**HEALING FROM HATE: ASIAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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**BACKGROUND:** The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted mental health in Asian-American communities through racial discrimination. This compounds longstanding barriers Asian-American patients face to access quality mental health care. Currently, little is known about Asian-Americans’ experiences of psychotherapy. This study uses thematic analysis to explore the impact of race on Asian Americans’ experiences of psychotherapy treatments.

**METHODS:** Participants were recruited from July 2020 to June 2021 through purposive and chain referral sampling. Participants identified as 1.5 or 2nd generation East or Southeast Asian, had a history of psychotherapy treatment, and spoke English. Participants underwent a semi-structured interview about perceived impact of race on their psychotherapy. Transcripts were coded by two investigators using NVivo software. Thematic analysis was conducted, and themes were discussed with the research team.

**RESULTS:** Participants reported varying degrees of interaction of race and psychotherapy. Four themes emerged: (1) Participants believed therapists with certain lived experiences were better able to understand Asian-American experiences. (2) Participants reflected upon the need to provide explanation about their culture and community to White therapists. (3) Participants described a process of ethnic identity development that affected their therapy experiences. (4) Differences in cultural norms around family were obstacles in processing relational issues.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The impact of the pandemic on Asian-American mental health demonstrates the urgency of improving access, utilization, and quality of mental health services. This study provides new insight into Asian-American experiences in psychotherapy, and explores how race plays a role in treatment. Looking forward, this is an important step in developing guidelines for high quality psychotherapy for Asian-American patients in the post-pandemic world.

**CONTENT CATEGORY:** patient care

**KEYWORDS:** psychiatry, psychotherapy, talk therapy, mental health, qualitative