

RELIGION & BLACK HEALTH ON CAMPUS

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97% of Black adults believe
in God or a higher power.



Black youth rank faith higher in importance than counterparts in other racial and ethnic groups.



Objectives



1. What is religious involvement?
2. Why does religious involvement matter for Black Americans?
3. How can these findings be applied?

What is religious involvement?

Involvement with a formal organization and associated beliefs, traditions, and rituals.

Types of involvement:

Organizational: community-level engagement

Non-organizational: individual-level or personal engagement



WHY DOES RELIGIOUS
INVOLVEMENT MATTER?

Religious communities can connect individuals to relationships.

Congregations as an “alternative” family

Social ties are voluntary within historical, theological, and community contexts:

reciprocal assistance

ethics of fellowship and spiritual helping

sharing life events (e.g., marriage, funerals)

frequently shared experiences at services and other activities

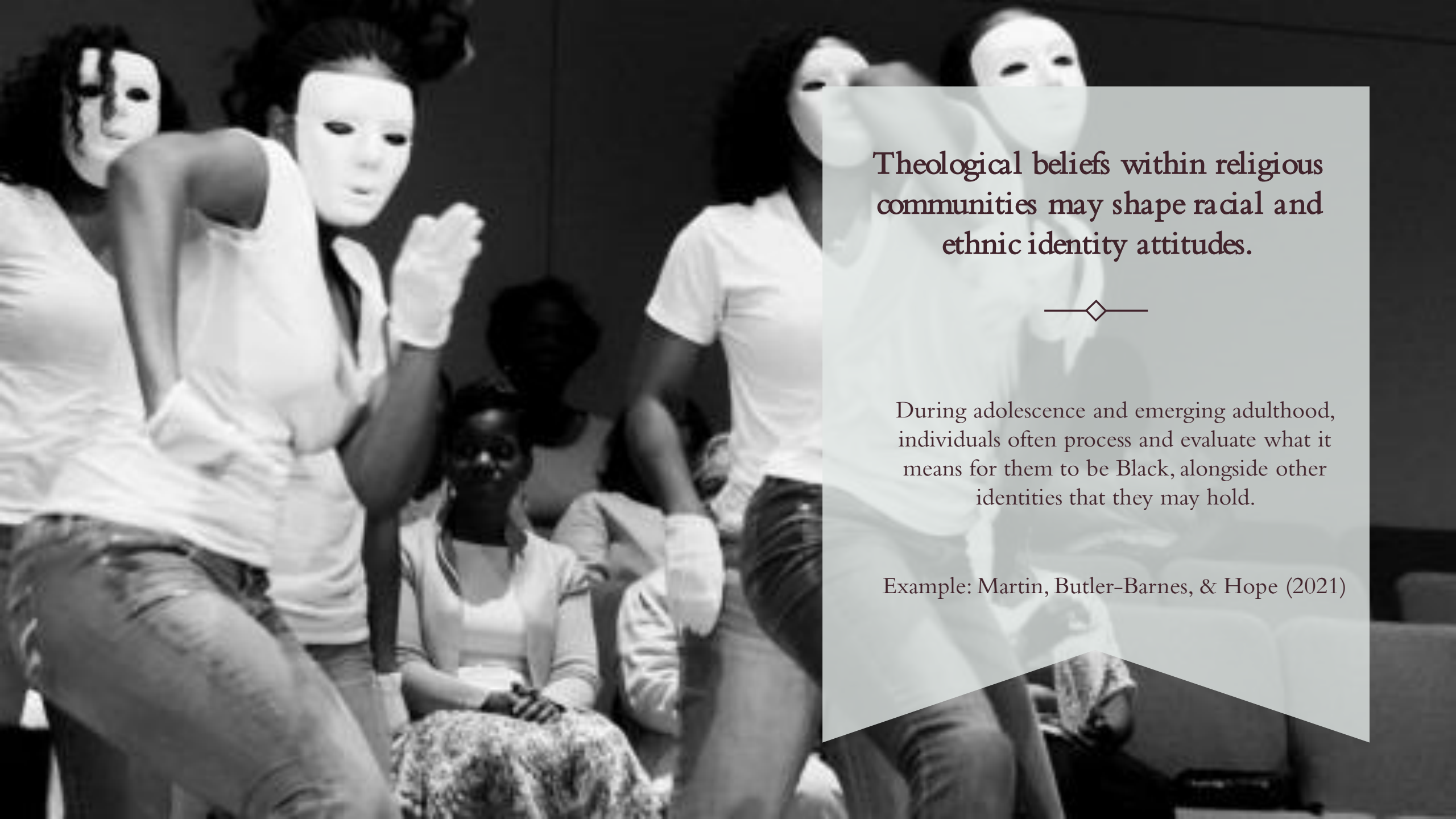
Religious involvement can connect individuals to social support.

African American adolescents who participated in more **congregational activities** tended to receive **and** provide all forms of church support.

(Note: Most studies only assess service attendance. However, congregational activities indicate greater social integration within the community.)

Religious involvement can facilitate ties to cultural heritage.

Black Americans with immigrant backgrounds may participate in religious traditions and communities that foster space and access to specific cultural experiences.



Theological beliefs within religious communities may shape racial and ethnic identity attitudes.



During adolescence and emerging adulthood, individuals often process and evaluate what it means for them to be Black, alongside other identities that they may hold.

Example: Martin, Butler-Barnes, & Hope (2021)

Religion and spirituality matter for health behaviors and outcomes.

For African American college students, lower levels of spirituality tended to be associated with greater likelihood of smoking (Turner-Musa & Lipscomb, 2007).

Religious involvement may reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms for Black emerging adult women (Cokley et al., 2012).

Higher levels of spirituality are associated with better nutrition and health promoting behaviors for African American undergraduates (Bowen Reid & Smalls, 2004).

Religiosity and spirituality enhances adjustment at college.

African American undergraduates who reported religious affiliation and frequent spiritual practice tended to exhibit higher levels of adjustment to college (Phillips, 2000).

Academic performance tends to be higher for African Americans who report greater spirituality (Walker & Dixon, 2002).

Religious socialization can shape psychosocial functioning at college.

Madison, a fourth-year Nigerian Christian woman, said:

“I was really **suffering from depression**. So the poor mental health outcomes for Black women because of the strong, Black woman stereotype really stands out to me. Because it’s really relevant. I started **getting help for it, which has been hard for me** and **something that I struggle with**. Trying to destigmatize. Because I feel like mental health in the Black community...taking medicine...that’s like unheard of. It’s a White people problem. We don’t have mental health issues, and then the whole religious thing gets introduced. **Like you’re so blessed, what do you gotta be depressed for?** Just pray on it.”

Religiosity can protect against the effects of racial discrimination on health outcomes.

For Black adolescents exposed to racial discrimination, religious support buffers against the likelihood of being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (Hope, Assari, Cole-Lewis, & Caldwell, 2017).

For Black emerging adults, religious coping can function protectively against the effects of racial discrimination on the physical consequences of alcohol use (Lee, Hope, Heinze, Cunningham, Caldwell, & Zimmerman, 2018).

Being Black and a religious minority may impact adjustment.

“I mean, I think I stand in this weird intersection between being a female—being a religious minority and being Black at University. And I think all these things are kind of inseparable from each other in my head. I mean, I think **I grapple with whether when to highlight one identity versus the other in certain capacities.** But I wouldn’t say one is more salient than the other.”

McGuire, Casanova, & Davis (2016)

Nonorganizational religious involvement (NRI) can enhance psychosocial well-being



NRI plays a significant role for life satisfaction, self-esteem, coping, and depressive symptoms for African Americans and Caribbean Blacks.


Rose, Hope, Thurman, Forrester, & Rose (2020)

Reading sacred texts is viewed as hope-promoting action.

(Harley & Hunn, 2015)

HOW CAN WE
APPLY THESE
FINDINGS?






How can we
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programming?




1. Revise intake and information forms to include questions about religion and spirituality.



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2. Create programming that integrates faith journeys with mental wellness.



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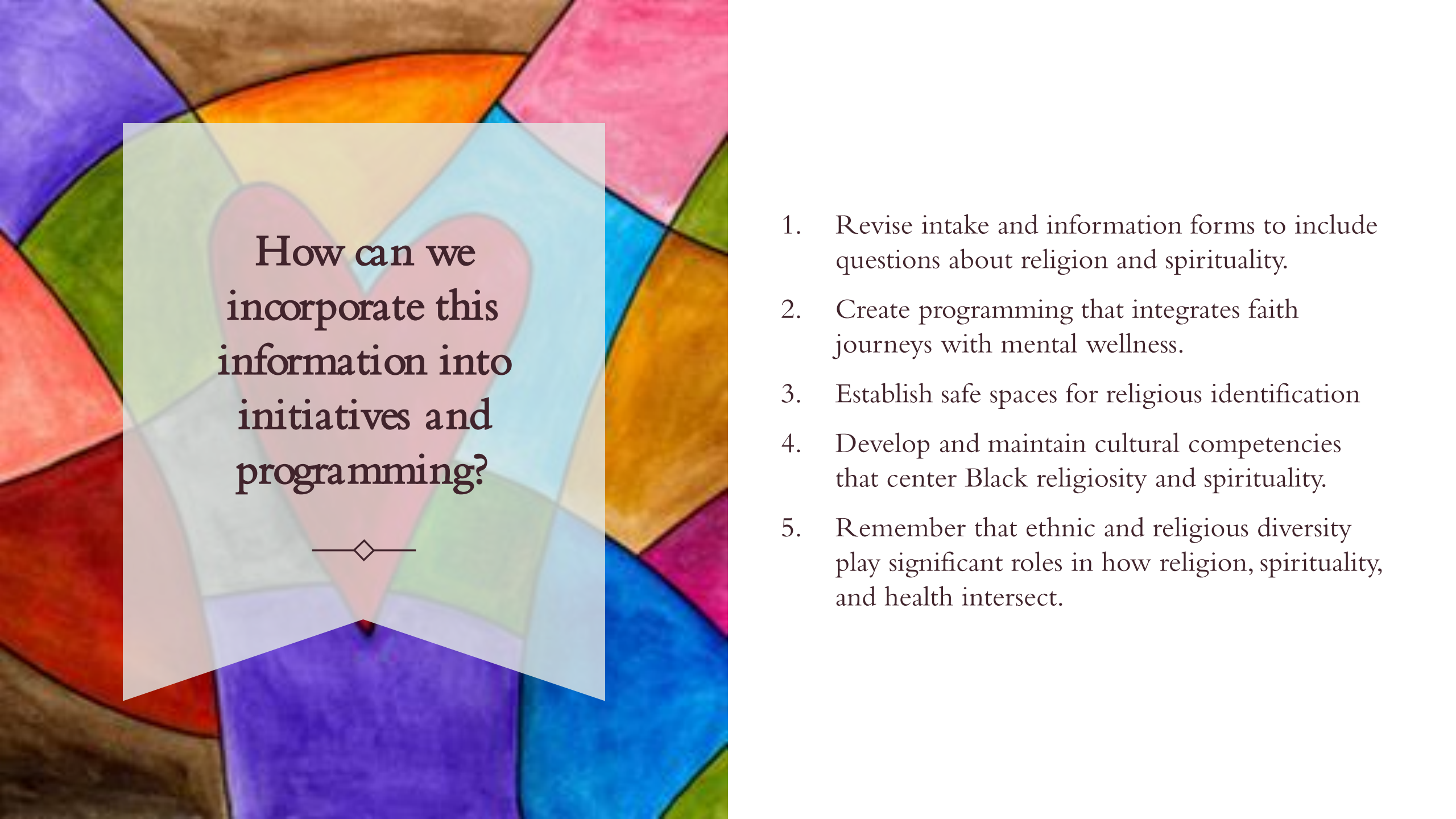
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2. Create programming that integrates faith journeys with mental wellness.
3. Establish safe spaces for religious identification
4. Develop and maintain cultural competencies that center Black religiosity and spirituality.



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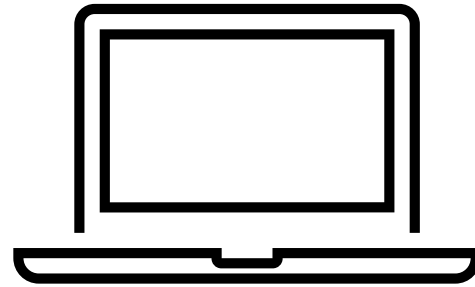


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5. Remember that ethnic and religious diversity play significant roles in how religion, spirituality, and health intersect.

Stay in touch



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