* even if the prayer isn't like "Here Jesus you were homeless, yes homeless you were, so homeless." You don't need to even remember it with words. Just being there and knowing that everyone is praying there means that everything you pray is tied both to the statue and also to the intersection.

K. C went on to explain how that intersection is laden with poverty. The visual of *Homeless Jesus* and the environment surrounding the prayer vigil thereby helped to maintain the event's

focus. Interviewees discussed how the act of praying by the sculpture led them to see themselves as connected to the issue of homelessness within Hamilton:

> It was a humbling experience. It was interesting the number of people, because of where that statue is, right by the streetlights, the number of people that would look out at me in the rain and quickly put their head down. It was almost like they didn't want to see. But it was almost like, and I might be making assumptions here, it was almost like, seeing someone sit on a bench in the pouring rain, like I was, made people uncomfortable. It was an education in itself. You get a very very small perspective on somebody who actually lives on the street, how they are treated, and how they are viewed (K.S).

Committing to sitting for an hour outdoors beside *Homeless Jesus* assisted this participant in empathizing with people who are homeless. All six interviewees who discussed this event, from varied church denominations (Anglican, Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Catholic, and Nondenominational), described similar experiences and shared an appreciation for sitting by the sculpture.

R. G and colleagues initially recognized this shared appreciation of *Homeless Jesus* and the desire to mitigate homelessness in Hamilton as an opportunity to strengthen the relationships between Christians of varied denominations. When describing the motivations behind hosting a prayer vigil that involved both Catholics and Protestant churches, R. G highlighted how each group holds prejudices about the other and how these prejudices are in opposition to the biblical teachings of Jesus.

> Both groups will tend to say, 'there's no Christians over there.' We're Christians, they're not Christians." And somehow, I think that Jesus wants us to get beyond that…So hopefully, maybe in some small way, the prayer vigil could be part of that (R. G).

This quote shows how the prayer vigil is rooted in a concern about the social divisions between Catholic and Protestant Christians. Reflecting on the impact of this event, O. H similarly noted that "I am hoping it will draw the Catholic church and the Protestant church together in prayer more." These two participants viewed creating an event around an issue that is relevant to distinct Christian groups as a way to foster solidarity.

Both R. G and O. H described how the prayer vigil required the event organizers to consider the differences and similarities between Catholic and Protestant Christians. This consideration was central to the task of constructing a prayer guide that met the preferences of both groups:

> They talked about 'are we going to have a Protestant prayer guide, a Catholic prayer guide?' In the end, they decided to mix them together. Hopefully, in a way that wouldn't offend anybody and in a way that would allow people to choose the type of prayer that they wanted to use (R. G).

The task of creating a multi-denomination prayer event yielded prudent deliberation about how best to support the needs and preferences of each group.

R. G conjectured that the prayer vigil has had a positive impact on the relationship between members of Protestant and Catholic churches in Hamilton; "We had some people from our church one of the years, and they said, "oh, the Catholic church was providing food for the people, they were having a barbeque! I thought we were the only ones who had barbeques." This quote suggests that the prayer vigil effectively created a space where individuals from distinct Christian groups could come together to develop a sensitivity to their shared goals, beliefs, and practices. Due to its perceived success, participants also appeared to take pride in the inter-denominational nature of the prayer vigil. When considering the prayer vigil along with other events that take place around *Homeless Jesus*, Fr. T. noted "I think there are seven different denominations that work with us. I think there are even some non-Christians now that joined."

The interviewees highlighted how the desire to bridge social and religious divisions between Catholic and Protestant communities was a motivating factor that led to the development of this *Homeless Jesus*-prayer event.

Homeless Jesus **as the American Dream**

The news articles recounted stories about how *Homeless Jesus* presented a message that contrasted with political efforts to remove people who are homeless from public spaces and common arguments against public spending on the arts. When recounting the controversies sparked by this sculpture, the news articles tell 'an American Dream' narrative, where an individual overcomes hardship and disadvantage to achieve goals or personal success. In this story, the news articles first recount how Timothy Schmalz struggled to find a place for this sculpture. The news articles used in both this narrative analysis and the iconography highlight how institutions have rejected *Homeless Jesus* because they viewed it as an inappropriate representation of Jesus, they felt that the sculpture is inappropriate for public spaces due to its religious content, the style of the sculpture did not match the architectural style of its surroundings, and that the message of *Homeless Jesus* would be inconsistent with rules or bylaws that criminalize behaviours associated with homelessness (see Slavin, The Scotsman, 2019; Chadwick, Townsville Bulletin, 2017; Vincent, Hamilton Spectator, 2016). These news articles recount *Homeless Jesus's* rejections as a way of introducing the sculpture to readers.

After highlighting these rejections, the news articles emphasize how the sculpture is now internationally valued and thereby culturally significant. For example, MacLellan from the Hamilton Spectator wrote in 2013 that the first *Homeless Jesus* "found its way to Regis College, the Jesuit school of theology at the University of Toronto." The news articles use the location of the sculpture to demonstrate that it is now 'wanted' and appreciated. The appreciation of the

sculpture gives it value. To further demonstrate the value of this sculpture, some news articles point to its large international presence: "copies are in place in cities including Grand Haven, Mich., Phoenix, Washington, Chicago, and Dublin, Ireland" (Fragomeni, Hamilton Spectator, 2016). By pointing to the number of national and international locations where replicas have been installed, these news articles are providing evidence to demonstrate that the appreciation for *Homeless Jesus* is widespread.

Likewise, the news articles demonstrate that *Homeless Jesus* is a culturally significant work of art by pointing to key public figures who appreciate it. Specifically, the news articles emphasize Pope Francis's commissioning of this sculpture at the Vatican. MacLellan (2013) in the Hamilton Spectator reports "now Jesus the Homeless and its Canadian sculptor have a new fan in the Vatican: Pope Francis." As a prominent political, cultural, and religious figure, Pope Francis's approval lends value and cultural significance to this sculpture.

Four of the twelve news articles originating from Hamilton also point to the sculpture's price as an indication of its cultural significance; "A number of these bronze statues are installed around the world and there are many more on order — costing about $33,000 each and taking two months to make. Christian churches of all denominations have placed orders" (Fragomeni, Hamilton Spectator, 2016). The hefty price required to install a *Homeless Jesus* corroborates its cultural significance by confirming that institutions or organizations appreciate the sculpture to such an extent that they are willing to financially invest in it. By highlighting *Homeless Jesus's* international presence, financial worth, and Pope Francis's approval, the news articles unanimously present *Homeless Jesus* and Timothy Schmalz favourably.

Homeless Jesus's international and media recognition and the sculpture's local presence appear to be a source of pride in Hamilton. This pride was captured by R. G when noting that

"whenever I have visitors from out of town, I always take them by and show them that. I think it's really cool that it's there and the message that it's bringing." The local pride associated with *Homeless Jesus* is also captured when Fragomeni (2016) from the Hamilton Spectator quotes Hamilton's Bishop; "Crosby called the unveiling a historic occasion. 'This *'Homeless Jesus'* has touched people around the world." Although prominent churches initially rejected this sculpture, news articles in Hamilton emphasize how it has become an internationally-known emblem, reminding people to recognize the dignity of those who are homeless and to care about their wellbeing.

An American Dream narrative, where *Homeless Jesus* is portrayed as overcoming rejection, may create an ethos among many readers of respect for this sculpture. After generating respect for this sculpture, the news articles use *Homeless Jesus* as evidence to support arguments about homelessness and art. They use the cultural significance of *Homeless Jesus* to support the notion that communities should invest and support artistic endeavours that address social issues. The news articles highlight how faith-based organisations that have installed a *Homeless Jesus* have been critiqued for spending a substantial amount of money on this sculpture when these resources could have been leveraged to address the physical needs of those experiencing poverty. After describing this controversy, the news articles accentuate the cultural significance and social impact of *Homeless Jesus*. The controversy around *Homeless Jesus's* cost is expressed in the excerpt below:

> For all its positive reception, *Homeless Jesus* has not been without public criticism. While some religious communities have responded negatively to the idea of the son of God being depicted as a vagabond the usual criticism focuses on the $33,000 price tag that would be better served in the hands of the poor (OpHardt, The Hamilton Spectator, 2015).

In a comment on Paddon's (2017) article about the unveiling of a second sculpture by Timothy Schmalz in Hamilton, an individual similarly argues,

> To spend $33,000 on a statue of a homeless person's suffering in the hope it will invoke change is myopic — to put it kindly. Of course, it's easier to erect a few monuments and say we've done a swell job than to tackle factors that cause poverty.

The two quotes above exemplify the tensions that surround investments in artistic endeavours that are intended to benefit publics. As noted in the introduction to this dissertation and the literature review, the social value of investing in art is difficult to empirically document and is thus frequently called into question.

An article from the Hamilton Spectator engages with the common criticism that the monies used to install *Homeless Jesus* replicas are better spent on directly alleviating poverty. In response to this criticism, this news article documents Timothy Schmalz's claim that the issue of homelessness is an ideological and cultural issue rather than an issue with strictly financial root causes.

> The premise that society can't both afford these statues and helping the poor is patently false. "If you look up at the billions of dollars of glass and metal skyscrapers in Toronto, it's not money in our culture that is lacking, it's awareness," said Schmalz. "We have richer rich people than ever before and poorer poor people than ever before, and that's something the statue brings to light." (OpHardt, The Hamilton Spectator, 2015).

After engendering respect for this sculpture via *Homeless Jesus*'*s* narrative, this news article favorably details an argument that contradicts common criticisms for investing in socially-engaged art.

Like Timothy Schmalz, the interviewees in this narrative inquiry also asserted that it is worthwhile to invest in art that takes up a social issue. For example, J. R. highlights how St.

Patrick's can afford both a sculpture and their efforts to address the physical needs of those experiencing homelessness. J. R further posits in the quote below that the sculpture is a source of inspiration for these efforts:

> Investing money in art may seem frivolous, but behind that statue, over a hundred people a day are served and long before that statute was there, there were other statues, other stories related to art in that church that inspired people to help.

This quote captures the notion that socially-engaged art is tangibly valuable because it can motivate and mobilize people to address an issue.

When reflecting on the community impact of *Homeless Jesus*, K.C similarly considers how this sculpture and other artwork can be an effective tool for addressing social issues rooted in faulty ideological systems. In the excerpt below, K.C acknowledges that the value and success of an art piece are difficult to measure in economic terms. *Homeless Jesus's* fame and international media attention however set precedence for the commissioning of future artworks that engage in social issues.

> [Homeless Jesus] gives space for Christians in the arts to think about how to communicate our faith in provocative ways, ambitious ways, costly ways, but ways that you might say 'why would you bother with that statue if you could take that 20 000 and give it to the poor?' But that art might be more valuable than just another meal. Another meal is valuable, but also changing the way that we think about homelessness is valuable. It's harder to pin to the economics. So it's harder to communicate that 'we could have served 10 000 meals with that money, instead 'we built a statue but it might have had a resonance that's worth the trade-off.'

This quote encapsulates the tension around the social utility of investing in the arts from the lens of a faith-based organization. Investing in the arts can be a 'trade-off' or a balancing act of addressing both the material and the more latent social, emotional, and spiritual needs of

community members. K.C reasons that investing in the arts is especially important for faith-based institutions that are committed to serving the holistic needs of people experiencing poverty; "the church is always called to the business of both the physical and the spiritual and I see that sculpture as very much a spiritual statement." The interviewees and news articles thus used *Homeless Jesus's* fame to present the idea that art can be an effective religious intervention when it comes to promoting the wellbeing of individuals and communities experiencing homelessness.

In addition to using the narrative of *Homeless Jesus* to support the notion that communities should invest in artistic endeavours that address social issues, a news article also uses this sculpture to challenge political initiatives that marginalize people experiencing homelessness. An article from the Hamilton Spectator reports on critics of the City of Hamilton's efforts to redesign Gore Park, an urban park at the centre of Downtown Hamilton 1-km from St. Patrick's. As part of the park's redesign, the city installed street benches which include a central arm piece. This news article documents a critic juxtaposing the message of *Homeless Jesus* with the presumed intentions behind installing this style of street furniture. This news article describes these benches, which prevent a person from lying down, as "defensive architecture", "homeless deterrence technology", and "anti-vagrant benches" (McNeil, Hamilton Spectator, 2016). Both the *Homeless Jesus* bench and Gore Park's benches present a message to the public about how those who are homeless should be treated. While Gore Park's benches signal that those who are homeless do not belong in a particular area, *Homeless Jesus* presents the message that these people should be included in public spaces. By contrasting Gore Park's benches with *Homeless Jesus*, the critics documented in this news article use *Homeless Jesus* to support their argument that the benches are 'morally wrong.'

In line with this critique of Gore Park's street benches, J. R, K.C., and O. H also considered how *Homeless Jesus* presents a philosophy that contrasts with political or social measures to exclude people experiencing homelessness from public spaces. When reflecting on the social implications of the meanings intrinsic to *Homeless Jesus*, J. R juxtaposed the benches in Gore Park with *Homeless Jesus*:

> The fact is nobody can lay on a park bench anymore because we've created them in ways where they have bars and there's no room for someone else. It is almost like they can't take up space, like they've put rules around the kind of space they can take up…and that statue is in the midst of it (J. R).

K.C similarly noted how *Homeless Jesus* can lead individuals to question the City of Hamilton's decision to put in place benches with a central armrest; "okay, we don't want people to sleep on them but then where does Jesus sleep?" O.H joked that people who pass by *Homeless Jesus* may "think he's taking up too much room on the bench." In these instances, J. R, K.C, and O.H are presenting the idea that communities wrongly tend to exclude those who are homeless or regulate how they use spaces that ostensibly belong to everyone. In communities that want to exclude those experiencing homelessness from public spaces, these interviewees are depicting *Homeless Jesus* as a reminder that public spaces should be inclusive of everyone who might benefit, regardless of their housing status. The 'American Dream' narrative of *Homeless Jesus* and its positive media portrayal has thus equipped individuals and groups to use this sculpture as evidence to critique the City of Hamilton's street furniture decisions and likewise respond to arguments against the funding of socially-engaged art.

Discussion

The three stories that emerged within this narrative analysis suggest that *Homeless Jesus* can be representative of a community's commitment to social inclusion. The stories told about

the sculpture were about how it inspired compassion and critical thinking among viewers, how it made space more welcoming for people experiencing poverty, how it bridged social and religious divisions, and how it presented opportunities to challenge dominant political and social responses to homelessness. In the following section of this chapter, I draw on Habermas's theory of communicative action, augmented by Fraser's (2013) conception of justice, to explore what these stories communicate about a relationship between public religious art, public dialogues, and community responses to homelessness.

A support of the public sphere. Within the stories, Fr. T and colleagues, the prayer vigil organizers, and journalists in Hamilton used *Homeless Jesus* to draw attention to the issue of homelessness, prompt critical thinking, ignite a broader conversation about how this issue should be perceived, and foster a sense of unity between both different Christian denominations and the homeless and the non-homeless. Drawing on Habermas's theory of communicative action, a key theme tying the stories together within my analysis is that this sculpture is a tool for strengthening the 'public sphere', or the social spaces where individuals discuss ideas freely and have equal access to information, respect, and opportunity. My analysis of these stories showcases how this sculpture has strengthened the public sphere in Hamilton by transforming a closed-off church property into a public space, helping individuals to empathize with those who are different than themselves, and by making a statement that is difficult to communicate tactfully and effectively solely with words or speech.

As noted by Radice (2018), public spaces where people can encounter one another is a prerequisite for the public sphere; they provide the physical or digital locations in which the public can meet and equitably dialogue. Using a case study of a temporary public art initiative where participants in China and Australia learn a dance together, McQuire (2016) points out that

contemporary art does not simply represent reality but can also "enact sociality through forms of dialogue, reciprocity, collaboration and hospitality" (p. 95). Some public artworks can create social spaces where strangers can encounter one another. Findings from Chapter 5 and the three stories presented here portray *Homeless Jesus* inviting engagement, which took the form of people sitting/praying (in the case of story 2, collectively) on the bench, leaving money and food, locking their bike to it, and re-considering their perceptions of homelessness. In addition to offering an invitation to engage with the sculpture, Fr. T and colleagues installed *Homeless Jesus* to make viewers feel welcome on St. Patrick's property. The notion that *Homeless Jesus* can transform a private space (the church property) into a public one aligns with Radice and Boudreault-Fournier's (2017) and McQuire's (2016) assertion that public art can shift how a space is used.

My interpretations of the data suggest that public art can not only help transform a private space into a public one (as in the case of *Homeless Jesus* at St. Patricks) but can also promote inclusivity within public spaces, making them suitable for public sphere discussion (Zebracki & De Bekker, 2018). Bourriaud, Schneider, and Herman (2002, p. iii) describe the arts as "tools to probe the contemporary world," reasoning that the arts are not passively interpreted but rather can be re-used and re-purposed by viewers. Social workers use the metaphor "inhabiting others' worlds' to discuss how the arts support individuals in empathizing with others and the metaphor of "breaking habits" to refer to how art can be "a foil" that shows alternative ways of knowing (Sinding et al. 2014, p. 194). In this narrative analysis, the sculpture prompted critical thinking about one's similarities and differences with others (first and second story) and ignited a broader media conversation about alternative ways of understanding and addressing the issue of homelessness in public spaces (third story). My analysis thus positions the sculpture as

supporting viewers in 'probing' contemporary understandings of their religious, economic, and social realities. By creating a context where viewers are willing to question their religious, economic, and social realities, *Homeless Jesus* would aid these viewers in dialoguing with those who hold differing worldviews and thus creating a more inclusive social space.

In addition to re-purposing a space for inclusive dialogue and creating public encounters, my interpretation of the data is also that *Homeless Jesus* leads individuals to consider and engage in dialogue about an issue many want to avoid. In their intellectual history of the arts, Belfiore and Bennett (2008) highlight how the arts have been historically praised for both their capacity to communicate taboo, foreign, or difficult messages that lead to greater social understandings, where people can empathize with others. This idea is also underscored within research on the role of arts within social work practices. Sinding et al (2014) draw out the metaphor of "getting stuff out" in their literature review on art-based social work practice. The metaphor of "getting stuff out" refers to how the arts can elicit and express difficult emotions when verbal and written language is insufficient or too abrasive. In the same way that social workers use art to compensate for the inadequacy of written and spoken language, the interviewees told stories of how *Homeless Jesus* conveyed an abrasive religious message to both a religious and a secular audience that contrasts with dominant neoliberal assumptions about poverty.

The capacity for art to convey a religious message to a secular audience makes public religious art, such as *Homeless Jesus*, well-suited to building up 'the public sphere'. For religious groups, art can be a vehicle for bringing religious ideas into public spaces in a way that enhances dialogue, is authentic to the religious dialoguer, and is considerate of those who hold differing beliefs. Habermas (2006) contemplates the role of religion in the public sphere in his essay on the meanings and implications of the principle, 'the separation of the church and state'. This

principle refers to the idea that a religious system should not govern political decisions. Habermas (2006) reasons that because the ideals and ideas of religious individuals are shaped by their religion, prohibiting religious influences within political and social realms of decision-making would exclude these individuals from participation, and thus would compromise the public sphere. Likewise, Habermas (2006) reasons that religion can carry moral insights about vulnerable members of society that can strengthen a political dialogue. Based on these premises, *Homeless Jesus* has strengthened public spheres in Hamilton by creating a platform for inclusive public discussion and by bringing religious ideas into dialogues about homelessness in a manner that is likely intelligible and respectful of those with a differing belief system. This idea and Habermas's (2006) position on the role of religion within the public sphere will be further explored in the next chapter.

A 'partial' promoter of parity of participation. Within the first story, Fr. T recounted how *Homeless Jesus* helped both St. Patrick's parishioners and their neighbours impacted by extreme poverty recognize homelessness as injustice. Habermas (1984) described justice as equal participation in the public sphere, where everyone has equal access to information, status, and opportunity to be heard. Based on this notion of justice, homelessness stigmas can be considered an injustice because they lower the status of those who are homeless and limit access to resources and knowledge (Goffman, 1963). For example, Ruth, Matusitz, and Simi (2017) highlight the inconsistencies around claims about the American political system and how those who are homeless are treated. While true democracy necessitates that everyone has the right to vote, Ruth, et al (2017) point to how disenfranchised members of society, such as those who are homeless, experience systematic barriers that prevent them from achieving this right. The

stigmatized status of those who are homeless can encumber their ability to equally participate in the public sphere.

As noted in Chapter 3, Habermas's theory of communicative action, although helpful in understanding how individuals can reach mutual understandings and in turn inform the public will, does not provide an adequate explanation of injustice. Nancy Fraser (1990, 2009), a critical feminist scholar recognized this gap within Habermas's theory, highlighting how Habermas's notion of justice is androcentric because it does not acknowledge how women's voices are manipulated and minimized within public spheres. Fraser (1990) put forward the concept of 'parity of participation' as a means of offering a more comprehensive explanation. Parity of participation is an ideal that refers to the capacity for individuals to fully participate within the fields of economics, politics, and culture. Its underlying premise is that there are two components of justice, the fair and equitable redistribution of resources (redistribution justice), and the fair and equitable recognition of cultural difference, where people from diverse social groups and cultures are respected even if they have not assimilated into the dominant culture (recognition justice).

These two components of justice are often pinned against each other. Fraser (1990) however asserts that they are interdependent and necessary to the development of a truly just society. Using the example of gender, Fraser (1990) points out how gender is a 'two-sided category', where women face both an economic disadvantage (lower-paying jobs and unpaid responsibilities) and a cultural disadvantage, where their culture demeans femininity and where women are more likely to experience violence and harassment in comparison to their male counterparts. To fulfill the ideal of 'parity of participation', a society must thus satisfy two conditions; (1) the equitable distribution of material resources to allow everyone to have

independence and a presence within public spaces and (2) institutional, social, and cultural systems where individuals are respected and able to pursue social esteem regardless of their identity.

This chapter's narrative analysis of stories told about *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton supports the notion that this sculpture promotes the second condition. Fr. T described how *Homeless Jesus* helped parishioners to become welcoming and less fearful of their neighbors experiencing homelessness. Likewise, by requiring individuals to sit alone outside by *Homeless Jesus,* the prayer vigil aided participants in imaging the harsh realities of those impacted by homelessness, which in turn appeared to inspire greater respect and empathy for this group. The third story showcased how this sculpture and its popularity served as evidence of the public's will to challenge the exclusion of those who are homeless from public spaces, such as Gore Park. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, both news media and participants explained how the ambiguity of Jesus's identity challenges viewers to re-consider which social groups they associate/do not associate with homelessness. This sculpture thus appears to compel viewers to respect those who are homeless.

While *Homeless Jesus* likely can promote Fraser's (1990) second condition for 'parity of participation' by challenging homelessness stigmas and generating greater respect for this group, it does not appear to fulfill the first condition. This finding aligns with Sharp et al's (2005) assertation that "the capacity of public art to foster inclusion is at best partial, able to address symbolic more than it is material needs" (p. 1021). Neither the three stories brought forward in this chapter nor the culturally shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus* discussed in the previous provide sufficient evidence to indicate that the sculpture promotes a more equitable redistribution of resources to those most impacted by poverty. The news articles and interviewees speculated

that the sculpture elicits tangible acts of compassion for those who are homeless and Fr. T's story indicates that this sculpture was part of the De Mazenod Door's efforts to address the inequalities that persist between the non-homeless and the homeless. However, this analysis does not support the notion that *Homeless Jesus* has had an impact on the economic systems in which Hamilton's homeless population belongs.

To satisfy Fraser's (1990) concept of parity of participation, barriers to economic participation and opportunity, such as those related to gender, race, culture, and sexuality need to be removed. A key theme within literature on homelessness risk factors and experiences is that those who are homeless have likely experienced multiple and intersecting social disadvantages based on their identities (Bower et al., 2017; Grenier, et al. 2016). For example, women are often excluded from economic participation due to unpaid social caregiving expectations. Mostowska and Dębska (2020) and Sharam (2017) explain how many older women are at risk of homelessness; these women may have relied on a male's income for much of their adult life and have now lost this income due to relationship breakup or death of an intimate partner. Furthermore, older adults may experience ageism when attempting to re-enter the workforce, which puts them at further risk of housing insecurity (Grenier et al., 2016). This example showcases how the current economic system favours some while disadvantaging others based on identity and how those who are homeless are likely to experience multiple economic disadvantages.

As noted in Chapter 5's discussion on the culturally-shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus,* this sculpture does not present a message that blames or critiques groups or systems for the social issue of homelessness. The three stories in this chapter draw attention to how this sculpture is a call to take individual responsibility and action to care for the needs of those impacted by

poverty. Although the three stories indicate that this sculpture contradicts and challenges the neoliberal logic of Hamilton's current economic system, they do not blame the system. By not blaming the current economic system, although this may be valuable in promoting 'a citizenship-based society' where individuals take on social responsibilities, the stories about *Homeless Jesus* do little to support Fraser's second condition of parity of participation. Those who are homeless will only be able to fully participate in Habermas's public sphere when they have the social respect and voice that comes with economic independence.

Evidence for 'justice-oriented' policy. Although *Homeless Jesus* only partially supports 'parity of participation' for those who are homeless and thus only partially promotes the development of a public sphere, my interpretation of the final story is that this sculpture is used as evidence to support the inclusion of those impacted by homelessness within public spaces. In Belfiore and Bennett's (2008) intellectual history of the arts, they draw attention to how the arts have historically had a sociopolitical function because of the common belief that the arts have "a stronghold on the human psyche" (p. 107). The capacity for art to influence one's psyche or prompt new ways of thinking makes it well suited to social engineering, or the task of promoting the formation of a 'good citizen'. Similarly, Belfiore and Bennett (2008) point to how religious institutions often use art to teach their core tenets and to inspire reverence. In the case of this narrative inquiry, 'a good citizen' is welcoming and compassionate towards those who are homeless. This idea is captured in Fr. T's account (first story) of how *Homeless Jesus* was intended to influence parishioners.

The belief that art can promote 'a good citizen' and influence the human psyche is consistent with how the news articles in the third story used *Homeless Jesus* politically when critiquing the city of Hamilton's efforts to exclude people who are homeless from a public park.

In the same way that *Homeless Jesus* offered a critique of the municipality's decision to install street benches with a central armrest, this sculpture may also have the capacity to be used as evidence for other policies, such as Housing First and Basic Income. Housing First programs seek to provide safe housing without expectations of sobriety. Basic Income Earth Network (2020), an international organization that brings together groups interested in basic income defines this initiative as "a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means tests or work requirements." These policy initiatives that target poverty and housing insecurity are approaches to addressing homelessness grounded in the same values intrinsic to *Homeless Jesus*.

Basic Income, Housing First, and *Homeless Jesus* all convey an understanding of homelessness that emphasizes a community's responsibility to ensure the basic needs of all members are met regardless of circumstance or identity. The popularity of *Homeless Jesus* is an indicator of what many people (intellectually) believe about homelessness; that people who are homeless, regardless of how they arrived at this situation, are persons with dignity and thus need to be treated as such. The meanings derived from *Homeless Jesus* in Chapter 5's iconography mirrored the basic tenets of these policies and thus can present them with moral backing. Grounding these policies in moral principles may be especially important in ensuring that the key principles of Housing First and Basic Income continue to shape these programs when implemented.

These policy initiatives may on paper be shaped by the principle of unconditionally caring for vulnerable members of society, but when implemented in a neoliberal context may exude a neoliberal commitment to paternally governing clients' behaviours (Hennigan, 2017). Comparing a Housing First and a Treatment First program, Hennigan (2017) found that both

programs seek to control clients' behaviors. Within the Housing First program, the housing market took on the role of withholding services until clients acted accordingly. Perkiö, Rincon and van Draanen (2019) similarly explain that basic income advocates have to make a choice: 1) develop proposals that align with the dominant political-ideological system (more fundable) or to 2) formulate less fundable proposals that "challenge hegemonic views and push for a paradigm change" (p. 236). Both Hennigan (2017) and Perkiö, et al. (2019) here draw attention to how what appears justice-orientated can serve a neoliberal agenda when taken up in a neoliberal context. As a permanent public art piece that conveys the same moral principles entrenched in Housing First and Basic Income policies, *Homeless Jesus* may have the capacity to act as a reminder that grounds these initiatives.

Conclusion. This narrative inquiry into the presence of *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton is a response to the question, "What do the meanings of, reactions to, and the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* reveal about the relationship between public religious art and dialogue within the public sphere about homelessness?" My analysis of the three stories suggests that this sculpture played a small role in building up Hamilton's public spheres by inviting public dialogue, making a private space feel public, fostering social inclusion, and 'partially' promoting justice. Likewise, my analysis suggests that this sculpture was used to buttress a community's response to homelessness (the public critique of 'anti-vagrant' street furniture in Gore Park). The idea that public art can be used to support political ideals and promote social inclusion aligns with literature on art-based public engagement. Likewise, it aligns with claims about the positive and negative social implications of art; art can be used to challenge a status quo.

Chapter 7: Public Art as Public Theology

This chapter gleans insights from and builds on Chapters 5 and 6 to explore how the religiosity of *Homeless Jesus* influences its capacity to challenge dominant ideological perceptions of homelessness and to build up the public sphere. Chapter 5 explored the culturally shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus*. It drew on Marcuse's ideas about art and social transformation to explore how its meanings disrupt and thus lead viewers to critically consider dominant ideological perceptions of homelessness. Chapter 6's narrative inquiry into the presence of *Homeless Jesus* in Hamilton drew on Habermas's concept of communicative action, augmented by Fraser's concept of parity of participation to investigate how it has been used to create inclusive public spaces suitable for the public sphere. This chapter in turn posits that art, such as *Homeless Jesus,* can be an entry-point for faith-based organizations to contribute to public dialogue in ways that are intelligible to a secular and religiously diverse society.

Throughout this discussion, I thus examine and compare how public theologians and non-religious scholars demarcate what role religion should play in shaping society. I consider how public religious art, like *Homeless Jesus,* can reinforce the capacity for faith-based organizations to achieve these societal roles. Likewise, I examine how findings from this thematic analysis are relevant to discussions about citizenship in religiously diverse societies through the lens of Lori Beaman's concept of 'deep equality' where religious differences are worked out relationally and Jurgen Habermas's concept of 'institutional translation proviso', where religious ideas are translated at formal levels of government into a universally accessible language. This chapter concludes by outlining what the interviewees' claims and beliefs about public religious art indicate about the limitations and strengths of this art when it comes to bringing politically-relevant religious beliefs into public dialogues about social issues.

To consider how and if public religious art can support religiously diverse public dialogue, this chapter relied solely on the interviews with faith leaders at organizations with a *Homeless Jesus* (Stage 1) and members of a faith-based organization in Hamilton (Stage 2), as opposed to the online news article and photos used in the previous chapters. When quoting participants, I use the same pseudonyms used in Chapters 5 and 6 (see Appendix A). Within the interviews, both sets of participants were asked to consider the role of art within their organization and in relation to *Homeless Jesus* (See Appendices C and D).

All fourteen interviewees from research stages 1 and 2 positioned creating and sharing the arts as a key element of their organization's mission. Together these interviewees represented 2 Christian non-profit organizations, 1 Catholic college, 1 Catholic cathedral, 1 Anglican cathedral, and 5 churches (2- Anglican, 1- Canadian Reformed, 1-Catholic, 1- Non-denomination). The two interviewees employed at a non-profit prayer organization in Hamilton noted that encouraging creativity among members and within the community was a central pillar of their organizational values. All interviewees recounted how their faith-based organizations use art as a vehicle for sharing their Christian faiths with non-members, teaching both members and non-members about the core tenets of this faith, and inspiring worship of God and exploration of oneself and spirituality. Within the context of this dissertation, I conceptualize both worship and spirituality broadly to accommodate different faith traditions. Here, I define worship as expressing reverence for God and spirituality as one's sense of purpose and meaning in life.

The Sacredness of Art in Faith-Based Organizations

This thematic analysis yielded four key themes, which will be expounded throughout this chapter: that religious art, such as *Homeless Jesus*, is a way of connecting to God, to seeking spiritual self-understanding, a way of connecting to others, and a way of teaching. While the

latter two themes bear weight when it comes to considering the role of public religious art in religiously diverse public dialogues, the first two are important within the confines of one's religion and spirituality. A recognition of the inherent, sacred, and ethereal value of religious art for faith-based organizations, provides a backdrop for considering the more tangible ways in which these organizations may 'use' public religious art in their public theological endeavours.

Connecting to God. A clear theme within the interview data was the notion that religious art can enhance sacred spaces, where one feels connected to God. J.R noted that art can be used to inspire "people into believing a particular message or to inspire people into something deeper, something with integrity." J.R reasoned that by inspiring, art can protect and enhance sacred spaces, which she emphasized are needed in urban centres. The notion that art can protect and enhance sacred spaces is also encapsulated in O.C's personal definition of creativity. O.C defines creativity as "using art, or language, or space, or ideas creatively to convey a message or ideas to people; to accomplish a goal or to bring them into a place where we hope they will encounter God's presence or encounter his mercy or justice." O.C is speaking to the role of creative or artistic endeavours in cultivating spaces where one feels connected to a higher power or deity.

Fr. P and Rev. W also affirmed this idea that artistic endeavours can create spaces that are 'sacred' or where individuals can connect with, pray to, or worship God. Fr. P explained how the arts are often used within Catholic churches to encourage "worship", or the recognizing, revering, and honoring of God. Rev. W. also considered how religious art can resemble or be a form of prayer:

> There's a kind of a moment in prayer where there's no longer kind of a need to talk because you're simply kind of sitting and resting in God's presence and you just trust that through that relationship, something is taking place. And I think with good art when we behold it, but I think also when we allow ourselves to be held, that something also happens beyond the realm of words.

Rev. W is associating the experience of praying with the experience of spiritually engaging with an artwork. Like the story of *Homeless Jesus* at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church (Chapter 6), this thematic analysis also sheds light on how faith-based organizations use art to both beautify their physical spaces and to make these spaces sacred or connected to God.

Art as meaning-making and self-exploration. When asked why their faith-based organizations invest in the arts, interviewees reasoned that the desire to create and make spaces aesthetic is a natural part of being human and thus a natural part of the work of faith-based organizations. R.G. explained this when quoting the founder of their non-profit organization, "we need to be careful to not fall into a life of greys." R.G explained that their organization places value on the arts because "God is so creative" and so by default human beings are meant to be creative; Being creative supports human beings in living holistically. This belief is also summed up by Rev. S:

> Art itself is an expression of human creativity, which is a reflection of the spark of the divine in us in many ways. We are made in the image of God and fundamentally to be creative, to be creators… co-creators, you might say. So art has an important theological place. It has an important spiritual place.

The quote above captures the logic that because human beings are divinely intended to be creative and God is creative, engaging in art is a natural avenue to increasing self-understanding and an understanding of God.

The notion that creativity and the arts are intrinsic to God and humanity and thereby an avenue to learning about God and oneself was a clear theme within each interview. M.A emphasized that the arts within faith-based organizations are not "extraneous or fluffy" but are rather about "expressing our faith," referring to a set of personal beliefs about God. B.M explained that the Catholic church values art because "it helps us explore our spirituality." Fr. P

similarly discussed how art in the church aids parishioners in better understanding themselves because people are both "spirit and body," noting that art can speak to people's 'hearts' as opposed to just their 'minds'. In other words, these participants believed that engaging in the arts is a way to learn about and express themselves emotionally, spiritually, and/or intellectually.

Participants thereby reflected on how the arts can increase holistic self-awareness. Both K. C and Rev. W reasoned that how an individual reacts to an art piece can tell that individual something about themselves. K.C considered how *Homeless Jesus* asks viewers to re-examine their reactions to and beliefs about poverty:

> You might see the *Homeless Jesus* and you might think from a distance and say 'Uh another bum laying on the street.' If you have that reaction and then you get closer and you see it's Jesus. Again, we've skipped the rational mind and gone right to 'you are afraid of or judgemental of the poor, but Jesus looked much more like the poor than he did the rich.' Or you might see him from a distance and say, 'Oh I should go see if that guy is okay.' Then you get closer and see that it's Jesus and you go 'Oh that's so cool that I have this impulse in me and that I can see someone who is a Jesus in the world and care for them.' That art piece really gets beyond some of the ways we would assume we would answer a question.

Here, K.C is seeking to explain how the arts can be a mode of spiritual self-discovery. Rev. W similarly articulated that "there's something with the statute of a homeless Jesus, which transcends the verbal and really moves towards a conversation with the heart." This quote captures the notion that art such as *Homeless Jesus* can aid individuals in understanding and engaging with their 'hearts' or emotions and intuition. As a chaplain at a college, Rev. W hoped *Homeless Jesus* would support students in formulating their identities and worldviews, as suggested in the quote below.

> For those that are Christian and know the story of Matthew's gospel, the great commission to feed those who are hungry, give drink to those who are thirsty, and shelter to those who are homeless, you can't walk by the statue without having that have some sort of impact on who you are and maybe those deeper kinds of ontological questions about how to wrestle with one's vocation or one's commitment.

This quote positions *Homeless Jesus* as an example of art that supports viewers in not only better understanding Christian beliefs but also in exploring their personal goals and sense of purpose or meaning in life. As all religions seek to offer insights into the deeper meaning and purpose of one's life, faith-based organizations use art to support members in meaning-making and in better understanding their spirituality.

Religious art as valuable in and of itself. The themes of connecting to God and self-understanding hint that public religious art would exist even if faith-based organizations experienced this art as 'unusable.' Both artistic endeavours and religion can serve the purposes of aiding individuals in exploring questions about one's purpose and the nature of God (Jensen & Vrudny, 2009; Jensen, 2013). It thereby is logical that art is prevalent and highly valued within religious spaces. Considering how scholars in the arts have sought to problematize advocacy and research that positions art as essential solely because of its social and economic possibilities without acknowledging its intrinsic value, I have sought to highlight here how religious art is valuable in and of itself (Belfiore & Bennett, 2008). By first outlining the spiritual implications and value of the arts, I hope to avoid privileging the potential tangible sociopolitical and theological functions (to be described) over the sacred and spiritual elements of religious art.

Public Religious Art in Religiously Diverse Public Spheres.

As noted above, a central theme in this thematic analysis is that faith-based organizations use art to connect with members of their organizations and external communities. After reporting

on this theme, I examine how public theology suggests 'connecting to others' is imperative to authentically participating in the Christian faith while non-religious scholarship has viewed religion in public life as 'a problem to be solved'. I then outline both Lori Beaman's and Jurgen Habermas's approaches to 'reconciling the problem of religion' in secular religiously diverse societies.

A point of connection with 'the public.' When recounting the role of arts within their organizations, the interviewees highlighted the ways that the arts can be a point of connection for their organizations with non-members. This was captured when Q. B., an artist working at a non-denominational church, posited that "art can draw people together and create a safe space for conversation and sharing". In this quote, Q. B. is referring to the process of creating and discussing art in groups. As these processes are creative, the act of creating or discussing art naturally produces spaces where individuals are prompted to share ideas and converse authentically. Conversation and sharing are naturally conducive to building relationships.

The notion that art can play a role in creating spaces that are conducive to relationship-building was also underscored by other participants, such as B. M. and Rev. W. B. M recounted how the college intentionally placed *Homeless Jesus* in a courtyard to increase its visibility for non-members that pass by.

> What we've done is position it in the college where it's not just part of the college but also part of the community. You see, you actually don't have to come into the college to be part of it; it's us and the community meeting around a work of art.

By intentionally placing *Homeless Jesus* in a location easily accessible to both the public and college students, faculty and staff, B. M. hoped this sculpture would bring together the college and their surrounding community. The college here is thus using *Homeless Jesus* as a tool for connecting relationally with those outside their organization.

Rev. W, who like B.M works within higher education, described how the sculpture was strategically placed in front of a building that has a high level of pedestrian traffic, from both students and visitors to the university: "This is a spot which is really going to capture the attention of the student community…It also sees the most traffic from outside of the community." Rev. W further explained how the sculpture has provided opportunities to converse about Christian beliefs. Considering how *Homeless Jesus* might be relevant to non-Christian viewers, Rev. W noted, "it really just looks like any other homeless person. I think even having that stimulates conversation." The quotes above indicate that faith-based organizations use religious publicly-placed art as a gesture that welcomes conversation with outsiders. Rather than using words to tell outsiders about their organizations' beliefs and values, in using art faith-based organizations invite conversation, which is likely to be more conducive to relationship building. The interviewees suggested that the arts aid faith-based organizations and religious individuals in connecting with non-members at both an organizational and a personal level.

On a personal level, interviewees described the challenge of participating in secular or non-Christian public spaces and facets of their daily lives, as individuals whose worldviews are shaped by a religious belief system. Art as a form of personal expression helped participants to reconcile or explore the intersections and tensions between being both religious and a member of secular society. As a columnist for a secular newspaper, J.R experienced tension around writing what she wanted to write about (her faith) while also considering the nature and audience of her newspaper column. She appreciated new-found freedom to talk publicly about faith in her role within the Anglican church.

> [Jesus] is important, but we don't talk about that. We talk about love. And in order to be the most inclusive, like obviously, we have to quiet that part down, but while other people are getting loud

> about their faith, I was sometimes caught. But now I'm not because I work in the Anglican church, so I have to talk about Jesus.

This quote from J. R captures the tension that religious individuals may feel when seeking to be authentic in their creative work yet also sensitive to the differing beliefs and worldviews of others.

M. A and Q. B, the two artists working in a non-denominational church, also experienced this tension and appreciation for producing artwork within a Christian space. This tension was captured when M.A considered the public and religious nature of *Homeless Jesus* and how the lines between what is religious and what is public are often blurred.

> I guess there is obviously this separation of church and state, but also like there is lots of religious life that are public and lots of public life feeds into religious life as well... Like we are a religious institution and I can't pretend that I'm not when I come into a public space or work on a public project. My experience, even if I didn't talk about it or didn't express it, I can only make work out of that. But still, I live my life equally as a religious person and as a public individual because that's what living in the city is.

M.A is highlighting the challenge of bracketing one's religious faith within public spaces when one's religion shapes how one views, experiences, and engages in these areas. Working within a faith-based organization allowed for the freedom to openly produce works that expressed religious or spiritual beliefs.

The excerpt above by M.A furthermore brings forward the idea that art within public spaces can be influenced by religion and that religious art can be influenced by public phenomena, such as social issues and culture that develop outside of faith-based organizations. A theme within the interviews is that the distinction between 'religious' and 'public' is often arbitrary. J. R discussed examples of using art to advocate for social justice, a value intrinsic to

her personal faith. In one example, a group of activists developed a life-size depiction of a refrigerator in which they covered with photographs of the sparsely-filled refrigerator interiors belonging to people living on social assistance. J. R recounted how they used this artwork to petition the City of Hamilton to improve policy support for people experiencing poverty. This example conveys the connections between the arts, public engagement in social issues, and one's religious faith.

Rev. S also discussed the interrelated nature of 'religious' and 'public' phenomenon when considering how what distinguishes them may at times be subjective and unfounded.

> I believe that all art has the potential at least to call out something or to engage or disturb our nature as human beings, whether it's to evoke a sense of beauty or shock. I wouldn't want to draw too sharp a line between so-called religious art and art… This is a serious piece of art in its own right [referring to *Homeless Jesus*].

This quote is a response to the notion that religious art is not true or 'serious' art but rather simply images that are continually replicated and recycled to fit the aesthetic preferences and traditions of religious institutions. Rev. S is pushing back against this stereotype by pointing out that religious art can reflect artists' original ideas and emotions and can have an emotional, spiritual, or intellectual impact on viewers. In this way, Rev. S is reasoning here that secular art can serve religious purposes and religious art can be relevant to a secular audience. A clear theme within this analysis is thereby that members of faith-based organizations view art as a means of exploring the interconnections between what is religious and what is public, seeking to participate authentically and publicly in their communities, as religious individuals.

On an organizational level, the interviewees indicated that art can be a visual statement that communicates an organizations' core values and beliefs to non-members. In Hamilton, P.J underscored how *Homeless Jesus* can be a visual statement of core beliefs and values when

stating, “I'm a bit jealous of the churches that have it because it's giving a very positive message and lending a very good reputation.” This quote captures the idea that churches with a *Homeless Jesus* are building a public reputation for caring about and recognizing the dignity within marginalized members of society.

B. M, Rev. S, and Rev. W also discussed how *Homeless Jesus* acted as a public statement which outsiders could use to better understand the organization. B.M brought forward this idea when pointing out that they hoped *Homeless Jesus* would be a statement about the essence of Christianity in their community: “It was our centenary last year, so we were looking to make a bit of a statement and add to our art collection, but we wanted to reflect a humbled and merciful church”. In times where Christianity is often viewed as hostile or exclusionary, B. M hoped *Homeless Jesus* would be a sign to outsiders that their organization is safe and welcoming.

Rev. S similarly explained how *Homeless Jesus* was chosen to be a visual representation of the church’s obligation to serve those who are disenfranchised: “it explains why this large Victorian gothic building is here. It’s about engagement with those who are rejected by society, marginalized, that’s where Jesus likes to be, where people are in pain. That is where we're called to be.” Rev. W also echoed this sentiment when defining *Homeless Jesus* as a ‘marker’ that explains the college’s activities and commitments; “it's important for us to have markers on the campus that talk about what we do beyond our academic studies.” Rev. W also explained how *Homeless Jesus* is intended to be an “aspirational” statement, that encourages students to act on their social convictions; “I'm not really sure if its a statement about who we are and what we believe… I think as much as it is that, it's probably as much an aspirational piece; So then this should be our focus.” This quote captures the idea that *Homeless Jesus,* as a visual and public statement about an organization, can speak both to what the organization is and/or what they

want to become. As a visual statement, interviewees hoped *Homeless Jesus* would be a connection point between their organizations and the communities in which they are located, helping non-members to better understand and dialogue about their values and beliefs.

Interviewees as public theologians. An overarching theme in this thematic analysis is that public religious art can be an avenue for faith-based organizations and their leaders to connect to external secular or non-Christian publics. This theme became particularly evident when interviewees discussed the challenge of contributing to secular non-Christian public dialogues as religious individuals, whose worldviews, behaviours, and language are shaped by a spirituality and/or a religious system. They indicated a desire to be both inclusive of those with differing worldviews yet authentically themselves without bracketing their religious influences. This desire to fully participate in a secular society as a religious individual/organization speaks to the heart of public theology. As discussed within Chapter 2, public theology is a discipline that seeks to produce "theologically informed discourse about public issues" (Breitenberg, 2003, p. 66). Christian public theologians explore how biblical interpretations and doctrines can benefit publics. Furthermore, Christian public theologians study how these interpretations and doctrines should guide the actions and speech of religious individuals in public spaces. Public theology is thus a discipline primarily concerned with authentic religious engagement in non-religious spaces.

Vanjoozer and Strachan (2015) assert that all pastors and church leaders should be public theologians who consider and can articulate the relevance of theology to their broader communities. They argue that these leaders have a responsibility to not only be 'spiritual guides' who motivate, mentor, and impart biblical beliefs about God, but should also help members to understand their everyday social, political, environmental, and intrapersonal realities through a

theological lens (Vanjoozer & Strachan, 2015). Based on this understanding of public theology and public theologians, all interviewees involved in this dissertation hold insight into the role and place of art when it comes to using biblical beliefs about God to engage publicly in and inform understandings of social issues.

Bedford-Strohm (2008, 2012), a Lutheran bishop and prominent public theologian, asserts that the discussions and political actions promoted by public theologians should be 'bilingual'. Bilingual faith-based organizations use their "biblical and theological roots, texts and metaphors" to inform their public engagement while also articulating in secular discourses why their public contributions and ideas 'make sense' (p. 151). This can take the form of giving an account of the philosophical plausibility of a religious idea or concept. The concept of 'bilingualism" aligns with the principle of 'institutional translation proviso', which Habermas uses to discuss how religious individuals should engage in public debates (to be discussed). Drawing on the ideas of Habermas, Bedford-Strohm (2012) points out that political arguments start from premises that are not purely rational. These pre-premises are the political openings that public theologians can use to bilingually assert their theologically-informed ideas and insights.

Reconciling the 'problem of religion'. As public theologians grapple with how to engage in social issues, philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists seek to pin down appropriate boundaries for religion when it comes to influencing political action. As captured in the thematic analysis above, leaders in faith-based organizations desire to participate authentically and be understood within their communities as both 'public' and 'religious' individuals/organizations, using art as one strategy for achieving this desire. Allowing religious individuals to participate authentically in their communities opens up the possibility of religious conflict within pluralistic and democratic societies.

Religious conflicts that require the dominant majority to adjust their practices, systems, rules, or language bring up tensions regarding the extent to which a dominant majority should allow themselves to be influenced by religion. Scholars and policy leaders thereby often treat religion as 'a problem' to be solved. Throughout Beaman's (2012) edited collection of essays on the practice of 'reasonable accommodation' in Canada, authors cite several recent and historic examples of how Canadian society has been shaped by the addressing of religious conflicts, such as the establishment of a Catholic school system in Ontario during the mid-1800s and the more recent legal battle involving an RCMP officer who wished to alter his uniform to accommodate wearing a turban in adherence to the Sikh faith. An awareness of common approaches to overcoming religious conflicts or putting boundaries around religious influence, put forward by philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists, provides a backdrop for considering why faith-based organizations use public religious art, such as *Homeless Jesus*, as a vehicle for achieving the desire to engage both religiously and publicly in society.

Positions on the role of religion in shaping society fall on a continuum, with an 'exclusivist' position on one end where religion is barred from public deliberation and an 'inclusivist' position on the other, where religion is celebrated as a source of political guidance (Jakobsen & Fjørtoft, 2018). When seeking to pin down the role of religion, scholars debate about the meanings of concepts, such as 'freedom of religion', 'the separation of church and state', and approaches to addressing the challenges of 'religious pluralism'. In this chapter, I rely on Habermas's (2006) definition of 'freedom of religion' as the right to practice one's religion and the "appropriate political answer to the challenges of religious pluralism", or the societal challenges associated with living in a religiously diverse society where citizens have conflicting convictions (p. 4). A key premise of Habermas's (2006) position on the role of religion in the

public sphere is that the separation of church and state is a prerequisite to democracy. This principle denotes that while all citizens, regardless of faith or religious belief system, can participate in public deliberation, religion alone should not guide political action.

As noted above, honoring freedom of religion and the separation of church and state can be challenging in religiously diverse societies. Dominant approaches to overcoming religious conflict include promoting tolerance and reasonable accommodation of religious differences and interfaith dialogues. Reasonable accommodation is both a legal and social discourse popular in Western nations that is implicit in discussions about religious conflict in public spaces. This discourse speaks to the balancing act of recognizing that everyone has the right to practice their religion, yet some religious practices may prevent individuals from participating fully in society, and thus these individuals need the dominant majority to adjust practices to accommodate for their religiosity (Beaman, 2012). Likewise, the discourse of reasonable accommodation speaks to the notion that some religious practices cannot be accommodated because they threaten the wellbeing of the majority (Beaman, 2012; Bribosia, Ringelheim, & Rorive, 2010). The dominant majority thus deems these threatening religious practices as 'unreasonable.'

Beaman's commentary on religion in public spheres. Dr. Lori Beaman, a Canadian religious studies scholar, makes a compelling case for problematizing the discourses of 'reasonable accommodation' and 'religious tolerance'. While religiously pluralistic societies may claim that they celebrate diversity, literature and policy often negatively handle religious differences as something that needs to be managed, tolerated, or accommodated. Beaman (2012) reasons that 'reasonable accommodation' and 'tolerance' as approaches to managing religious diversity are problematic because they create power differentials that promote the exclusion of minority religious groups while ostensibly appearing inclusive; writing that, "when we

accommodate someone, we grant an exception to the rule, rather than questioning the inclusiveness of the rule itself" (p. 208). When an authority or dominant majority grants an exception to the rule to accommodate a religious difference, it is reaffirming its power to change rules and reinforcing the religious minority's vulnerable position of needing to request social inclusion.

Marcuse's (1969) concept of 'repressive tolerance' is likewise useful in understanding Beaman's problematization of reasonable accommodation. This concept denotes the scenario where individuals are presented with opposing positions or ideas but are always predisposed to accept the positions and ideas that belong to the powerful elite or dominant majority. Beaman (2012) and Shelby and Beaman (2018) point out that Canada is a state rooted in a Christian ideology and history yet predominantly secular. These scholars thereby suggest that claims made by religious minority groups are weighed unfairly against policies and practices rooted in Christianity, secularism, or a combination of these two worldviews. The practice of determining whether to accommodate a religious minority based on the preferences of a majority sustains an unequal power differential. The discourse of 'reasonable accommodation' and the unequal power differential it sustains between religious minority groups and the secular majority influenced by Christianity can in turn compromise Habermas's ideal speech situation, where everyone has equal opportunity to contribute to the public sphere.

In addition to problematizing 'reasonable accommodation' and religious tolerance, Beaman (2017) also critiques 'interfaith dialogue' as an approach to dealing with religious differences and conflict. Interfaith dialogues bring together individuals from distinct religious groups to diplomatically discuss shared matters of interest. Beaman critiques this third approach by highlighting how it can discount atheists and agnostics, promote the principle of tolerance,

and can reduce the complexity of individuals' faith and spirituality by relegating individuals to specific religious categories. Based on these critiques, Beaman (2017) reasons that religious conflict cannot be truly reconciled within the context of interfaith dialogues because not everyone is welcome to participate authentically.

However, Beaman's critiques of interfaith dialogues as an approach to reconciling religious differences may at times be unfounded. For example, a key theme within Heft's (2011) anthology on interfaith dialogue within the Catholic church is that interfaith dialogues should not be guided by the principle of tolerance. Heft (2011) premises this anthology by explaining how tolerance of another's religion is only a step above religious violence. Drawing attention to the proximity of meanings between religious tolerance, something that is often perceived positively, and the negative phenomenon of religious violence compels public theologians and social scientists to consider alternatives to tolerance and reasonable accommodation when it comes to overcoming religious conflicts in pluralistic societies.

In replace of reasonable accommodation, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue, Beaman (2012), along with colleagues call for 'deep equality' built on a critical awareness of one's privilege and/or fear of others or religious difference, and a respect for shared humanity. The principle of deep equality and interfaith dialogues are not mutually exclusive approaches to overcoming conflict but rather deep equality can be embedded within interfaith dialogues to ensure that these dialogues allow all individuals to participate authentically. Beaman's concept of deep equality refers to the notion that religious differences should be resolved in the context of personal relationships, where an individuals' complex religious views and circumstances can be considered and respected.

A barrier to respecting religious views within the public domain can be the dominant cultural tendency prevalent in Western nations to pin religion against rationality. Both secular scholars concerned with honoring freedom of religion and public theologians seek to discredit the dichotomization of religion and rationality. To argue that the dichotomization of religion and rationality can thwart efforts to promote social cohesion and inclusion in pluralistic societies, Beaman (2012) first highlights that the boundaries between religious majorities and minorities are often blurred; for example, one can accept a dominant worldview while holding onto practices and traditions from one's minority religious upbringing. According to Beaman (2012), viewing faith and religion as co-opting forces that prevent individuals and groups from dialoguing rationally is problematic because it puts a religious individual "in the either/or position – one is either a person of faith or one is rational" (p. 221). This idea that individuals can both adopt dominant rational ways of thinking and maintain religious beliefs that do not have 'rationale' foundations is underscored within this thematic analysis where interviewees describe the blurred lines between their religious and public lives and/or art.

To reconcile the political challenges associated with religious conflicts in pluralistic societies, Beaman's concept of 'deep equality,' which can be enacted within interfaith dialogues, is a viable alternative to religious tolerance and accommodation. As opposed to relying on rigid religious categories, this principle can recognize the complexity of faiths belonging to individuals. It is thus a more tangible and realistic approach to overcoming conflict than 'reasonable accommodation'. By recognizing the complexity of faith within individuals, and thereby also within the faith-based organizations they make up, Beaman's 'deep equality' approach to overcoming religious differences reinforces the notion that religion is not necessarily a threat to rational political decision-making. Encouraging publics to respect religious

differences in their pluralistic societies, this concept promotes the development of public spheres where all members, regardless of religious affiliation, can participate with equal access to information, resources, and opportunities.

Habermas's position on religion in public spheres. The position that religious difference and diversity should be 'worked out' in equal relationships characterized by respect aligns well with Habermas's (2002, 2006, 2008, 2013) discussions on the roles of religion in the public sphere(s). At the heart of these discussions is the question, "how do you share citizenship with those who use faith rather than reason to make decisions?" (Calhoun et al. 2013, p. 2). Habermas responded to this question in the context of the strong religious influence on politics in the United States, conversations about eugenics and the value of human life, and islamophobia in Europe and the United States (Calhoun, et al., 2013). The attention Habermas has paid to the role of religion in the public sphere(s) also largely stems from the aftermath of 9/11, a watershed event that fueled anti-Muslim sentiments.

In opposition to anti-Muslim (and general anti-religious) sentiments, Habermas (2006) positions religion as an important source of moral insights that can humanize neoliberal policies and institutions shaped by instrumental reasoning, or the use of 'cost-benefit analyses' to make political decisions. Based on this premise, religion is not an opposing force to rationality but rather complements it. When advocating for a post-secular public administration, where religious ideas are valued in political governance, Putten, Overeem, and van Steden (2019) conclude that "religion can fill the spiritual and moral gap that rationalization and (neoliberal) capitalism have unintentionally produced in people's lives" (p. 24). Due to an emphasis on protecting the vulnerable and providing an alternative perspective to the dominant ideological system, the

inclusion of religion within public-sphere dialogues promises to advance true democratic action, where all citizens have equal access to information, resources, and opportunity.

Habermas (2006) reasons that religious communities can not only advance civil society by offering insights into "morally-loaded issues" (p. 7) but can also encourage political participation and activism. Habermas (2013) is interested in religion as a motivating force for social transformation, arguing that reason or rational thought is not enough to spur on collective action or bring social solidarity. For Habermas, religious faith is often a response to social problems rather than a desire for individual happiness:

> The redemptive moment of the impending Kingdom of God or the liberating moment of release from the cycle of rebirths, is not exhausted in individual happiness; rather, against the backdrop of a widespread awareness of crisis, it acquires the significance of a collective fate that concerns human beings (Habermas, 2013, p. 356.)

Habermas is articulating here that religion is better equipped for supporting collective action than pure rationality because it inspires a deep hope for a shared future.

The notion that religious communities can encourage political participation is intrinsic to the public theologian's belief that Christians are called to engage politically in their social realities. Rauschenbusch (1917) argues that the prophets of the bible were both political and religious agents because they called for social change. In Cartledge, Dunlop, Buckingham, and Bremner's (2019) study on the social engagement practices of megachurches in the UK, they found that "keeping the relationship between people's experiences with God and their social activism connected" can fuel positive societal contributions, such as the operating of shelters and day centres for people who are homeless (p. 332). Individuals may be more likely to engage politically when they feel the connection between their actions and faith. Findings from Chapter 6 indicating that *Homeless Jesus* inspires concern for those who are homeless supports this

notion. *Homeless Jesus* presents a religious message that can encourage a political response to a social issue.

Furthermore, Habermas (2006, 2008, 2013) reasoned that respecting religious voices is key to respecting democracy. In the quote below, Habermas (2013, p. 371) draws attention to the illogic of a 'post-religious' democratic society.

> The problem is that liberal constitutions erode on the air of a paradox in this regard. Although they are designed to guarantee all religious communities an equal freedom to participate in civil society, they simultaneously shield the public bodies that make collectively binding decisions from religious influence.

Central to Habermas's position on the role of religion in the public sphere is the notion that censoring religious voices within a democracy is inconsistent with its core premise of allowing all citizens to participate in the political process.

The idea that democracy necessitates respect for religion is affirmed and advanced by Putten, et al (2019, p. 24), who present the logic that "paying attention to religion means doing justice to a social reality." They reason that seeking to understand and recognize religion within political and public spaces is important because religion is a force that shapes worldviews and thus can affect on a systematic level public sphere discussion. Cartledge et al (2019) found that megachurches are intertwined with the processes of globalization, where they both have an international influence and foster new forms of international connection. The context of globalization can magnify the motivations of these large faith-based organizations, as they can reach a global audience. Based on this premise and research, paying attention to religious voices is important to understanding social life on a macro global scale. When policy leaders neglect to consider religion and/or require individuals to filter out their faith-informed motivations and

ideas within public spaces, these leaders are turning a blind eye to a source of change and may run the risk of developing misinformed policy.

After establishing that religion is valuable and has a place within the public sphere(s), Habermas insists pluralistic and democratic societies should seek to be 'post-secular', where both the religious and non-religious co-exist and share the task of governing. Like Beaman (2012) and Cartledge et al. (2019), Habermas challenges the dominant belief that religion and rationality are mutually exclusive. A post-secular society, according to Habermas, still upholds the principle of 'separation of church and state', which ensures that one religious system cannot dominate politics. Putten et al (2019) affirm Habermas's concept of post-secularism. They value it for offering a balanced alternative to and protection from "militant secularism" where religious groups are barred from public dialogue and "fundamentalist religious dogmatism" where any argument grounded in a belief about God is indomitable (p. 23). Within a post-secular society, Habermas (2006) asserts that "fair arrangements can only be found if the parties involved learn to take the perspectives of others" (p. 4). Again, Habermas's position aligns with Beaman's (2012) and Cartledge et al. (2019)'s position that religious differences should be negotiated within the context of equal relationships where all members are respected and not merely tolerated or accommodated.

Habermas's concept of "Institutional Translation Proviso". To facilitate perspective taking within pluralistic societies, Habermas uses and amends John Rawl's concept of translation to formulate the concept of "institutional translation proviso". This concept necessitates that at formal levels of the public sphere that entail deliberation about official state policy and action, all citizens should be able to articulate why their chosen political course of action (that can be rooted in religious ideals) can be supported by public reason (Habermas, 2006). Essentially,

religious individuals can use religious language within informal public dialogues if they choose but must translate these ideas into a universal language for these ideas to be permissible within a public institutional setting. Putten, et al (2019, p. 13) conceptualize translation as "a filter" that allows an argument made within a mosque, temple, church, or another place of worship to start as 'religious' but to end up as a universally understandable claim within a formal public dialogue. In other words, translation is a mediation process between religiously distinct groups at formal levels of public deliberation.

Translation is a method of ensuring all citizens are respected and included in democratic processes because it requires policy leaders to ensure their actions are both grounded and justified in principles and a language that is "equivocally accessible to all citizens" (Habermas, 2006, p. 7). Jakobsen and Fjørtoft (2018) note that translation can protect and promote social cohesion. If a state makes decisions based on a religious premise in a pluralistic society, many citizens will not see this decision as legitimate. Neglecting to translate political decisions arising from a religious principle will thus lead to a deepening of the public's mistrust of the state (legitimacy crisis), in turn weakening the public sphere.

In their book on responses to Habermas's position on the relationship between religion and the public sphere, Calhoun et al. (2013) summarize key criticisms of Habermas's concept of institutional translation proviso. A key point of tension for scholars such as Lafont (2013) and Pensky (2013) is that translation is the transformation of a religious claim into a moral claim that is seen as valid within secular society. These scholars question whether this transformation is possible. Habermas suggests that philosophy presents a language that public theologians can draw on to support them in the act of translating. Philosophy shares with religion a concern for uncovering and validating claims to truth and responds to similar metaphysical questions

(Junker-Kenny, 2014). However, religion differs from philosophy because these two fields draw on different authorities when making claims. For example, philosophy does not have an equivalent to the notion of 'God' or its communal rituals and traditions (Junker-Kenny, 2014; Mendieta, 2012). Critics thus argue that the act of translating a religious belief makes it no longer religious because the translator takes away the claim's essence or basic underlying premise, namely its connection to the sacred (Calhoun, et al. 2013). Critics assert that the 'translated religious idea' is a new idea altogether.

By drawing attention to the limitations of using philosophy to translate religion, critics reason that institutional translation proviso marginalizes religious individuals because they are unable to fully express their argument. Cartledge et al's (2019) research indicated that faith-based organizations often fall short at the task of translation, or bilingually speaking both a religious and a secular language. In their research on megachurches in the UK, they found that faith-based organizations have their own language and discourses. As they are immersed in these discourses, they often do not realize that these discourses are inaccessible to a broader public. An inability to express one's faith in accessible terms often reinforces the notion that religious institutions are irrelevant when it comes to engaging in social issues. According to Cartledge et al. (2019), this phenomenon is evidenced by a decline in the population who adhere and participate in organized religion in the UK.

Habermas's critics thus beg the question, can "religion survive translation"? (Calhoun et al. 2013, p. 352). In response to this question, both Habermas (2013) and Putten et al. (2019) claim that religion can survive translation because translation is a relational task. In a truly democratic society, Putten et al. (2019) reason that secular citizens should not only respect the perspectives of religious citizens but should also "be willing to help with translating religious

arguments" (p. 12). In agreement with Habermas (2013), Putten et al. (2019) envision the translation of religious arguments in a public dialogue as "a co-operative task" (p. 12). Habermas (2013) points out that religion can survive translation because it is not simply a process of simplifying or getting rid of one's language but is rather the process of teaching one's language to another. For true democracy, societies need civil solidarity where both religious and non-religious citizens respect and learn from one another.

Other critics argue that Habermas's understanding of religion is simplistic and limited because religious beliefs are not simply basic premises in which individuals build arguments but rather can be non-argumentative and experiential (Cooke, 2013). Faith-based organizations are a different breed than public ones with differing motivations and ways of reasoning (Bielefeld and Cleveland, 2013). This point is evidenced within Cartledge et al's (2019) research on megachurches, where they found that the religious motivations and discourses used by individuals within these churches were not designed to "win arguments" (p. 332). Rather these churches promoted a desire among congregants to foster a personal relationship with God and with others. Habermas does not directly or adequately respond to this criticism. However, this concept of translation does offer a next best alternative to the total loss of religious meaning that might occur without an effort to be 'bilingual'.

A third prominent criticism of Habermas's concept of translation and position on religion in the public sphere is that religion can lead people to disregard deliberation (Calhoun, et al., 2013). This criticism is based on the premise that religions often urge members to accept traditions, principles, and ideas on faith. It speaks to the fear that if religion were to be allowed within public spheres and political realms, religious voices would use 'divine authority' as a trump card that others could not dispute. Pointing to events in Christian history, critics further

argue that undue religious influence can reinforce social oppression (Calhoun, et al. 2013) Within this history, religious beliefs and doctrines were at times drivers of social exclusion, the misuse of power, and systematic violence against groups of people.

In response, Habermas (2008) argues that freedom of religion and the secularization of political power are "two sides of the same coin" (p. 3), where these two principles keep each other in balance. Religious arguments cannot prevail without political consensus in societies governed by the separation of church and state while freedom of religion allows for religious arguments to enter political discussions. Again, Habermas (2008) points to the importance of understanding 'translation' to be a relational task, writing that "the ethos of liberal citizenship demands that both sides [religious and secular] should determine the limits of faith and knowledge in a reflective manner" (p. 2). Critics of Habermas's concept of translation should not worry about undue religiosity in politics because the process of deliberation within the public sphere naturally will curb this influence.

Habermas responds to concerns about the possibility of religious groups causing violence and perpetuating social oppression by also optimistically putting faith in people's ability to critically consider their religious beliefs. Habermas (2013) asserts that religion is not just a selection of dogmas that are passed down throughout generations. For religious traditions and doctrine to remain stable, these traditions and doctrines need to be accepted by each forthcoming generation. Within the context of public sphere dialogue, religious individuals will be required by their secular counterparts to consider their beliefs perpetually and critically during the process of 'translation'. The quest to be 'bilingual' necessitates that individuals do not take their religious ideas for granted. Rather, the act of translating their beliefs into another philosophical

or secular claim compels the religious individual to consider first the essence of their argument and then to distill this essence into a language that is accessible to their fellow dialoguers.

Habermas's responses to critics of 'institutional translation proviso' showcase the plausibility of religious individuals fully participating in public dialogues. For this to take place, all interlocutors must be willing to learn from one another and to reflexively consider their own religious beliefs and motivations in relation to their counterparts. When formal public dialogues allow for translated ideas, religion can play a role in protecting vulnerable members of society and in providing moral insights that temper aggressive neoliberal capitalism. Habermas's concept of translation thereby provides an avenue for reaching Beaman's (2012, 2017) concept of deep equality where religious ideas are not merely accommodated but are understood and respected in public spaces. When religious difference is no longer a problem to be solved, religious ideas can be harnessed responsibly to strengthen political responses to social issues.

Public Religious Art in Bilingualism, Translation, and Deep Equality

The previous section outlined how participants, who can be conceptualized as public theologians, described public religious art as a way of connecting with their external communities. Likewise, it examined how the literature positions religion in the public sphere as a problem to be solved and outlined Beaman's commentary on religious accommodation, tolerance, and inter-faith dialogue as unhelpful ways of addressing this problem and the alternative of 'deep equality.' Habermas's position on religion and the concept of 'institutional translation proviso' similarly provides ways of demarcating how public theologians can contribute meaningfully and authentically within the public sphere(s). This section now outlines how the participants not only used public religious art as a way of entering into public spaces but also as a way of teaching their external communities about the Christian faith. I thereby build on

the previous section by considering how public religious art can and cannot support deep equality, translation, and the public theologian's concept of bilingualism in the public sphere.

A prophetic teaching tool. In addition to being a connection point to non-members of a faith-based organization and God, the interviewees explained that art can be a tool for teaching about the faith. When asked why the arts are important to Christian organizations, interviewees explained how stained-glass windows were historically crafted to share biblical content with illiterate church congregants. Rev. S. noted that much of the art within their organization was intended to be a mode of storytelling, with "the stained-glass windows being a case in point." Rev. S also noted that icons can serve as "aged prayers" or "something to meditate upon that's not necessarily storytelling but really invites a kind of dialogue." B.M similarly explained that "religious art has always been part of the Catholic church [because] it is meant to enhance worship, meant to awaken interest and understanding, prompt thinking, prompt discussion." Rev. S suggested that the cathedral invests in art because art is "how we engage people in thinking about [faith]." These quotes capture how faith-based organizations leverage the capacity for art to tell stories and foster internal and interpersonal dialogue to engage members and non-members in learning about Christianity.

Due to their capacity to narrate biblical scriptures and encourage individuals to think and dialogue about them, faith-based organizations use the arts as a tool for not only teaching about Christianity but also in nurturing one's spirituality. This theme was underscored by K. C who described art within the church as a form of prophesy or truth-telling:

> We think of prophecy in the Hebrew tradition as truth-telling. Whenever people use those expressions, like 'we are going to speak truth to power', 'we are going to tell the powerful the truth', that would be what the Old Testament would call prophetic. When we are saying we are going to use art prophetically, we are saying 'how do we allow the arts to speak the truth'.

This quote captures the notion that art in faith-based organizations is not only meant to convey facts about Christianity but also meant to engage viewers in its deeper meanings and implications about 'what is true' in the present day. Fr. P similarly noted that their cathedral intended to use *Homeless Jesus* "prophetically". He casually estimated, without systematically eliciting direct feedback from parishioners, that approximately 10 % of parishioners greatly appreciated and were moved by *Homeless Jesus*, 10 % did not appreciate the sculpture, and 80% were ambivalent or did not express an opinion. Considering the assumed 10% who disliked the sculpture, Fr. P hypothesized that this group did not like to think about homelessness or associated homelessness with "a lifestyle" in which they disapproved. In response to those who did not appreciate the sculpture, church leaders reminded them that the "church is called to be prophetic" or provide truth regardless of how it makes people feel. Within this context of Fr. P's cathedral, the church leadership is using this sculpture as a mode of 'prophetic' teaching, where it guides viewers in thinking about what they should believe and do about homelessness.

Although Rev. W did not use the word 'prophesy' to describe the role of art in teaching, this participant likewise affirmed that religious art can be an important teaching tool that leads to deeper biblical understandings. Rev. W described how *Homeless Jesus* can prompt students to consider their social obligations within their local contexts.

> My experience has been that a lot of the students that are involved in that program [Social Justice studies] are often looking outward. They're looking beyond the city, beyond the province, beyond the country, into the developing world. And one of the reasons why I wanted to install *Homeless Jesus* was because I wanted people to consider what our obligation is to the people that are living here with us, not only just in terms of how we need to reach out to them charitably but also to give consideration to what we need to look at in terms of systemic justice and what we might need to be doing as a community to eliminate homelessness altogether. So the *Homeless Jesus* for

> me was a way of making those connections between the faith-based realities of our institution, but also the general humanitarian call that I think all people can readily embrace.

In this quote, Rev. W chose to install *Homeless Jesus* at their organization with the intention that it would shape how students engaged in thinking about poverty and justice. Specifically, this participant hoped *Homeless Jesus* would guide students in considering the systematic issues that prevent justice in their local communities. The quote thereby further captures the theme that faith-based organizations use public religious art to prompt thinking about biblical scriptures or 'truth' and their implications.

Public religious art in public theology. Interviewees discussed how the arts in their organizations can be statements about their core beliefs and prophetic (or truth-telling) teaching tools. These themes indicate that faith-based organizations may at times use art to carry biblical, religious, or spiritual ideas about God into public spaces. Bringing biblical, religious, or spiritual ideas into public spaces is a key task of public theologians. The notion, presented by the interviewees, that some art can communicate religious ideas in a language that is accessible to a secular audience is interwoven throughout Jensen and Vrudny's (2009) edited book on 'visual theology'. Illman's (2010) case study of a theatrical performance likewise indicates that the arts can facilitate interfaith dialogues, which are accessible to distinct religious groups in conflict. These scholars and the interviewees thus position art as a tool for achieving the public theologian's task of bringing religious ideas about God into public spaces where others hold differing beliefs.

Homeless Jesus as a public theological response to homelessness. As noted above, public theologians are concerned with providing a theological discourse for engaging in social issues. The interviewees discussed how *Homeless Jesus* conveyed their organizations' core faith-informed beliefs about poverty and homelessness to a public audience, a theme that is also

corroborated in Chapter 6. Bedford-Strohm (2008, 2012) provides an account of the public theological response to homelessness that aligns with the culturally-shared meanings derived from *Homeless Jesus*, discussed in Chapter 5. My analysis of the iconography of *Homeless Jesus* indicated that the image of a homeless Jesus sleeping in a public space on a street bench signals to viewers that people who are homeless have dignity regardless of their circumstance, that Jesus comforts and identifies with this group, and that Christians should care for those who are homeless in the same way they would care for Jesus. Although the latter two messages are strictly for those who are Christian, the first message is relevant to all viewers.

A core tenet of Christian theology, according to Bedford-Strohm (2008), is that to be in "right relationship with God", human beings must be in right relationship with each other. Within Christianity, to be in a 'right' or healthy God-intended relationship with others necessitates that individuals recognize the equal worth and dignity of others and treat them accordingly. When explaining the motives of megachurches, or faith-based places of worship with over 2000 members, who engage in social justice activism and poverty work, Cartledge, et al. (2019) posit that this premise is rooted in the biblical teaching that all persons are of equal worth because every person is made in the image of God. This belief stems from the biblical verse, Genesis 1:27, which reads "So God created humankind in his own image" (NIV). Many Christians thus believe that rectifying one's relationship with another by ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth and social esteem is a way to honor God and to align oneself with God's intent for humanity. For example, Rauschenbusch (1917), a public theologian at the centre of the social gospel movement, asserts that social inequality and poverty are the collective impacts of individual sin or misalignment with God's will.

These basic premises that all human beings are made in the image of God and that addressing social inequality is necessary for overcoming 'sin' and in turn entering into right relationships underlie all public theological inquiries into the essence, root causes, and solutions to social and economic inequalities and homelessness (Bedford-Strohm, 2008). The publicness of homelessness and the notion that Christians need to address this issue compels them to develop a public theological response. With a public theological response to homelessness, a faith-based organization views itself as "an agent in civil society" that generates discussions about social issues rather than dictating political or economic solutions (Bedford-Strohm, 2008, p. 150). Furthermore, with this approach, they also seek to politically align themselves with the poor, vulnerable, and/or socially oppressed. Public theologians committed to intervening in the social issue of homelessness are thereby primarily concerned with ensuring that all people are equal, as 'biblically' or 'divinely' prescribed.

The public theological understanding of homelessness aligns well with the culturally-shared meanings of *Homeless Jesus* presented in Chapter 5. As *Homeless Jesus* is intended to bring religious ideas into the public sphere, it is an example of a public theology tool that encourages "a theologically informed discourse" (Breitenberg, 2003, p. 66). While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make claims about whether *Homeless Jesus* successfully communicates its message to a secular or non-Christian audience, this thematic analysis indicates that faith-based organizations hope that this sculpture will engage their broader communities in considering the dignity of those living in poverty.

Public religious art in translation. Habermas's position on the role of religion in public sphere(s) is largely compatible with that of public theologians. Both Habermas and public theologians assert that religion can hold insights that promote or enhance public dialogues.

Likewise, they both assert that religion should be embedded within dialogues in a way that respects and is accessible for those who hold differing beliefs. In the same way that public religious art can be a tool for public theology, my interpretations of the data suggest that public religious art can also support faith-based organizations in achieving Habermas's concept of 'institutional translation proviso'.

While scholars have debated the validity of this concept extensively, there is a dearth of attention paid to the role of the arts in the process of translation. Like Habermas, both those who critique and rationalize his stance on religion centre their discussions around semantic dialogues, privileging political rationales gained from written and spoken deliberation as opposed to artistic and aesthetic endeavours. In this section, I seek to contribute to the conversation by exploring how public religious art can offer a response to the question, "Can religion survive translation?" (Calhoun et al., 2013). This chapter's thematic analysis of the interviewees' reflections on the uses of *Homeless Jesus* and other works of art within their organizations provides insight into how faith-based organizations use public religious art to support efforts to convey their beliefs, actions, and motivations in a universally accessible manner. Furthermore, their reflections offer groundwork for considering how faith-based organizations use public religious art to pursue mutual understanding and respect within public dialogues. By promoting mutual understandings and respect, public religious art may offer the conditions necessary for a collaborative learning process to take place between individuals or groups with differing worldviews, a process that Habermas believes can support translation work.

Interviewees indicated that their faith-based organizations use art at times to teach both members and non-members about the Christian faith. They explained how this practice stems back to early church history where the arts made biblical content and story accessible to illiterate

members. This practice is documented by several scholars, such as Jensen (2013) and Kiilerich (2015). Their histories illustrate how religious art, although seeking to convey straightforward biblical narrative, can both elicit and reflect the dominant theological meanings of the time. Jensen's (2013) overarching thesis is that "visual art often serves as a highly sophisticated, literate, and even eloquent mode of theological expression" (p. 3) rather than just a rudimentary teaching tool. Like the interviewees, Jensen (2013) points to how faith-based organizations use art to not only convey information about biblical content, but also decorate, teach, allegorically interpret, and connect abstract and spiritual knowledge to everyday experiences and images. Rather than being a method of communication subordinate to written and spoken language, Jensen (2013) and the interviewees from this dissertation regard religious arts as a method of expressing meanings in a manner that can lead to deep religious understanding or critical and discerning questions about the art's subject matter. Inspiring deep understanding and/or discerning questions are the primary tasks of any teacher.

As noted above, the task of teaching religious beliefs and principles is a key element of Habermas's concept of translation. When addressing critics of this concept, Habermas articulates that translation should occur within the context of relationships, where both secular and religious interlocutors seek to learn from one another and gain a shared vocabulary that in turn augments their discussion. Anderson (2013) views religious art as a "form of dialogue" that allows viewers to take on another's perspective (p. 102). Interviewees observed that their faith-based organizations use art to inspire critical thinking and conversation. Due to the capacity for art to encourage dialogue and perspective-taking, it can support the relationality necessary for Habermas's translation work and Beaman's 'deep equality' to occur. As art can prompt dialogue, make a space beautiful, provide understanding via teaching, present rich allegorical

interpretations, and convey abstract and spiritual knowledge within familiar contexts, the arts are well-suited to teaching 'religious beliefs' in a manner that can resonate with or make sense to secular viewers. This teaching may in turn promote mutual understandings between those in faith-based organizations and secular viewers that can ease the process of finding accessible equivalents to religious ideas.

Homeless Jesus as 'serious art in its own right'. A theme within this thematic analysis is that the interviewees hoped *Homeless Jesus* would be appreciated and would 'speak' to those outside of their faith-based organizations who might pass by. They saw it as a statement that communicated core values and beliefs about God to non-members. In Chapter 5, I considered how the use of both conventional and natural symbols in *Homeless Jesus* makes it possible for those who are not familiar with Christianity to still elicit meaning from it. The interviewees in this chapter likewise drew attention to how the line between what is religious and non-religious can be blurred. A blurred line between religious and non-religious art insinuates that a religious public piece of art can be meaningful for non-religious viewers.

When reflecting on how non-members/Christians might find meaning in *Homeless Jesus*, Rev. S asserted that this sculpture is a "serious piece of art in its own right." This quote points to the at-times arbitrariness of the religious/secular categorizations of art. Many people have multiple religious or spiritual influences and thus they do not always fit well within a defined religious category, such as Christian or Atheist (Beaman, 2017). As a bridge between the secular and the religious, art can showcase how the strict lines between various groups within Christianity, between Christianity and other religions, and between the religious and non-religious are often misplaced. In this way, *Homeless Jesus* calls viewers to recognize and challenge the arbitrary differences that reinforce marginalization, segregation, and inequality.

When discussing the role that art can play in facilitating interfaith dialogues, Anderson (2013) argues that all art should engage viewers in considering their experiences and realities; Thereby, reasoning that categories, such as religious, spiritual, or secular, can be irrelevant or misleading. If an art piece can lead an individual or group into a more empathetic understanding of another, the art piece has helped set the stage for productive dialogue within a pluralistic society.

Remembering the 80 percent. Public religious art however is likely to be a limited mode of promoting this productive dialogue. In contrast to the 20% who had a strong positive or negative reaction to *Homeless Jesus*, Fr. P imagined that roughly 80% likely did not think too deeply about the sculpture, with it being just another piece of art that adorns their cathedral. The notion that an art piece likely will not draw the attention of all viewers or be meaningful to many is underscored by Zebracki et al. (2018), who juxtaposed the goals of policymakers with the public art experiences of viewers. In this study, they found that these two perspectives differed, where the latter group did not always appreciate the art in the way anticipated by the former. Furthermore, Zebracki's (2013) survey on public perceptions of public art indicated that their appreciation of and engagement with this art is likely to be mediated by subjective factors, such as prior knowledge of the art's intended meanings and cultural background. For example, a viewer's familiarity with the story of Jesus will likely influence their engagement with *Homeless Jesus.* The notion that a public religious artwork will elicit reactions unique to individuals or no reaction limits the capacity of this art to reliably 'translate' religious concepts.

The capacity of public religious art to 'translate' religious concepts is likely to not only be impacted by subjective factors, but also by the nature of the social issue in which the artwork takes up. Although homelessness is highly stigmatized, the religious notion that everyone has equal worth in the eyes of God largely mirrors secular sentiments about universal human rights

(Habermas, 2006). Many distinct religious and secular groups are thereby to likely appreciate intellectually aspects of *Homeless Jesus* and will have a common ground in which to dialogue about this issue. In contrast, other social issues and dialogues will naturally have less common ground. While one may use religious art to communicate their perspectives in contentious dialogues, one's counterparts may be unwilling to engage critically and thoughtfully with the artwork.

This phenomenon can be seen in public responses to Jo Clifford's play *The Gospel According to Jesus, Queen of Heaven* (Clifford, 2009). In this theatrical performance, Jesus is played by a trans woman. While this play brought a religious perspective to dialogues about transgender rights and has been received positively by many, news coverage over the past decade has suggested that it was met by extreme hostility (see BBC, 2018). In this example, the majority of those who are/were against transgender rights protested outside theatres, rather than engaging in the aesthetic experience. The divisiveness and discord that can colors dialogues about social issues may be a barrier that prevents groups from engaging with a related socially-engaged public religious artwork.

Considering the other 20 percent. The capacity for public religious art to 'translate' religious concepts should also be contextualized with an awareness of the relationship between religion and social power. As highlighted by critics of Habermas's concept of 'translation', religion can be used to perpetuate social oppression because it can lend 'divine authority' or credibility to an oppressive status quo. Images of Jesus can thereby advance the interests of an elite group at the expense of others. People may be more likely to erroneously accept an unjust system as just if they see the system as a divine given.

The social power granted by religion partly explains why representations of Jesus can be controversial. Scholars, artists, politicians, and religious figures can seek out or create representations of Jesus that align with their interests. Fr. P and K.C positioned *Homeless Jesus* as prophesying because they saw it as representing biblical and spiritual truths. In contrast, Fr. P suggested that those who did not appreciate the sculpture disagreed with how it portrayed Jesus as identifying with those who are homeless. Religious viewers are thus compelled to consider whether *Homeless Jesus* aligns with their ideological investment in the 'divine authority of Jesus' or a deeper biblical or spiritual reality in which they, as a religious individual, are seeking. Artistic representations of Jesus can be a way in which faith-based organizations identify and challenge social oppression within their spaces.

Conclusion. In this discussion, I have reasoned that art can be an avenue for religious individuals to participate in public dialogues about social issues in a manner that respects those with differing beliefs, adheres to the principle of 'separation of church and state', and allows secular societies to honor 'freedom of religion'. With the capacity to 'translate' and/or 'teach' religious concepts in a manner that is meaningful to a secular audience, art may be important to institutions that are pursuing Beaman's concept of deep equality, where religious difference is not simply a problem to be solved but rather something that is truly valued and where conflicts arising from such difference are resolved relationally and with a critical consideration of power relations. This analysis and discussion present the notion that some public religious artworks, such as *Homeless Jesus*, can aid in efforts to enact Habermas's 'institutional translation proviso.' A potential implication of my interpretations of the data is that religious artistic endeavours within public spaces may at times strengthen social cohesion in pluralistic societies.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This case study on the presence and meanings of Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus* indicates that public religious art may be a way of both inserting uncomfortable but familiar ideas into public dialogues and informing and challenging taken-for-granted understandings of social issues. In the first stage, the iconography indicated that members of faith-based organizations and media view *Homeless Jesus* as a call to be compassionate and humble when caring for those who are homeless. I viewed the sculpture as presenting a call for both those impacted by homelessness and their more privileged counterparts to challenge the stigmatization of homelessness and to see themselves as socially connected to the issue. This iconography presented in Chapter 5 directly responded to this dissertation's first research question: "What meanings do faith-based organizations and media elicit from Timothy Schmalz's *Homeless Jesus*?"

The next two phases of this project, presented in Chapters 6 and 7, responded to the second question: "What do the meanings, reactions to, and the stories told about *Homeless Jesus* reveal about the relationship between public religious art and dialogue within the public sphere about homelessness?" In the second phase, a narrative inquiry into the presence of this sculpture in Hamilton, Ontario retold three stories about how faith-based organizations and media use this sculpture and its meanings. Using Habermas's theory of communicative action, my analysis suggested that the stories centered on bridging social divisions, fostering an inclusive public space, and promoting 'justice-orientated' policy. In the final stage of this dissertation, a thematic analysis of interviews with faith-based leaders sheds light on how faith-based organizations use the religiosity of *Homeless Jesus* to enter or inform public dialogues about homelessness. My interpretations of the data are that faith-based organizations can use public religious art as a statement that communicates their core beliefs to their broader publics at both a personal and an

organizational level, as a teaching tool, and as an avenue to exploring one's spirituality and connecting to God. In all three stages, I saw *Homeless Jesus* as a platform for reconsidering perceptions of homelessness on a micro-level of analysis and prompting discussion about this issue in media on a macro-level.

In this final chapter, I provide an overview of key findings and their connection to this dissertation's critical theoretical framework. I summarize how Herbert Marcuse's position on the arts in social transformation and Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and position on the sociopolitical functions of religion align with my conclusions about the meanings and uses of *Homeless Jesus.* Here, I also note how Marcuse's and Habermas's positions are augmented by Nancy Fraser's concept of parity of participation and Lori Beaman's concept of deep equality to provide a stronger foundation in which to consider what these meanings and uses suggest about the relationship between public religious art, public dialogues, and public perceptions of homelessness. Likewise, I recapitulate how this dissertation's findings contribute to literature on art-based public engagement, particularly the art-based public engagement of faith-based organizations adhering to the core tenets of public theology, and homelessness and social stigma. I then move on to outline the limitations of this study and areas for future research.

Overview of Theoretical Insights.

Marcuse's ideas on the role of art in social transformation and Habermas's theory of communicative action, augmented by Fraser's concept of parity of participation and Beaman's concept of deep equality, proved useful in considering how and if a public religious art piece can factor into public dialogue and perceptions of social issues. Using these four scholars to guide this dissertation's iconographic, narrative, and thematic analyses, I grounded my dissertation in the core principles of critical theory. These core principles include a commitment to uncovering

and questioning taken-for-granted ideological systems and promoting the development of a just and equitable society by aligning one's research with the interests of an oppressed group.

Marcuse, Habermas, Fraser, and Beaman all possess lived experiences with or have engaged in extensive research on marginalization and systematic oppression. Habermas and Marcuse are two scholars that experienced the extremity of Nazi Germany during the 1940s. These experiences shaped their academic careers of theorizing the origins of social oppression and how to overcome it (Kellner, 1990). With lived experience of sexism, Fraser has sought to advance feminist theory and action to foster a more equitable and just society (Fraser, 1990). Beaman draws on experiences working in the field of law and social theory to question the ostensibly positive accommodation and treatment of religious minority groups (Beaman, 2017). Their theories and concepts offered a roadmap for considering why individuals might unjustly oppress people who are homeless via stigmatization, how public religious art can disrupt this process by generating dialogue or placing individuals in a context where they are willing to reconsider biases and prejudice, and how religious doctrines should/should not be allowed to factor into public dialogues.

Marcuse (1998, p. 202) pinpoints the arts as an "instrument of opposition" to oppressive ways of thinking, behaving, and speaking. The arts, according to Marcuse (1998), can estrange individuals from the social oppression in which they are immersed and desensitized, in a manner that enables them to identify their "suppressed needs, faculties, and desires" (p. 202). Within the context of this research, I saw *Homeless Jesus* as presenting a message that contrasted with the neoliberal framing of homelessness as a social issue in capitalist societies. Rather than viewing individuals who are homeless as at fault for their circumstances and thus worthy of stigmatization, my analysis suggests that this sculpture compels viewers to question dominant

ideological and personal assumptions about homelessness and privilege. The image of a homeless Jesus combines two discourses that together oppose neoliberal ways of understanding homelessness: those of homelessness and that of Jesus (a symbol of goodness and benevolent sacrifice). By proposing that images of goodness can coincide with images of poverty, *Homeless Jesus* may challenge viewers to re-evaluate what makes an individual dignified and worthy of compassion. My conclusions about the meanings of *Homeless Jesus* thus align with Marcuse's position that art can promote critical consciousness.

Positive social change according to Habermas's theory of communicative action hinges on the capacity for individuals to dialogue with equal access to opportunity, information, and respect. The capacity to bring distinct publics together around an idea and to lend recognition and respect to traditionally marginalized members of society renders public art a political instrument for building up the public sphere; scholars and cultural policy suggest that public art can honour traditionally marginalized groups, bring up an issue in which various groups can rally around, and can communicate a message that leads to greater social understandings (Sharp, et al., 2005; Zebracki & De Bekker, 2018). These claims are congruent with findings from this research on how faith-based organizations and media use *Homeless Jesus* and its culturally-shared meanings.

A clear theme within this dissertation is that faith-based organizations used *Homeless Jesus* to overcome social divisions and to connect with their broader publics. In the prayer vigil story, the meanings of *Homeless Jesus* presented a common point of departure for churches of various Christian denominations to collaborate. At Saint Patrick's, *Homeless Jesus* appeared to serve the purpose of bridging the division between the non-homeless and homeless by promoting increased social and spiritual understandings of poverty. Lastly, my interpretations of themes

within the third stage of this dissertation are that public religious art can be a tool that aids faith-based organizations in participating in public dialogues authentically and in a manner that is intelligible to those with different worldviews, bringing together faith-based organizations with their broader publics.

The iconography and the narrative findings also suggest that the sculpture both calls attention to the presence of and engenders a sense of respect for people who are homeless, a traditionally marginalized group. Sharp et al. (2005) draw on Nancy Fraser's concept of parity of participation to explain how cities use public art to create social inclusion by choosing art that recognizes marginalized groups as important contributors to a community. They point out that this can be challenging when the marginalized group's identity, community contributions, or histories are misaligned with the dominant ideological system. Marcuse's concept of 'repressive tolerance' can explain how at face value a city may appear inclusive of all community members via their choices and processes of implementing public art, while also maintaining a status quo that privileges an elite. Involving socially excluded groups in the creative process can support the capacity for an art piece to enhance inclusive public spaces (Sharp et al., 2005; Zebracki & De Bekker, 2018). By inviting participation, individuals can engage in making public space their own, where they feel like they belong.

Homeless Jesus is unique from many other public art examples in that it is a sculpture that has been replicated numerous times by the same artist. Members of the public both inside and outside these institutions did not participate in the creative process. This facet of the sculpture may limit its capacity to support social inclusion and the ideal of parity of participation. Future research could explore how and if faith-based organizations invite community participation in their works of art. Likewise, the logic that faith-based organizations who install a

Homeless Jesus did not invite participation from their broader publics and thus the sculpture may be limited in how it promotes social inclusion, may prompt these organizations to take additional steps beyond installing *Homeless Jesus* to achieve their goals. For example, in the story of St. Patrick's, the parish sought to foster the inclusion of people who are homeless within the parish by teaching the 'beatitudes' during masses and by developing the De Mazenod Door to address some of the material needs of those experiencing poverty, in addition to installing *Homeless Jesus*. This however may not be the case for all faith-based organizations with a replica or other forms of socially-engaged public art.

Although this research does not provide insight into whether the goals of generating a greater understanding of the faith-based organizations' core beliefs, bringing diverse groups together, and fostering greater social inclusion are accomplished (see limitations), findings lead to questions about how large institutions in public locations, such as many faith-based organizations, can play a role in promoting social inclusion via the art they present and make accessible to the public. As institutions that have separation from political or corporate interests, faith-based organizations and other non-profit, non-governmental organizations can capitalize on their ability to create artistic experiences that recognize marginalized groups. By recognizing marginalized groups via art in public locations, these institutions can promote Fraser's concept of parity of participation. Supporting social inclusion and the ideal of parity of participation is an important step towards strengthening a public sphere characterized by equal respect and opportunity.

My analyses also suggest that faith-based organizations use *Homeless Jesus* as a mode of communication and teaching within public spaces. Both Marcuse and Fraser point to how Habermas's focus on verbal and written dialogue in the model of bourgeois society is limited due

to its androcentric nature. Artistic endeavours and the use of natural symbols within them that will resonate with many individuals provide alternatives to 'bourgeois' public dialogues. Art can allow faith-based organizations to communicate abrasive or counter-cultural ideas, such as the notion that people should treat those who are homeless with dignity, in ways that are both authentic to their beliefs and intelligible to a diverse audience. By equipping faith-based organizations with a mode of communication suitable for diverse publics, art can potentially be a tool that both builds up an equitable and diverse public sphere and adheres to Beaman's concept of deep equality where religious differences are worked out relationally. The processes depicted in the narrative and thematic analyses thus provide an example of how organizations can communicate counter-cultural ideas and positions via art. This dissertation's discussion of public religious art in public dialogues may be relevant when it comes to strengthening the religious and cultural diversity within Canada.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

These findings should be understood within the context of the nature of this project and its limitations. As this research is qualitative, it provides insight into only one piece of public religious art and its relation to public dialogues and perceptions of a social issue. This dissertation thereby does not capture if other public religious art is used in the same ways as *Homeless Jesus*, although it considers whether this might be the case (see Chapter 7). Quantitative research on faith-based organizations and their use of public religious art is needed to shed light on whether findings from this dissertation can be generalizable.

This research only explores the relationship between public religious art, public dialogues, and public perceptions of social issues within this context of a single piece of art, amongst many alternatives. Viewers, faith-based organizations, and media will not necessarily

use *Homeless Jesus* in the same way as they use other works of art. There are many historical examples of how artistic representations of Jesus have been used by faith-based organizations and media to dialogue about social issues. A famous example is Ronald Harrison's painting, *Black Christ (1962)*, which depicts a Black Jesus hanging on the cross, along with Mary (his mother), Judas (his betrayer), and two Roman Soldiers (his persecutors) and where each face in the painting is of key political leaders during South Africa's apartheid. After being smuggled out of South Africa to protect it from government censorship, the painting inspired many Westerners to contribute to the anti-apartheid movement as it drew attention to the suffering and oppression of Black South Africans (Harrison, 2006). Likewise, *Homeless Jesus* is just one work within a series of sculptures by Timothy Schmalz that depict Jesus as vulnerable, such as *Jesus the Sick* at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton and *Jesus the Beggar* at St. Stephen-in-the-Fields Anglican Church in Toronto. Future research could explore if organizations also use other works of art and non-visual forms of art (literature, music, dance, theatre) to promote social inclusion, foster public dialogue, and support fair and equitable recognition of cultural differences.

An overarching limitation is that the interviewees and news articles included in this study are not able to fully capture the meanings elicited by and the uses of *Homeless Jesus*. All participants were white and from Western nations (Australia, Canada, and the United States). Viewers of *Homeless Jesus* from other races and cultures would have augmented findings by providing additional perspectives on *Homeless Jesus*. Other forms of media, such as social media, would lend themselves to different forms of engagement with this sculpture, in contrast to the online news articles used in this dissertation. For example, social media may provide a platform for individuals to engage socially with the sculpture with others, while online news articles may be characterized by more introspective and individualized forms of engagement.

Despite *Homeless Jesus's* location in countries where English is not the national language, this project relies only on English-speaking online news sources and interviewees.

The interviewees can provide a single perspective on the meanings, stories, and implications of having a *Homeless Jesus* replica at or near their faith-based organizations. Their perspectives are likewise shaped by personal, cultural, and religious experiences and beliefs and can thus differ from other faith-based organizations. Similarly, other organizations declined the invitation to participate because they did not see themselves as able to answer the research questions or did not respond to the invitation. Their insights could have provided a fuller depiction of the meanings and uses of *Homeless Jesus.*

As this study only includes the perspectives of members of faith-based organizations and online news articles, it does not provide insight into the perspectives of casual viewers who have no investment in the sculpture. An individual's public art experience is shaped by several intra- and interpersonal factors (Zebracki, 2013). Zebracki and De Bekker (2018) compared the perspectives of producers of two public artworks with those of the broader community to find that the city's rhetoric about the artwork did not always resonate with viewers' experiences. Within this dissertation, the interviewees' conjectures and hopes about how viewers experience *Homeless Jesus* may be misaligned with those of casual viewers. This dissertation thus only explored how online news media and members of faith-based organizations elicit meaning and use this sculpture. It does not capture if the faith-based organizations and news media were successful at using *Homeless Jesus* to accomplish their goals of fostering social cohesion, promoting justice-orientated policy, and contributing theological insights to public dialogues.

Importantly, by only collecting and analyzing the perspectives of members of faith-based organizations and online news articles connected to *Homeless Jesus*, this dissertation does not

provide insight into the meanings that people who are homeless elicit from it. Artists, public theologians, and social scientists all argue that to adequately understand homelessness, research needs to elicit first-voice accounts of experiences living unhoused (Lyons & Smedley, 2019; Nixon, 2013; Renedo & Jovchelovitch; Zufferey, 2014). A key limitation of this research is that it does not engage with those who are homeless. Future research could explore how viewers experience social-engaged public religious art, such as *Homeless Jesus*, and whether these experiences align with the intended purposes of the art.

An Initial Step Towards Change

This case study of *Homeless Jesus* presents the notion that faith-based organizations and media can use public-religious art with the hope of contributing to public dialogues and encouraging introspection about one's connection to social issues, such as homelessness. Accounts of the meanings of *Homeless Jesus* exemplify Habermas's (2006) point that religion can carry insights that enhance public dialogues. My analyses suggest that this sculpture is intended to prompt groups to care for and protect vulnerable members of society. The stories told about *Homeless Jesus* also indicate that public art can help foster spaces where people want to "live, work, holiday, and rest" (Pollock and Paddison, 2014, p. 85). Public religious art that is used to draw attention to social issues, such as *Homeless Jesus*, may hold potential when it comes to making a space more welcoming for traditionally marginalized groups. While my research conclusions are that faith-based organizations can use public religious art to help foster inclusive public spaces and dialogues, installing public art will not be enough to promote true social transformation or counteract histories of social oppression. Installing socially-engaged public religious artwork is only an initial step towards promoting positive social change.

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Appendix A: Pseudonyms for Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Research Stage	Position	Organization Type
Fr. T.	1, 2, 3	Priest	Catholic Church – Parish (Canada)
Fr. P.	1, 3	Priest	Catholic Church – Cathedral (Canada)
Rev. S.	1, 3	Reverent	Anglican Cathedral (Canada)
Rev. W	1, 3	Priest/Chaplain	University (Canada)
A. T.	1, 3	Administrator	Non-profit organization (United States).
B. M.	1, 3	Provost	Catholic College (Australia).
K. C.	2, 3	Pastor	A non-denominational church (Hamilton)
M. A.	2, 3	Artist	
Q. B.	2, 3	Artist	
P.J.	2, 3	Pastor	Canadian Reformed Church (Hamilton)
D.W.	2, 3	Freelance columnist Program Consultant, Social Justice & Outreach	Anglican Church (Hamilton)
R. G.	2, 3	Spiritual Director	Non-profit prayer organization (Hamilton)
O. H.	2, 3	Prayer Missionary	Non-profit prayer organization (Hamilton)
S. K.	2, 3	Pastor	Anglican Church (Hamilton)

Appendix B: Online News Articles

Source	Number	Article Title	Author	Date of Publication
BBC	6	Tim Schmalz seeks home for his Homeless Jesus	Nuala McCann	December 27, 2014
		Irishman funds Belfast's Homeless Jesus	Nuala McCann	May 7, 2015
		Homeless Jesus statue installed in Glasgow city centre	Gillian Furmage	December 7, 2017
		'Homeless Jesus Christ' sculpture unveiled in Manchester	BBC	April 24, 2018
		Belfast City Council to consider 'Homeless Jesus' statue	BBC	May 8, 2018
		Vatican sculpture dedicated to migrants unveiled	BBC	September 30, 2019
The Blade (Toledo, Ohio)	1	Homeless Jesus statue installed in Toledo	Nicki Gorny	October 19, 2019
Buffalo News	2	Thought-provoking religious statue to be unveiled in Cathedral Park	Melinda Miller	March 30, 2015
		Homeless Jesus' embraced as symbol to hope	Lou Michel	April 1, 2015
CBC	12	Timothy Schmalz's Jesus statue stolen from Toronto church	Kim Magi	December 2, 2013
		Thief returns Jesus statue with sorry note	CBC	December 9, 2013
		Homeless Jesus sculpture finds homes around the world	CBC	September 4, 2014
		St. Jacob's sculptor Tim Schmalz makes bronze tribute to Gordon Lightfoot	CBC	February 6, 2015
		Homeless Jesus coming to Hamilton and Kitchener	CBC	April 7, 2015

		Artist Tim Schmalz says Homeless Jesus statue 'becoming a movement	CBC	September 23, 2015
		'Homeless Jesus' sculptor Timothy Schmalz on controversy and compassion	Jon Sufrin	October 23, 2015
		Hamilton shows what works in the fight against homelessness	Kelly Bennett	September 14, 2016
		Sculptor of Ajax Bomb Girls monument looking for your WWII photos	CBC	August 29, 2017
		Homeless Jesus' statue stopped runaway dump truck from crashing into pedestrians: police	CBC	May 29, 2018
		Ottawans react to Homeless Jesus	CBC	October 9, 2018
		Homeless Jesus attracts double takes, compassion	Sandra Abma	October 10, 2018
Charleston-Gazette	1	Church to bless `Homeless Jesus' statue	David Gutman	November 21, 2014
Chicago Sun-Times	1	Just Relations: A friendly face at church to ease the pain of the homeless	Rev. Shannon Johnson Kershner	June 8, 2018
Daily Gazette Schenectady New York	2	Gifts being left at homeless Jesus statue at Buffalo church	Not Provided	April 6, 2015
		Story behind 'Homeless Jesus' sculpture in Schenectady	Jeff Wilkin	January 8, 2018
Daily Hive	1	'Homeless Jesus' sculpture can be found at Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver	Chandler Walter	August 18, 2017
Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City, OK	3	'Homeless Jesus' sculptor happy to spread gospel message through art	Carla Hinton	May 14, 2016
		Home for 'homeless' statue	Carla Hinton	May 14, 2016
		Memorial remembers homeless who died during past 12 months	Carla Hinton	December 22, 2019

Detroit Free Press	4	Is there a home for Homeless Jesus statue in Detroit	Patricia Montemurri	April 5, 2015
		Sculpture of homeless Jesus finds home at Detroit church	Kat Stafford	May 16, 2015
		Homeless Jesus arrives, dedication Sunday	Patricia Montemurri	June 27, 2015
		Homeless Jesus sculpture unveiled, dedicated in Downtown Detroit	Patricia Montemurri	June 28, 2015
Edmonton Journal	1	Sculpture honours Fort McMurray firefighters	Claire Theobald	May 17, 2016
The Evening Times	2	Homelessness could affect any one of us	Victoria Brenan	December 12, 2017
		Howson unveils powerful new work	Callum Baird	December 10, 2019
The Hamilton Spectator	6	Pope Francis admires homeless Jesus statue	Stephanie MacLellan	November 28, 2013
		Homeless Jesus statue unveiled in Hamilton	Carmela Fragomeni	October 8, 2015
		'Homeless Jesus' statue mistaken for real person	Not Provided	January 21, 2016
		Gore Park benches: Are they designed to deter the homeless or just an extra arm rest?	Mark McNeil	November 11, 2016
		Church gardens offer sense of peace and space to downtown neighbours	Rob Howard	August 1, 2017
		Homeless Jesus creator unveils new sculpture at St. Joseph's	Natalie Paddon	August 22, 2017
Indianapolis Star	5	$40,000 'Homeless Jesus' invites debate	Wei-Huan Chen and Jorge Dorantes	November 29, 2015
		Homeless Jesus statue reminds us of Indy Homelessness	Kelly Wilkinson	November 13, 2015
		Creepy statues of Indiana	Not Provided	June 2, 2016

		Giant blanket fort will help the homeless	Maureen C. Gilmer	September 18, 2016
		Trump clown and other art that provoked	David Lindquist	February 3, 2017
Irish Times	2	Church at Christmas is good for you, research finds	Kate Holmquist	December 22, 2014
		Good Friday: 'I was hungry and you gave me food'	Not Provided	March 30, 2018
London Free Press	2	Homeless Jesus to be gathering place for Sunday's observance of World Day of the Poor	Not Provided	November 15, 2019
		Face It|Live It: A Week of Moments – SUNDAY	Not Provided	December 9, 2019
Montreal Gazette	1	Unveiling of Homeless Jesus statue draws attention to city's vulnerable	Christopher Curtis	November 17, 2019
National Post (Including Postmedia News)	3	'Homeless Jesus' statue stolen from downtown Toronto church, leaving 'dark empty hole,' sculptor says	Robin Grant	December 4, 2013
		Homeless Jesus statue stops runaway truck in Hamilton: police	No Provided	May 28, 2018
		Raymond de Souza: Canadian who sculpted 'Homeless Jesus' takes talents to the Vatican	F R. Raymond De Souza	October 4, 2019
The Scotsman	3	Homeless Jesus sculpture to be installed in Glasgow	Not Provided	July 3,2017
		Fife priest Willy Slavin on a life of chastity and obedience	Fr Willy Slavin	June 13, 2019
		General election: Sajid Javid's big lie must be called out – Brian Wilson	Brian Wilson	December 6, 2019
Tampa Bay Times	4	'I Have no place to lay my head'	Sarah Whitman	April 18, 2014
		Art calls attention to plight of homelessness	Sara Dinatale	February 10, 2016

		Emotionally charged 'Homeless Jesus' sculpture in Tampa a social statement	Lennie Bennett	March 31, 2016
		Portico adds mural to downtown	Sarah Whitman	June 12, 2016
Toronto Star	7	Homeless Jesus finds a place to lay his head	Leslie Scrivener	April 13, 2013
		Homeless Jesus wins over Pope; Canadian sculpture may be 1headed for the Vatican after pontiff calls it 'beautiful'	Stephanie MacLellan	November 28, 2013
		Begging Jesus is returned to church; Note of apology appears along with sculpture at St. Stephen-in-the-Fields	Michelle Le Page	December 6, 2013
		The Francis effect; How a down-to-earth pope's new direction is wooing the 'Christmas and Easter' crowd	Sandro Contenta	December 22, 2013
		Finding room at the inn for everyone this Christmas	Stephen Bede Scharper	December 24, 2013
		Statue finds sanctuary in the Vatican; Canadian artist's sculpture depicts a homeless Jesus	Donovan Vincent	April 1, 2016
		Sculpture commissioned to honour Fort McMurray firefighters now given new meaning	Laura DaSilva	May 12, 2016
Townsville Bulletin	4	Church icon in search of home	Emma Chadwick	June 21, 2017
		City Rejects Church Gift	Emma Chadwick	July 7, 2017
		OMG! Is that a body?	Kelsie Iorio	December 21, 2017
		“Jesus the Homeless” installed at Townsville City cathedral	Kelsie Iorio	December 20, 2017
	5	Homeless Jesus sculpture searches for a home	Ron Csillag	April 17, 2013

The Washington Post		'Homeless Jesus' provokes debate on what it means to be Christian	Ken Garfield	March 12, 2014
		Why Pope Francis's call to care for the poor is so contagious	Cardinal Donald Wuerl	September 22, 2015
		On Ash Wednesday, 'Homeless Jesus' goes to Washington	Sarah Pulliam Bailey	February 18, 2015
		The blanketed sculpture on a D.C. bench? That's 'Homeless Jesus.'	Sarah Pulliam Bailey	February 21, 2015
Waterloo Region Network	7	Sculpture of Jesus the Homeless rejected by two prominent churches	Leslie Scrivener	April 15, 2013
		Homeless Jesus truly hits home	Not Provided	October 31, 2013
		Local sculptor's homeless Jesus blessed by Pope	Stephanie MacLellan	November 29, 2013
		Opinion: Canadian Veterans' Memorial in Waterloo touches the heart	Karley George	November 5, 2015
		Sculpture given new meaning through the flames	Not Provided	May 15, 2016
		New work from Kitchener artist	Natalie Paddon	April 23, 2017
		Timothy Schmalz's defiant campaign to bring faith, beauty and meaning to the public square	Joel Rubinoff	December 20, 2019

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Stage One

Context	What is your role within this organization? Tell me about the artwork in your organization, such as banners, sculptures, and paintings. • How does your organization go about selecting artwork? • What value does your organization place on aesthetics? • Why is having art in or around your location important or not important? Tell me about your organization's primary mandate, purpose, or vision. • How do you see your organization enacting this mandate, purpose, or vision? • How does the artwork in your organization relate to this mandate, purpose or vision, the core beliefs of your organization, and/or what your organization does on an everyday basis?
History	When did you first come across the work of Timothy Schmalz? When did you first come across *Homeless Jesus*? What were your initial thoughts? • Did you like/Dislike it? • What was your initial experience? • Did it spark conversation? • Did it ignite a particular emotion? Have you ever participated in an event, such as prayer vigil for those impacted by poverty or a service, at a *Homeless Jesus* sculpture? If so, can you tell me more about your experience participating in this event?
Impact	How do you imagine members of your organization responding to *Homeless Jesus?* How do you imagine members of the community in which your organization is located responding to *Homeless Jesus*? What might be the impact of these responses? What potential impact do you see *Homeless Jesus* as having on your organization and broader community in the future? Will it still be a meaningful piece of art in the future?
General	Do you have any thoughts that you would like to add that my questions did not give you the opportunity to express?

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Stage Two

Context	What is your role within this organization? Tell me about the artwork in your organization, such as banners, sculptures, and paintings. • How does your organization go about selecting artwork? • What value does your organization place on aesthetics? • Why is having art in or around your location important or not important? Tell me about your organization's primary mandate, purpose, or vision. • How do you see your organization enacting this mandate, purpose, or vision? How does the artwork in your organization relate to this mandate, purpose or vision, the core beliefs of your organization, and/or what your organization does on an everyday basis?
History	When did you first come across the work of Timothy Schmalz? When did you first come across *Homeless Jesus*? What were your initial thoughts? • Did you like/Dislike it? • What was your initial experience? • Did it spark conversation? • Did it ignite a particular emotion?
Impact	What were the responses to *Homeless Jesus* when it was first installed (members of your organization and the broader community)? What do you see as being the impact of this response? What challenges (if any) occurred as a result of bringing *Homeless Jesus* to your organization? Are there any events, programs, or community gatherings that involve Homeless Jesus at your organization? • What impact do you see these events, programs, or community gatherings as having? • Do you see these events, programs, or community gatherings as being relevant to your organization's mandate, purpose, or vision?

	Overall, what does *Homeless Jesus* bring to your organization? • Has this sculpture provided opportunities for your organization that support its work/mandate? What potential impact do you see *Homeless Jesus* as having on your organization and broader community in the future? Will it still be a meaningful piece of art in the future?
General	Do you have any thoughts that you would like to add that my questions did not give you the opportunity to express?