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Recovering Our ‘Selves,’ Reclaiming Our Parts:  
Toward a New Pastoral Psychology  
of Multiplicity for African American Women

By

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Degree to be awarded: Doctor of Theology

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Recovering Our ‘Selves,’ Reclaiming Our Parts:
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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Candler School of Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology
2012
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**Year:** 2012
Abstract

Recovering Our ‘Selves,’ Reclaiming Our Parts:
Toward a New Pastoral Psychology
of Multiplicity for African American Women
By: Christina A. Jones

African American women who seek psychological wellness encounter significant challenges. To begin, some African American women have adopted oppressive understandings of what psychological health is and feels like. Specifically, those who have adopted notions of mental health that require that they seek to feel like one essential, monolithic self at all times, in all settings, and in every situation. The problem is that the sociopolitical landscapes that African American women traverse do not lend themselves to this sort of experience. Attempting to be a monolithic self at all times and the presence of socially constructed conflated images of African American women, also known as stereotypes, complicate matters further for African American women. My research found that many women consciously or unconsciously split or disavow important parts of themselves in efforts to not be associated with prevailing African American women stereotypes. However, these same parts may be the very aspects of African American women’s selves that aid in their successful navigation of the structures and systems among which they exist and, as such, are a primary resources of strength, creativity, and prowess necessary for surviving and thriving in their surroundings. Therefore, this research determines multiplicity as a more appropriate and liberating pastoral psychological conceptual framework for understanding African American women’s psychology. This study both displays how African American women’s experiences align with concepts of multiplicity and deems multiplicity as a useful aid in African American women’s resistance to the oppressive features of prevailing African American women stereotypes.
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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the holy cloud of witness with me through this intellectual birthing process, including my grandmother, Ms. Katherine Williams. I would like to thank the women who graciously and courageously contributed their voices for the sake of this project and its aims. I would like to thank my dissertation committee members. To Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, for her invaluable scholarship and theoretic contributions to the field of pastoral theology that inspired this work. To Dr. Emmanuel Lartey for his consistent pastoral care and affirmation of my scholastic endeavors, even while one of his Introduction to Pastoral Care students. To Dr. Carolyn McCrary, for her very presence, a model of Womanist purposed living. I would like to thank my parents, Virginia and Larry Jones, for the many family prayers, bed time bible lessons, and days spent at church that forever nourish, ground, and shape my love of God, others, and self. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my soon-to-be husband, Ryan J. Davis, for his unwavering support, encouragement, and feedback. Thank you.
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