



## Faith Space And Class Integration : Social Practices In A Connect Group Mawar Sharon Church 'My Home' Medan

Grace Prima Apriani Sihombing<sup>1</sup>, Aprilia Aprilia Cahyani Prabudiantoro Putri <sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1&2</sup> Department of Sociology, Universitas Terbuka, Tangerang Selatan, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

**Research Aims:** This article examines how the space of faith within the Connect Group community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan functions as a social space that facilitates social practices and social class integration.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive–interpretive design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation within several Connect Groups of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan. Nine informants were purposively selected based on their active involvement and structural roles in the community, including sponsors, Connect Group leaders, coaches, and team leaders. Data were analyzed thematically using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, focusing on the interaction between habitus, capital, and social field. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and researcher reflexivity.

**Research Findings:** The result of this research show that (1) Connect Group community functions as an inclusive social field that gradually reduces ethnic and social class boundaries through routine religious and social practices. (2) Praise and worship practices play a significant pedagogical role in strengthening emotional bonding and collective identity. Repeated interactions within worship, fellowship, and mutual support activities foster the exchange of social and cultural capital, leading to transformations in members' habitus and the development of cross-class solidarity. (3) However, the study also reveals the persistence of symbolic domination, particularly through leadership structures, language use, and the distribution of symbolic authority, indicating that class integration occurs within existing power relations rather than in a fully egalitarian manner.

**Theoretical Contribution/Originality:** Thematic analysis was conducted using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, focusing on the interaction between habitus, capital, and social field. The findings indicate that the Connect Group operates as an inclusive social field that gradually reduces ethnic and class boundaries through routine worship, fellowship, and mutual support activities. Praise and worship practices function as a form of social pedagogy that strengthens emotional bonding, collective identity, and cross-class solidarity.

**Keywords:** Faith Space, Social Practice, Class Integration, Pierre Bourdieu, Church Community.

## Introduction

Faith spaces are often perceived merely as private and individual sites of worship. However, recent developments in the sociology of religion demonstrate that religious spaces function as dynamic social arenas where complex social interactions, power relations, and identity formations take place (Smith & Clark, 2021). Within this perspective, churches are not only ritual institutions but also social fields in which social relations, collective identities, and class boundaries are negotiated and reshaped (Jones, 2020).

In urban contexts, religious communities increasingly serve as mediating spaces for social integration across socioeconomic divisions. Members from diverse class backgrounds encounter one another through shared religious practices, including worship, small-group gatherings, and social services. These interactions foster social solidarity while simultaneously managing class-based differences (Li & Wang, 2022; Martinez, 2023). Studies in Southeast Asia further suggest that urban religious communities play a significant role as platforms for interclass dialogue and the exchange of social and cultural values (Rahman, 2023).

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice provides a relevant analytical framework for understanding these dynamics. According to Bourdieu (1977), social practices emerge from the interaction between habitus, various forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic), and the social field. In this sense, faith spaces can be understood as social fields where religious practices are not merely spiritual acts but also arenas of symbolic negotiation and power relations (Bourdieu, 1990). Through routine interactions, individuals mobilize and exchange capital, which may facilitate social integration while also reproducing subtle forms of domination.

These dynamics are particularly evident in the Indonesian urban context, including the city of Medan, which is characterized by complex social stratification and ethnic diversity. Small group based church communities, commonly referred to as cell groups or Connect Groups (CG), have emerged as significant social spaces that bring together individuals from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Previous studies indicate that class integration within religious communities occurs not only at the spiritual level but also through everyday social practices that enable negotiation and accommodation of social differences (Santoso, 2021; Putra & Sari, 2024).

Despite the growing body of literature on religion as social space and class integration, existing studies have predominantly focused on Western contexts or macro-level religious institutions. Limited attention has been given to micro-level faith communities in Southeast Asian urban settings, particularly cell-based church groups. Moreover, prior research rarely examines how everyday social practices within religious spaces simultaneously foster class integration while reproducing symbolic domination. This gap limits our understanding of how faith-based communities function as inclusive yet contested social fields.

This study addresses this gap by examining the Connect Group community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan through the lens of Bourdieu's social practice theory. Using a qualitative approach, this research explores how social practices within the space of faith facilitate social class integration, while also revealing the persistence of symbolic power relations. By doing so, this study contributes to the sociology of religion by offering an empirical and theoretical analysis of faith spaces as arenas of social integration and class negotiation in a heterogeneous urban society.

### Literature Review

The concept of social space and social practice in religious communities can be effectively examined through Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Bourdieu (1977) conceptualizes social practice as the outcome of the dynamic interaction between habitus, capital, and social field. Habitus refers to a system of durable dispositions shaped by individuals past experiences and social positions, guiding perceptions and actions in an often unconscious manner. Capital, in turn, consists of various resources economic, social, cultural, and symbolic that actors mobilize within a given social field. The social field itself represents a structured arena governed by specific rules, power relations, and forms of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1990).

Within the context of religious communities, churches can be understood as social fields in which diverse forms of capital are negotiated and contested. Religious practices such as worship, small-group meetings, and leadership activities are not merely expressions of faith, but also social practices through which power relations and social positions are reproduced or transformed. As Bourdieu (1990) argues, symbolic power operates subtly through routine practices, often appearing natural and legitimate to participants. Consequently, faith spaces function simultaneously as sites of spiritual meaning and arenas of social stratification.

Several studies have demonstrated that religious communities may facilitate social integration by enabling interactions across class boundaries. Through regular participation in collective rituals and community activities, individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds engage in the exchange of social and cultural capital, which can reshape habitus and foster solidarity (Chen et al., 2022; Rahman, 2023). In urban settings, such interactions are particularly significant, as religious spaces often serve as rare environments where social classes intersect in relatively informal and sustained ways (Li & Wang, 2022).

However, Bourdieu's framework also highlights the ambivalent nature of social integration within religious fields. While religious communities may promote inclusivity, they also risk reproducing inequality when certain forms of capital such as economic resources, educational credentials, or symbolic authority; are disproportionately valued. Dominant groups may exercise symbolic domination through leadership roles, decision-making processes, and cultural norms that marginalize less privileged members (Anderson, 2021). As a result, class integration

within faith spaces is rarely neutral or egalitarian, but instead operates within existing power structures.

In the Indonesian context, studies on religion and social class have emphasized the role of religious communities as spaces of social negotiation rather than purely spiritual institutions. Santoso (2021) argues that religious spaces in major Indonesian cities function as arenas where class identities are continuously negotiated through everyday interactions. Similarly, Putra and Sari (2024) show that church-based communities in Medan play a strategic role in bridging social fragmentation by fostering interpersonal relationships across ethnic and economic divisions. These findings suggest that religious communities may contribute to social cohesion while simultaneously reflecting broader societal inequalities.

Despite these contributions, existing literature has not sufficiently explored how micro-level social practices within cell-based church communities shape class integration in Southeast Asian urban contexts. In particular, limited attention has been paid to how everyday interactions within small religious groups mediate both inclusion and symbolic domination. By applying Bourdieu's social practice theory to the Connect Group community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan, this study seeks to address this gap and provide a nuanced understanding of faith spaces as contested social fields where integration and inequality coexist.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive-interpretive design. This approach is appropriate for examining social practices, class dynamics, and meaning-making processes within religious communities, particularly in understanding how faith spaces function as social fields. The research focuses on the Connect Group (CG) community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan as a micro-level religious setting where interactions among individuals from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds take place. The research was conducted within several Connect Groups affiliated with Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan. These small-group communities consist of members who participate regularly in worship, fellowship, and social activities. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select informants who actively participate in CG activities and hold different structural roles within the community. A total of nine informants were involved, including sponsors, CG leaders, coaches, and team leaders. The informants represent diverse ethnic, educational, occupational, and economic backgrounds, enabling an in-depth exploration of class integration within the faith community.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participatory observation was conducted during weekly CG meetings, worship sessions, and social service activities to capture everyday interactions, ritual practices, and informal social dynamics. In-depth interviews were carried out with each informant to explore their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of social relations within the CG. Interviews focused

on themes such as participation, leadership, class interaction, ethnic diversity, and experiences of inclusion or domination. Documentation, including church materials and activity records, was used to support and contextualize observational and interview data.

Table 1. Ethnic, educational, and occupational backgrounds of research informants

Informants	Membership	CG	Age	Ethnicity	Education	Occupation
A	Sponsor	27	30	Chinese	High School	Insurance Agent
B	Sponsor	09	33	Chinese	Bachelor	Private Employee
C	CG Leader	11	31	Chinese	Bachelor	Private Employee
D	Sponsor	32	32	Toba	Bachelor	Private Employee
E	Team Leader	All CG	33	Toba	Bachelor	Teacher
F	CG Leader	33	35	Chinese	High School	Entrepreneur
G	Sponsor	33	40	Chinese	Bachelor	Entrepreneur
H	Coach	31	30	Nias	Bachelor	Entrepreneur
I	Team Leader	All CG	28	Karo	Bachelor	Entrepreneur

Source : Interview research.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure guided by Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice. The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, interview transcripts and field notes were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns and themes related to social interaction, class relations, and religious practices. Second, these themes were organized into analytical categories corresponding to Bourdieu's key concepts like habitus, capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic), and social field. Third, an interpretive analysis was undertaken to examine how social practices within the CG facilitate class integration while simultaneously reproducing symbolic power relations. This analytical process enabled a systematic linkage between empirical findings and theoretical interpretation. The researcher adopted a participant-observer role, allowing close engagement with the research setting while maintaining analytical distance. Reflexive field notes were used to document observations, personal reflections, and potential biases throughout the research process. This reflexive approach helped ensure that interpretations were grounded in empirical data rather than personal assumptions.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was

conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected informants to confirm accuracy and resonance with their experiences. In addition, methodological transparency and reflexivity were maintained to enhance the dependability and confirmability of the research findings.

## Result and Discussion

### a. Faith Space and Class Integration in Connect Group of Mawar Sharon Church My Home Medan

Table 2. Ethnic Diversity in CG

Informants	Membership	CG	Ethnic
A	Sponsor	27	Majority Chinese
B	Sponsor	09	Karo Batak, Toba Batak, Indian, Chinese, European, Manado, and Javanese
C	CG Leader	11	Majority Batak and Chinese
D	Sponsor	32	Majority Chinese
E	Team Leader	All CG	Mixed Batak Toba, Karo, Manado, Indian, and Chinese
F	CG Leader	33	Majority Chinese
G	Sponsor	33	Majority Chinese and Batak Karo
H	Coach	31	Majority Chinese, Batak Karo, and Nias
I	Team Leader	All CG	Majority Chinese, Nias, Batak Karo, and Batak Toba

Source : Interview research.

Connect Group is a spiritual community at Mawar Sharon Church that is inseparable from the history of cell groups/communities. Cell groups are groups of 5-10 people who believe in Jesus Christ and fellowship, pray, love one another, care for one another, study God's word together both personally and as a family, with the goal and dynamic of spiritual maturity to pray for, love, help, encourage, strengthen, serve, and together preach the gospel (Sutoyo, 2012). Along with the development and progress of the times, Connect Group has emerged as a forum that not only answers spiritual needs but also the need for a positive community for each of its members. This can be seen from the jargon and motto of the Mawar Sharon Church Connect Group, namely "a home for everyone" and "a second home."

Data from interviews and observations show that CGs are characterized by a tiered leadership structure, including roles such as sponsor, CG leader, coach, and team leader. This structure reflects an internal hierarchy that regulates participation, responsibility, and authority within the community. Although formally presented as

functional and pastoral, these positions implicitly shape the distribution of symbolic capital, as leadership roles are associated with legitimacy, trust, and moral authority. As Rizabuana (2021) suggests, the effectiveness of cell-based communities depends on the functioning of these structures, as disruptions in leadership relationships can hinder community growth.

Ethnic diversity constitutes a significant dimension of the CG social field. As shown in Table 2, the majority of CG members are of Chinese ethnicity, alongside Batak (Karo and Toba), Nias, Manado, Javanese, and Indian members. Interview data reveal that this diversity initially generated feelings of awkwardness and social distance among most informants. Seven out of nine informants reported discomfort when first joining the CG, primarily due to unfamiliarity, ethnic differences, and language barriers, particularly the frequent use of Hokkien in daily interactions.

However, empirical evidence also indicates a gradual transformation of social relations through sustained participation in CG activities. As summarized in Table 3, informants consistently described a shift from initial discomfort toward greater integration and mutual acceptance after prolonged involvement in the CG. Routine interactions during worship, fellowship, and informal gatherings enabled members to recognize and negotiate ethnic differences in a non-confrontational manner. In Bourdieu's terms, these repeated interactions contributed to the gradual reshaping of habitus, allowing members to adjust their dispositions and expectations toward others within the religious field.

**Table 3. Differences in multiethnic interactions before and after joining CG**

Informants	Multiethnic Interaction	
	Before CG	After CG
A	Awkward because they did not know each other.	Already integrated and learning to recognize and accept others' differences
B	Awkward because they don't know each other + ethnic differences	Mingling with friends in the same CG
C	Awkward because they don't know each other	Mingling and becoming more cohesive.
D	Awkward because they don't know each other	Mingling and enjoying close friendships with friends of different ethnicities
E	Awkward because of ethnic and language differences	Blend in and behave fairly so as not to cause domination in the CG.
F	It's normal, because all CG members are from the same tribe.	Maintain good relationships with each other

G	It's normal, because they have known each other for a long time	They blend in and are united.
H	Awkward, because of ethnic and language differences	Blending in and no domination between gender and ethnic differences
I	Awkward, due to being an ethnic minority.	Blending in and connecting with each other.

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Source : Interview research.

The presence of Connect Group as a spiritual community where everyone can find a spiritual family with the goal of being disciplined to become more like Christ. Not only that, within Connect Group, each member is free to participate in regular weekly activities together. This is as stated by the research subjects related to the leadership structure of Connect Group at Mawar Sharon My Home Church as follows :

*"...my first impression was that it was fun, so as far as I know, that's how the spiritual community has been all this time spiritual seemed kind of stiff, like it was just about teaching the Word. But in CG, you can really hang out together. Worship together, so it's not stiff at all. So we hang out with friends, you know? The material is also light, because it's , CG isn't really a place for teaching, but more of a place for friendship and discipleship. So I eventually realized. So when first time at CG, I felt it was so much fun and lighthearted, but I still got the value out of it. So every time I came home from CG, I always felt like, 'I got something new,' you know..." (Subject D).*

Interview excerpts further illustrate how CG activities foster an informal and inclusive atmosphere. Informant D, for instance, emphasized that CG meetings felt "fun and light-hearted," contrasting them with more rigid perceptions of spiritual gatherings. Activities such as shared meals, ice breakers, testimonies, and prayer sessions created a relaxed social environment that encouraged interaction beyond ethnic and class boundaries. These practices function as mechanisms through which social capital is built, as members develop trust, familiarity, and emotional closeness through repeated encounters.

*"...usually we gather for a meal first for half an hour, then we do ice breakers, then ice breakers, then PAW..." (Subject I).*

*"...there is an ice breaker, or if it is possible or not possible it can be replaced with eating first, or it can be eaten at the end. Once you enter the worship must be close to God, then praise and worship, the Word, testimonies, and it could be weeks where we pray, continue to pray for one another, present. Then there are activities to prevent boredom, replaced with other activities, such as games but related to the Word of God..." (Subject F)*

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the CG operates as a social field governed by informal norms rather than explicit regulations. Participation in worship, adherence to group values, and willingness to engage in communal activities serve as implicit

criteria for recognition within the group. While these norms appear neutral and inclusive, they simultaneously define acceptable forms of participation and belonging. Thus, the CG functions as a space where symbolic boundaries are softened but not entirely eliminated. Koehrsen's (2018) study states that in religious communities, class identity is also expressed through religious style, such as worship practices and ritual appearance.

In the urban context of Medan, where ethnic and class divisions remain socially salient, the CG provides a relatively safe arena for cross-group interaction. The findings suggest that the CG does not immediately dissolve social differences but enables members to manage and negotiate them through everyday religious practices. In this sense, the space of faith becomes a social field that facilitates integration through gradual habituation rather than formal intervention. Nevertheless, the existence of leadership hierarchies and dominant cultural practices, such as language use, indicates that power relations continue to shape interactions within the community.

Overall, the empirical data demonstrate that the Connect Group of Mawar Sharon My Home Church functions as a social field in which faith-based practices mediate ethnic and class relations. Through routine interaction and participation, members experience a transformation of social dispositions that supports integration, while simultaneously revealing the subtle persistence of symbolic power within the religious space.

#### **b. Social Practices in the Connect Group Community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home Medan**

Social practices within the Connect Group (CG) community of Mawar Sharon My Home Church play a crucial role in facilitating social class integration. Empirical data indicate that the process of joining the CG is largely mediated through existing social networks. Most informants reported that they were introduced to the CG by friends, relatives, or acquaintances who already occupied structural roles such as sponsors, CG leaders, or coaches. This recruitment pattern suggests that entry into the CG is embedded within social capital, where trust and familiarity serve as initial bridges for participation.

Informants A, B, C, D, E, G, H, and I explained that their introduction to the Connect Group community began within their circle of friends, which was also part of their respective Connect Group structures. Based on the results of interviews with these eight informants, they were invited by friends, relatives, and neighbors who were already established members and served as sponsors, coaches, or CG leaders in their respective Connect Groups. Each actor in the Connect Group leadership structure played their respective roles to "reach out" to congregants who had not yet joined or needed a healthy social circle. If we review the data on the congregation of the Mawar Sharon My Home Church in Medan, the majority of the congregation is ethnic Chinese. Meanwhile, within the Connect Groups that were formed, there were various types of members from various ethnicities who decided to join. For the author, this is an

interesting phenomenon because in carrying out the decision-making process and dividing up group cooperation, the CG members were very adaptable in carrying out their respective roles. This is in stark contrast to the context of the city of Medan itself, which still often discriminates against the Chinese community, and vice versa. This is also reinforced by previous findings by experts regarding the Chinese and indigenous communities. The dark history that once occurred in Indonesia against the Chinese has become a form of trauma for them regarding the presence of indigenous people in their social circles. Their stigma against indigenous people includes perceiving them as exploitative, insulting, and condescending (Burhan and Sani, 2013; Lubis, 2012).

However, this was not the case with the Connect Group community at Mawar Sharon My Home Church in Medan. The presence of this community has actually become a means of embracing people from different classes and ethnicities. All informants from different ethnic groups agreed that a connection of mutual help and support was built within their CG, thanks to the role of the CG Leader and their sponsors who listened to their complaints and became their prayer partners at all times. One example is when a CG member is sick and needs help with hospital expenses, CG members do not hesitate to help them in various ways, such as buying vitamins and medicine, sending food and fruit. In addition, during every Chinese New Year, CG members of different ethnicities join in the festivities by sending cakes and flowers or visiting homes for "pai cia." The connections built within the CG are like family, and this is what keeps them solid in their faith and spirit of togetherness despite their ethnic differences. However, it cannot be denied that minor conflicts related to ethnic issues have also been experienced by every party in the CG.

Informants A, B, C, D, E, G, and H admitted that every conflict that occurred was due to misunderstandings and stigmas that had been built up before joining the CG. Each of them felt awkward or, more precisely, afraid to speak; where in general, the Chinese community within the CG still strongly uses the Hokkien language, making it difficult to understand the circumstances and characters of each other. In addition, informant B also added that initially he had decided to leave because his CG environment did not support him as he was not fluent in Indonesian. However, in the end, the informant decided to remain in the CG and get closer to the others. Unlike the previous informant, informants D, E, H, and I, who are of Batak and Nias ethnicity, also admitted that they initially had difficulties when joining a CG that was predominantly Chinese. They had difficulty understanding Hokkien, so misunderstandings in conversation were not uncommon. Informant E added that the issue of Chinese dominance also made him a little awkward at first, but in the end, he blended in and became part of the group. Informants D, E, H, and I eventually began to adjust to the Chinese members of the CG and tried to learn Hokkien from their conversations within the CG. The informants admitted that they really enjoyed it and felt lucky because it made it easier for them to interact with the Chinese community they encountered at work and in their daily lives.

Based on this research, data show that sustained participation in CG activities gradually reduced social distance. Informants from Batak, Nias, and other non-Chinese backgrounds described a process of adaptation in which they learned basic Hokkien phrases and became more familiar with the cultural norms of the group. This learning process not only facilitated communication but also enhanced their confidence and sense of belonging. In Bourdieu's terms, this reflects a gradual transformation of habitus, whereby individuals internalize new dispositions that enable them to navigate the social field more effectively. At the same time, Chinese informants acknowledged adjusting their behavior to accommodate non-Chinese members, particularly by moderating language use and fostering inclusive interactions. These reciprocal adjustments suggest that class and ethnic integration within the CG is not a unidirectional process but rather a negotiated outcome of everyday social practices. Through routine interactions—such as shared meals, prayer support, and informal conversations—members collectively construct norms of solidarity and mutual care.

Empirical examples further illustrate how social practices within the CG contribute to cross-class solidarity. Informants reported that members regularly provide material and emotional support to one another, including assistance during illness, financial difficulties, and family events. Practices such as visiting sick members, contributing food or medicine, and participating in cultural celebrations like Chinese New Year were repeatedly mentioned as expressions of communal care. These practices function as concrete manifestations of social capital, reinforcing trust and reciprocity across ethnic and socioeconomic lines.

However, the data also suggest that class integration within the CG is not entirely free from tension. Several informants acknowledged the persistence of minor conflicts rooted in pre-existing stereotypes and social stigmas. These tensions were often linked to broader societal narratives surrounding ethnic relations in Medan, particularly between Chinese and indigenous communities. While the CG provides a space that mitigates overt discrimination, these underlying perceptions do not disappear entirely and may resurface in subtle forms during interactions.

In this context, the CG can be understood as a social field where class and ethnic integration occurs through continuous negotiation rather than immediate transformation. Social practices within the CG enable members to manage difference, build solidarity, and expand social networks, while simultaneously revealing the limits of integration shaped by historical and cultural power relations. Thus, the CG functions as an arena in which social class integration is actively produced through everyday practices, yet remains embedded within broader structures of inequality.

### **c. Building Social Bonds and Solidarity in the CG: A Pedagogical Approach.**

Praise and worship constitute a central social practice within the Connect Group (CG) community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home and play a significant role in fostering social bonds and group solidarity. Empirical findings from interviews

indicate that praise and worship sessions are not merely ritual expressions of faith but also function as embodied social practices that shape emotional connection and collective identity among CG members. Several informants emphasized the affective and relational impact of worship activities. Informant I described how physical gestures during worship, such as holding hands, contributed to a sense of closeness and belonging, transforming fellow CG members into perceived “family.” As stated by the informant as follows:

*"...because sometimes the worship leader invites us to hold hands, that builds bonding, builds closeness, embraces, there are songs that make us feel like, 'Oh, this is my friend,' 'Oh, this is my family,' like that. It really affects on me..."*

A similar sentiment was expressed by informant D as follows:

*"...without a doubt. Because when we worship and praise together, we become one vision, one mission, one heart. Without realizing it, it does have an impact. It builds a sense of togetherness, because when we praise and worship together, we focus on a shared purpose. So, it's common that after worship, we become even more affectionate, like looking at each other and hugging one another like that it feels truly extraordinary. Because during worship and praise, we can pray together, right? And it feels like we're one. That feeling brings out a sense of togetherness. There are no differences; instead, we become like family..."*

Similarly, Informant D highlighted that collective worship generated a shared vision and emotional unity, temporarily suspending perceived differences and reinforcing a sense of togetherness. These narratives demonstrate that praise and worship operate as social mechanisms that facilitate emotional synchronization and relational bonding within the group. From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of social practice, these worship activities can be understood as pedagogical processes through which habitus is shaped and reinforced. Practice theory suggests that the way activities are taught and trained creates a certain moral language and subjectivity, or in other words, can be referred to as a pedagogical process. In the connect group community itself, which is a religious arena, preparing praise and worship and other CG activities cannot be separated from the system built by CG actors such as sponsors, Leaders, Coaches, and Team Leaders themselves. An important point in building solidarity and bonding between CG members of different ethnicities is inseparable from the pedagogical process that occurs during praise and worship sessions. In preparing the songs to be sung, they should be as similar as possible to the weekly theme that has been set, whether it is about intimacy or unity. The lyrics of the songs should be adapted to the established theme as much as possible, not forgetting to convey the Church's vision and mission (sponsor's message) implicitly through the songs and preacher performed in CG activities. In addition, the praise and worship leader, or more commonly referred to as the worship leader, plays a very important role in the practice of these sessions. The worship leader leads the singing of the songs, emphasizes the lyrics of each song, and gives instructions to each CG participant while slipping in messages and sermon themes in the songs and words spoken. Thus,

worship leaders prepare themselves as much as possible physically, mentally, and psychologically to lead the praise and worship session in the connect group.

The data further reveal that praise and worship are not spontaneous or unstructured activities, but rather carefully prepared social practices embedded within the organizational structure of the CG. Informant G, who serves as a worship leader, explained that leading worship in CG requires intensive preparation, including emotional sensitivity, contextual awareness, and technical competence. The worship leader's role involves selecting songs aligned with thematic messages, guiding participants' emotional engagement, and facilitating a shared spiritual experience. This preparation reflects the pedagogical dimension of worship, where leaders consciously shape the affective environment to foster unity and inclusion. This was conveyed by the informant in the following interview:

*"...it's not the pressure, but rather whether we can facilitate them enter into God's presence because there are fewer people and we know, we know the person, oh maybe this person is facing something like this, this person is facing something different, so when we want to be more like, 'Oh God, how can we so that my my CG friends can all enter God's presence' like that. Especially if for example, if we're in the general public, I think they are much more logical than the AOG kids or the ProM kids, so they might cry or something like that, it's harder for the fathers and mothers, it's a bit harder, and what I'm more concerned about how to make sure all my CG friends can feel the presence of God. They need to be refreshed for a week, maybe they worked on how and so on, how to fulfill their respective longings. That might be my burden, I mean the burden I'm thinking about, so I feel like I really need to be well-prepared. In our worship, we already have a song bank, we already know the theme, maybe it's already universal, but in the CG it's more like, it needs extra attention in my opinion, it's actually small but it needs to be more sharp..."*

Next, informant G explained that technical and spiritual preparation is necessary when leading praise and worship in CG in order to build togetherness in CG and not just enjoy the songs being sung. For him, leading praise and worship in CG is like leading an event, requiring technical skills and thorough preparation, as stated by the informant in the following interview:

*"...the theory should actually work, in my opinion, the technical aspect is 50% spiritual is just as important, you know. Some people say, 'Oh, what's important is the anointing.' Yes, the anointing is important; it means God is with us. But when you serve, you believe God is with you, you believe God is with you But if you don't prepare yourself, if you don't master the field, if you don't know who your audience is, it just won't work. Right? An MC who's just good at at talking but not good at interacting, not good at understanding the audience, then how enjoyable MC..."*

Such pedagogical practices contribute to the accumulation of symbolic capital within the CG. Worship leaders, sponsors, and CG leaders gain legitimacy and recognition through their ability to guide collective worship and sustain group

cohesion. At the same time, participants acquire cultural and emotional competencies, such as familiarity with worship styles and shared religious language that enhance their sense of belonging within the community. In this way, praise and worship function as a site where symbolic capital is produced and distributed through embodied practice.

Beyond the formal CG setting, the influence of praise and worship extends into members' everyday lives. Informants reported maintaining close relationships outside CG activities, including regular communication, mutual encouragement, and shared leisure time. These extended interactions indicate that the habitus formed during worship practices carries over into daily social relations, reinforcing solidarity beyond ritual contexts. Moreover, the emergence of reciprocal economic and social support, such as promoting each other's businesses or facilitating employment opportunities suggests that worship-based bonding also contributes to the expansion of social and economic networks within the community. For example, the Chinese ethnic group, the majority of whom are traders or restaurant owners, are supported by other members to order food and promote it to other families. Non-Chinese communities such as the Batak, Manado, and Nias learn the Hokkien language, which makes it easier for them to find jobs and build business relationships with the Chinese community outside the Connect Group community. Thus, in reality, praise and worship also influence the formation of social networks, particularly socio-economic networks within the community.

However, the findings also point to limitations in the scope of this solidarity. While praise and worship effectively strengthen bonds within individual CGs, the data indicate a tendency toward group compartmentalization during larger church gatherings, such as Sunday services. Members were observed to primarily interact within their own CG, with limited engagement across different groups. This pattern suggests that while worship practices foster strong internal cohesion, they may simultaneously reinforce symbolic boundaries between groups within the broader church community.

Overall, the empirical data demonstrate that praise and worship in the CG function as a form of social pedagogy that shapes habitus, strengthens solidarity, and facilitates class and ethnic integration at the micro level. At the same time, these practices also reveal the selective nature of integration, highlighting how solidarity is produced within bounded social fields rather than across the entire institutional space of the church. This dual character underscores the ambivalence of faith-based social practices as both integrative and boundary-producing processes.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the Connect Group (CG) community of Mawar Sharon Church My Home in Medan functions as a dual space : a spiritual arena and a social field where class and ethnic relations are continuously negotiated. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practice, the findings reveal that routine religious

activities— such as small-group worship, fellowship, and informal support practices— serve as mechanisms through which social and cultural capital are exchanged, enabling gradual social class integration among members from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds.

Empirical evidence indicates that integration within the CG does not occur instantaneously but emerges through sustained participation in everyday social practices. Initial feelings of discomfort, language barriers, and ethnic differences are gradually managed through repeated interaction, leading to transformations in habitus that support mutual recognition and solidarity. At the same time, the study also identifies the persistence of symbolic power relations within the CG, particularly through leadership structures, linguistic dominance, and the distribution of symbolic authority. These findings suggest that faith-based integration operates within, rather than outside of, existing social hierarchies.

Praise and worship practices play a central pedagogical role in shaping collective habitus and fostering emotional bonding among members. As embodied social practices, these activities cultivate shared dispositions, reinforce group cohesion, and extend social solidarity beyond ritual settings into everyday life. However, the findings also highlight the bounded nature of this solidarity, as strong internal cohesion within individual CGs may coexist with limited interaction across different groups within the broader church community.

Theoretically, this study extends Bourdieu's social practice framework by applying it to micro-level religious communities in an Indonesian urban context. It demonstrates that faith spaces are not merely sites of spiritual meaning but active social fields where habitus, capital, and power relations are continuously produced and negotiated. This contribution enriches discussions on religion, class, and social integration beyond Western-centric analyses.

Practically, the findings suggest that church-based communities have significant potential to foster social cohesion across class and ethnic boundaries when everyday practices encourage inclusive interaction and mutual support. However, religious leaders and community organizers should remain attentive to subtle forms of symbolic domination that may arise through leadership roles, language use, and cultural norms. Designing participatory strategies that promote cross-group interaction beyond individual CGs may help expand the scope of integration within the wider church community.

For future research, further studies could explore comparative analyses across different denominations or cities to examine whether similar patterns of integration and symbolic power emerge in other faith-based settings. Longitudinal research could also provide deeper insight into how habitus transformation and class negotiation evolve over time within religious communities.

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