




# Who Am I and Where Do I Belong? The Impact of Heritage Cultural Identity Salience on Immigrant Workers Acculturation Strategies

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Accepted: 27 July 2022

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## Abstract

There has been growing interest among organizational researchers in the relationship between acculturation strategies and organizational outcomes of immigrant employees. However, what is noticeably missing from the literature on acculturation strategies is how cultural values such as heritage cultural identity salience affect an immigrant employee's acculturation strategy and subsequent work attitude and behaviors. Drawing on Berry's (1997) acculturation strategy and framework, we examined heritage cultural identity salience, harmony enhancement, integration and marginalization acculturation strategy, turnover intention, and affective commitment among immigrant employees in the USA. In this time-lagged study, we found that heritage cultural identity salience was negatively related to marginalization and positively related to integration. Harmony enhancement significantly buffered the relationship between heritage cultural identity salience and marginalization and integration, respectively. Heritage cultural identity salience had significant indirect effects on affective commitment via marginalization and both affective commitment and turnover intention via integration. Lastly, results from the moderated mediated analysis showed that the indirect effect of heritage identity salience on affective commitment and turnover intention via integration was significantly different at varying levels of harmony enhancement. Our study affirms existing research on acculturation strategy and extends the literature by introducing harmony enhancement as a moderator. The use of Berry's (1997) framework and the results of this study provide useful insights into the inclusion and retention of immigrant employees in the US workforce. Practical implications, as well as theoretical contributions, are discussed.

**Keywords** Heritage cultural identity salience · Immigrant/foreign-born employees · Harmony enhancement · Affective commitment · Turnover intention

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## Introduction

Several studies have examined immigrant's identities (e.g., ethnic identity) and the challenges of acculturation within various domains such as physical education and achievement (Kouli & Papaioannou, 2009), economics/labor market (Constant, 2014), general population (Kosic, 2004), and politics (Leach et al., 2008); however, recently, there has been growing interest among organizational researchers in the relationship between acculturation strategies and organizational outcomes of immigrant employees (Gürlek, 2021; Hajro et al., 2019; Hommey et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2011; Samnani et al., 2012). Although migration per se does not compromise the organizational outcomes of immigrant employees, the process of *acculturation* which is, the psychological, social, and cultural changes that occur both at an individual and societal level when two cultural groups come into consistent contact, is considered a major life-changing event that presents various stressors that threaten the identity salience of an immigrant employee (Berry, 1997). *Identity salience* refers to how central one's identity is to his/her goals and core sense of self, which determines the level of belongingness and affiliation to particular groups (Petriglieri, 2011). Specifically, *heritage cultural identity salience* (HCIS) refers to the degree to which an immigrant's heritage culture, compared to other identities (e.g., gender or race), is integral to his/her self-identity (Samnani et al., 2013; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Immigrant employees perceive cultural differences within the working environment as a threat to their HCIS (Sam & Berry, 2010; Samnani et al., 2012).

To minimize these threats, immigrant employees must balance their identity in respect to their interactions and adaptations of both the heritage and host cultural group by using *acculturation strategies*. Berry (1997) developed the most widely accepted framework of acculturation strategies, which examines acculturation as a bi-dimensional process during which immigrants face two fundamental issues simultaneously upon entering the host culture. The first issue is *cultural maintenance*, immigrants ask, “*is it considered to be of value to maintain my cultural identity or who am I?*” The second issue is *contact and participation*, immigrants ask, “*is it of value to maintain relations with other groups (larger society) or where do I belong?*” Preferences to these questions will lead immigrant employees to adopt one of four acculturation strategies (*assimilation, integration, marginalization, and separation*). Berry's (1997) acculturation framework will be used as the foundation of this study to affirm existing knowledge in the literature on acculturation strategies (Fig. 1).

Most of the research on acculturation strategies have focused more attention on exploring the outcomes of acculturation strategies, most commonly in student populations, than on understanding the factors that influence the adoption and implementation of acculturation strategies (Choy et al., 2021; Hajro et al., 2019; Zagefka et al., 2009). For example, some studies have explored antecedents for acculturation strategies in the wider population (e.g., Zagefka et al., 2009) and majority attitudes that lead to preferred acculturation strategies for immigrants (Kosic et al., 2005). In a related vein, few studies have examined the predictors

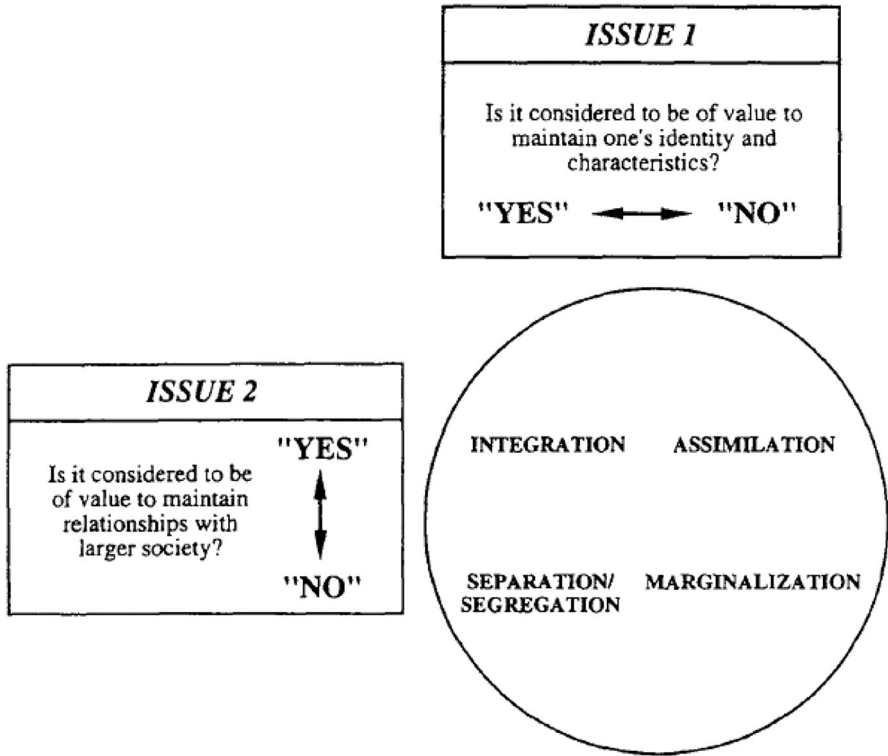


Fig. 1 Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies model

of acculturation strategies of immigrant employees such as newcomer adjustment (Hommey et al., 2020), contextual factors (Hajro et al., 2019), acculturation strategies as a determinant of job outcomes (Wang & Jing, 2018), and dispositional and situational factors (Samnani et al., 2013). However, what is noticeably missing from the literature on acculturation strategies is how cultural values such as HCIS affect an immigrant employee's acculturation strategy and subsequent work attitude and behaviors. Our study aims to fill this gap.

Building on this, we explore further the contact and participation aspect of Berry's (1997) model by exploring the moderating effect of another cultural value, *harmony enhancement (HE)*, on the relationship between HCIS and acculturation strategies. By doing this, we extend the current literature on potential moderators on the relationship between antecedents and acculturation strategy (Ng et al., 2017). *Harmony enhancement* is defined as "engaging in behaviors presumed to strengthen the relationships among the parties involved" (Leung et al., 2011, p. 796). It is important to note that while there are four acculturation strategies, we only focus on two, *integration* and *marginalization*. When an immigrant wants to maintain their heritage culture, adopt aspects of the host culture and establish interpersonal relationships with members of both cultural groups,

they select integration strategy. On the contrary, when they want to neither maintain their heritage culture nor adopt aspects of the host culture nor establish relationships with others, they select marginalization strategy (Berry, 1997).

Research on acculturation strategies has consistently shown that integration and marginalization have different effects on psychological adaptation and organization outcomes of immigrants (Hajro et al., 2019; Sam & Berry, 2010; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000); while empirical evidence is usually inconsistent and weak in predictive power for assimilation and separation strategies (Ng et al., 2013; Sam & Berry, 2010). Furthermore, although these two strategies have been widely researched, their interaction effects with HE have been widely unexplored. As contextual factors determine the impact of acculturation strategies on immigrants and most research has been done on international students or the general migration population, we must assess the contributions of these two strategies on immigrant employee outcomes in the working environment (Hajro et al., 2019; Hommey et al., 2020; Tonsing et al., 2016). Consequently, this forms the basis for the choice of integration and marginalization strategies in this study.

Against this backdrop, we aim to make three contributions to the literature on immigrant employees. First, we answer the call by researchers to use more culturally based models that incorporate cultural values and attitudes that are malleable as opposed to fixed to determine antecedents to acculturation strategies (Chao & Moon, 2005; Hajro et al., 2019; Samnani et al., 2012). We aim to contribute to the understanding of immigrant employees' HCIS on organizational commitment and turnover intentions via marginalization and integration strategies. Second, also lacking in management studies are moderators exploring the relationship between acculturation strategies and outcomes (Gürlek, 2021; Hajro et al., 2019). More commonly, research has explored acculturation strategies as the moderator (Hommey et al., 2020). This study fills this gap, by introducing the moderator role HE. Lastly, unlike previous studies that explored how immigrant employees adapt to the working environment in the host culture (Farashah & Blomquist, 2021; Hajro et al., 2019; Hommey et al., 2020; Risberg & Romani, 2021), we are the first study to use Berry's (1997) bi-dimensional acculturation strategy model to inform the inclusion and retention of immigrant employees in the host working environment. As the workplace gets more culturally diversified, developing an inclusive culture and keeping highly talented immigrant employees is crucial for employee well-being and business competitiveness (Farashah & Blomquist, 2021; Hajro et al., 2019).

## Heritage Cultural Identity Salience and Acculturation Strategies

Several research studies on acculturation strategies have underscored the importance of cultural and ethnic identity in the motivations behind the selection of acculturation strategies (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2006; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Within the work setting, immigrant employees' cultural identity becomes more salient as they are acutely aware of their group membership in a minoritized group—culturally and ethnically (Alam, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2006). According to the social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel &

Turner, 1986), immigrants select acculturation strategies by defining their social identity in relation to members of their heritage cultural group versus those of the host cultural group (Sam & Berry, 1997). As heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) is situational specific and exists on a spectrum, it allows immigrant employees to prioritize their heritage culture over all other social roles (e.g., gender) when needed (Samnani et al., 2012). Furthermore, HCIS provides the immigrant employees with a sense of belonging, pride, and commitment to their heritage cultural groups. Immigrants with HCIS are therefore more likely to seek and engage in cultural activities with their cultural group (Samnani et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2006). Accordingly, HCIS will drive them to select either marginalization or integration strategies (Ward et al., 2021).

Under the umbrella of SIT, Brewer's (2003) theory of optimal distinctiveness, states that an individual's social identification is motivated by two fundamental human needs: *the need to belong* and *the need to be unique*. In other words, HCIS motivates the immigrant employee to identify with the cultural group for which they will achieve positive social identity and feel a kinship with group members while on the other hand separate from cultural groups that they do not feel close to and aim to remain detached from (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2006; Zagefka et al., 2009). Theoretically, as HCIS operates on a spectrum, it will allow immigrant employees to choose the cultural identity that is inclusive enough to be part of the host culture, while at the same time exclusive enough to be deemed as distinct from others (Brewer, 2003; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Hence, an immigrant employee on the lower spectrum of HCIS will differentiate themselves from both cultural groups and tap into a more salient identity (e.g., gender) to adapt to the working environment. Therefore, immigrants with low HCIS are more likely to choose marginalization strategy (Samnani et al., 2012; Ward et al., 2021). On the contrary, immigrant employees on the higher spectrum of HCIS who want to retain important aspects of their heritage culture that are distinct (e.g., familism for Hispanic immigrants) while adopting key dominant cultural values of the host culture (e.g., Sunday night football) that will allow them to fit in will more likely choose integration strategies.

To borrow from previous research on immigrant identities, Samnani et al. (2012), in a study on key outcomes of newcomer acculturation strategy in the workplace, found that immigrants' selection of acculturation strategy varied based on their level of cultural identity salience. Immigrant employees who did not identify highly with their heritage culture chose marginalization strategy, while those who did chose integration strategy. Similarly, in a study on student cross-cultural transitions, Mersh and Auburn (2021) found that as international students transitioned into a new culture, their acculturation strategies were determined based on positive social identities. Thus, students with high HCIS selected integration strategies while those with low HCIS selected marginalization strategies, opting to use other social identities that were more important to functioning in the host environment. As shown in Fig. 2, we propose:

Hypothesis 1a. Heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) is negatively related to marginalization.

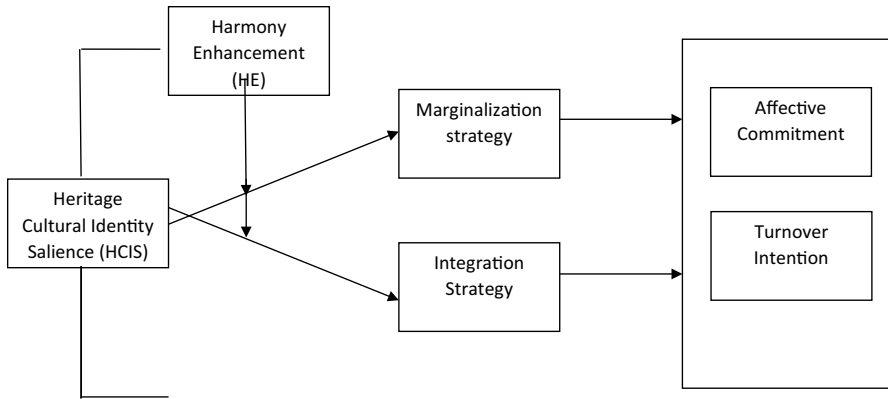


Fig. 2 Research model

Hypothesis 1b. Heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) is positively related to integration.

### The Moderating Effect of Harmony Enhancement

Drawing from Alam's (2018) theoretical significance of minority identity, we propose that in the working environment immigrant employees will be made immediately aware of their minority group status because of the cultural differences between their cultural group and that of the majority cultural group. Alam (2018) suggests that with the existence of a minority cultural identity, there is also a majority group which creates a power imbalance. The attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of the majority identity group toward the minority identity group will lead immigrant employees to be singled out from the majority cultural group indicating that they are significantly different and do not belong in the working environment. In response to this power imbalance which may lead to their maltreatment in the host culture, members of the minority identity group may work toward reconstructing their identity (Alam, 2018; Ward et al., 2021). Previous research has found that immigrants who attempt to reconstruct their identity may engage in avoidance behaviors to maintain their self-concept, while others may adapt their values, norms, and behaviors to those of the majority group (Alam, 2018; Gürlek, 2021; Kosic et al., 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010; Samnani et al., 2012).

Building on this, we introduce harmony enhancement (HE) as a moderator to contend that immigrant employees' attempt to reconstruct their identity may be determined by the degree to which they want to interact with members of the host culture. Representing high relationship orientation, HE is the degree to which an individual actively engages in social activities to establish and maintain high-quality interpersonal relationships (Leung, 1997). To borrow from SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), interpersonal cultural values like HE can influence immigrant employees who identify with a particular cultural group to act in ways that are consistent with cultural group norms and values (Gürlek, 2021). Specifically, immigrant employees

can utilize HE to establish favorability with group members by highlighting their similarities while minimizing their differences (Leung et al., 2011). Immigrants low in HE do not care to belong in the host culture and therefore have no desire to establish personal relationships with members of either cultural group. Their success in the working environment is motivated more by individual gain and self-interests as opposed to networking and team-building (Leung et al., 2011). On the other hand, immigrant employees high in HE are keen on seeking and sustaining positive relationships with others in the working environment. Their success in the working environment is based on their ability to fit in and establish a sense of belonging with their co-workers (Leung et al., 2011).

Based on Berry's acculturation strategy model (1997), HCIS and HE will interact to impact an immigrant employee's selection of acculturation strategy. Theoretically, since immigrant employees with low HE are both uninterested in building social networks with members from either cultural group and do not strongly identify with their minority cultural group, they will be more inclined to choose marginalization strategy. On the other hand, because of their social savviness, immigrant employees high in HE can establish and navigate positive relationships with individuals from both cultures which leads to integration strategy. Of note, there is ample evidence that states that integration strategy is the most beneficial strategy for immigrants while marginalization is the most detrimental. Against this backdrop, it is therefore assumed that HE is a protective factor that minimizes the risks associated with a salient minority identity (Gürlek, 2021). Further, to borrow from SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), having a shared cultural identity fulfills the need to belong, and establishing relationships with individuals from both cultural groups may help buffer the negative costs associated with a salient minority identity. In this case, having a strong HCIS may have fewer negative effects for immigrant employees who adopt an integration strategy as opposed to a marginalization strategy (Gürlek, 2021). Research on HE as a moderator on the relationship between HCIS and acculturation strategy is still scarce, however, based on the arguments above we propose:

Hypothesis 2a. Harmony enhancement (HE) moderates the negative relationship between heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) and marginalization. The relationship is stronger for immigrant employees lower in HE than those higher in HE.

Hypothesis 2b. Harmony enhancement (HE) moderates the positive relationship between heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) and integration. The relationship is stronger for immigrant employees higher in HE than those lower in HE.

### **Heritage Cultural Identity Salience, Acculturation Strategies, and Employees' Affective Commitment and Turnover Intention**

HCIS determines the degree of cultural maintenance and therefore is instrumental in selecting acculturation strategies. According to Berry's (1997) model, immigrants' acculturation strategies will affect their short-term (e.g., stress) and long-term (e.g., adaptation) outcomes. Two important organizational adaptation outcomes are

affective commitment and turnover intentions. Affective commitment is defined as “an affective or emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 67). Turnover intention is defined as an individual’s intention to voluntarily quit his/her organization (Mobley et al., 1979).

Acculturation strategies influence how involved and committed the immigrant worker is in the working environment. Depending on the acculturation strategy selected, social interactions and work experiences of the immigrant worker will either be enhanced or reduced (Berry, 1997). Selecting marginalization strategy indicates that the immigrant worker is neither interested in cultural maintenance nor establishing relationships. In contrast, selecting integration strategy signals that the immigrant worker wants to maintain their heritage culture and adapt various aspects of the host culture while simultaneously building strong interpersonal relationships with co-workers (Berry, 1997). For an immigrant employee, acculturation strategies also indicate the extent to which an immigrant worker takes part in the activities of the host culture. This can be perceived as a form of acceptance and inclusion in the host country. More acceptance and inclusion in the working environment lead to more affective commitment and fewer turnover intentions (Choy et al., 2021).

Based on Berry’s (1997) acculturation framework, there are likely benefits to immigrant employees who match their acculturation strategies to what is generally expected and accepted in the host culture. Research shows that native-born individuals would ideally like immigrants to integrate into the host culture and there are substantial benefits to both the organization and immigrant worker when acculturation strategies are accepted (Alam, 2018; Kosic et al., 2005; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Hence, immigrant employees who marginalize are likely to experience a significant loss in both cultures. They are less involved in both cultures and therefore lack support and accommodation. They are more likely to be rejected by their co-workers because they are perceived as not belonging to the organization. As a result, immigrant employees who select marginalization strategies are less likely to be committed and more likely to leave. On the other hand, with integration strategies, the immigrant employees are involved in two cultural communities which can provide them two social support systems (heritage culture and host culture). Organizations are more willing to invest in immigrant employees who show interest in the organization and to provide support and resources (e.g., English language proficiency lessons) that make them feel like part of the organization. As a result, immigrant employees who integrate are more likely to be committed to the organization and less likely to leave (Berry, 1997; Kosic et al., 2005).

Research has provided support to the relationship between acculturation strategies and immigrant employees’ attitudes and behaviors. In a qualitative study on professional Chinese immigrants in Australia, Lu et al. (2011) found that Chinese immigrants who integrated had a higher affective commitment and lower turnover intention. In another study, researchers found that individuals with strong cultural maintenance who selected integration strategies were more likely to identify with the organization, and had higher levels of affective commitment and greater emotional stability (Luijters et al., 2006). Other research found that compared to professional Chinese immigrants who chose other acculturation strategies, those who



adopted a marginalization strategy reported lower levels of job satisfaction, turnover intention, and affective commitment (Lu et al., 2011; Wang & Jing, 2018). Taken together with H1a and H1b, which predict a negative relationship between HCIS and marginalization, and a positive relationship between HCIS and integration, we further propose the following two mediational hypotheses (see Fig. 2).

Hypothesis 3a. Marginalization mediates the relationship between heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) and immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 3b. Integration mediates the relationship between heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) and immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intention.

### **The Moderated Mediation Models**

As per H2a, we predict that HE moderates the relationship between HCIS and marginalization. As per H3a, we predict marginalization mediates the relationship between HCIS and workplace outcomes. Taken together, we propose a path *a* moderated mediation model with HE moderating the *a* path (Fig. 2).

Hypothesis 4a. The indirect effect of heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) on immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intention via marginalization is dependent upon harmony enhancement (HE), such that the indirect effect is weaker when HE is high rather than low.

As per H2b, we predict HE moderates the relationship between HCIS and integration. As per H3b, we predict that integration mediates the relationship between HCIS and workplace outcomes. Thus, we also propose another path *a* moderated mediation model, with HE moderating the *a* path.

Hypothesis 4b. The indirect effect of heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) on immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intention via integration is dependent upon harmony enhancement (HE), such that the indirect effect is stronger when harmony enhancement (HE) is high rather than low.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

We limited our participants to those who had full-time work in the USA. A total of 492 immigrant employees completed time 1 (T1) survey. A majority, 51.2% were female, 23% had a length of stay (LOS) in the USA of more than 25 years, 42.6% were between the ages of 25–34 years, 37.2% had a bachelor's degree, and 33.3% were White. Among these participants, 187 immigrant employees also filled out the

time 2 (T2) survey, of which 55.1% were female, 26.7% had a length of stay (LOS) in the USA of 6–10 years, 48.1% were between the ages of 25–34 years, and 32.6% had a bachelor's degree.

## Measures

Heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) was measured using the 6-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure–Revised (MEIM-R) (Phinney & Ong, 2007). A sample item was “*I have a strong sense of belonging to my own cultural group.*” Response choice ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Acculturation strategy* was measured using Barry's (2001) East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM). Although the scale was designed for Asian populations, none of the items on the scale are specific to Asian cultures (Barry, 2001). The only identification to the targeted population was the word “Asian,” which was changed to “my fellow countrymen” for this study. The measure included a 5-item Integration subscale (e.g., *I feel comfortable around both Americans and my fellow countrymen*) and a 6-item marginalization subscale (e.g., *I sometimes feel that neither Americans nor my fellow countrymen like me*). Response choice ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

Harmony enhancement (HE) was measured using 11 items by Leung et al. (2011). A sample item was “*Having an ability to interact with others harmoniously is vital for achieving major successes.*” Responses to each item were indicated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Affective commitment* was measured using the 8-item measure of the Affective Commitment subscale from the Organizational Commitment scale (Meyer & Allen, 1991). An example item was, “*I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.*” Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

*Turnover intention* was measured using a 3-item Likert scale (Meyer et al., 1993). Sample items include “*I frequently think of leaving my organization.*” Participants rated items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

## Procedure

Immigrant employees were recruited from three sources: A large health system in the northeast US, Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk), and the first author's personal social network. We used three sources because, at the time of data collection, President Donald Trump was recently elected and issued a Muslim ban. Immigrants were fearful and understandably wanted at the time to remain socially invisible. To respect their privacy, we used best practices of a combination of recruiting sources to reach members of this population during this crucial time (Shaghghi et al., 2011). We collected data at two-time points with 1-month intervals. We measured HCIS, HE, marginalization, and integration strategy at time 1 (T1), and affective commitment and turnover intention 1 month after the T1 survey. Participation was anonymous.

To link T1 and time 2 (time 2) surveys, we asked three personal questions at the beginning of the T1 and T2 surveys.

Researchers use mTurk, an internet service, to recruit participants for a small fee (Barger et al., 2011). To minimize the risk of poor quality data, we employed best practices set forth by Aguinis et al. (2020). First, mTurkers had to be Master Turkers with at least a 95% or higher prior approval rate from having completed over 1000 surveys on mTurk. Second, we accounted for a 20–30% attrition rate by requesting 240 participants to complete the surveys. Third, we provided mTurkers with clear rules to receive \$5 compensation (e.g., participants had to complete both surveys and attention checks had to be answered correctly).

### Control Variables

Previous research has found that immigrants' age, gender, and length of stay (LOS) in years were significantly related to integration and marginalization strategies (Berry, 2007; Glazer & Güzel, 2019). Therefore, we controlled these variables in the analyses.

### Results

We tested the measurement model with confirmative factor analysis (CFA) using Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2009). The test of the four-factor model (HCIS, HE, marginalization, and integration) showed a satisfactory model fit:  $\chi^2 = 1026.8$ ,  $df = 428$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.93, SRMR = 0.06. We then tested the three-factor model with marginalization and integration combined into the same factor. The model fit decreased significantly:  $\Delta\chi^2 = 905.5$ ,  $\Delta df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Finally, we tested the two-factor model with HCIS and HE combined into one factor. The model fit again decreased significantly:  $\Delta\chi^2 = 1857.8$ ,  $\Delta df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . These results provided support to the measurement model.

### Descriptives and Correlations

As can be seen from Table 1, HCIS was negatively related to marginalization ( $r = -0.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and positively related to integration ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). HE was also negatively related to marginalization ( $r = -0.43$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and positively related to integration ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Marginalization was negatively related to affective commitment ( $r = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and positively related to turnover intention ( $r = 0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Integration was positively related to affective commitment ( $r = 0.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and negatively related to turnover intention ( $r = -0.25$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### Hypothesis Testing

We conducted latent moderated structural equations (LMS) (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000) to test the research hypotheses. LMS is superior to traditional moderated

**Table 1** Descriptives and correlations among major variables

|                                   | 1      | 2      | 3     | 4      | 5      | 6      | 7      | 8      | 9    |
|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| 1.Age (T1)                        | –      |        |       |        |        |        |        |        |      |
| 2.Gender (T1)                     | .05    | –      |       |        |        |        |        |        |      |
| 3.Length of stay in the U.S. (T1) | .38**  | .05    | –     |        |        |        |        |        |      |
| 4.HCIS (T1)                       | –.01   | .13**  | –.05  | –      |        |        |        |        |      |
| 5.HE (T1)                         | .21**  | .17**  | .00   | .52**  | –      |        |        |        |      |
| 6.Marginalization (T1)            | –.26** | –.17** | –.09* | –.15** | –.43** | –      |        |        |      |
| 7.Integration (T1)                | .21**  | .10*   | .02   | .20**  | .34**  | –.19** | –      |        |      |
| 8.Affective commitment (T2)       | .08    | –.01   | .05   | .08    | .13    | –.27** | .31**  | –      |      |
| 9.Turnover intention (T2)         | –.03   | .05    | .03   | –.07   | –.03   | .16*   | –.25** | –.70** | –    |
| <i>N</i>                          | 492    | 492    | 492   | 492    | 492    | 492    | 489    | 187    | 187  |
| <i>M</i>                          | 2.54   | 1.51   | 4.41  | 3.72   | 4.03   | 3.45   | 5.35   | 4.48   | 3.35 |
| <i>SD</i>                         | 1.06   | .50    | 1.82  | .88    | .78    | 1.51   | 1.04   | 1.22   | 1.77 |
| $\alpha$                          | –      | –      | –     | .89    | .94    | .92    | .69    | .81    | .91  |

*HCIS* heritage culture identity salience, *HE* harmony enhancement. For gender, males were coded as 1, and females were coded as 2. Length of stay in the U.S represent number of years in the U.S;  $\alpha$ =Cronbach's alpha for all main study variables

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

multiple regression (MMR) analysis because of the correction for measurement errors using latent variables. When running LMS, we created the latent variables, as well as latent interaction terms of  $HCIS \times HE$ . We used the maximum likelihood with ML estimator in Mplus 7.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2009) while specifying a random effect. We controlled employees' age, gender, and length of stay in the USA in the analyses. We tested a series of models to examine the unique contribution of each predictor (Luo et al., 2015). Unstandardized coefficients are presented in Table 2.

We ran model 1 to test H1a and H1b, which stated that HCIS would be negatively related to marginalization and positively related to integration. In model 1, we included the control variables and HCIS to predict marginalization and integration, respectively. The model fit for model 1 was moderately satisfactory:  $\chi^2 = 795.95$ ,  $df = 221$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.89, SRMR = 0.07. Consistent with H1a and H1b, HCIS negatively predicted marginalization ( $\gamma = -0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and positively predicted integration ( $\gamma = 0.34$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

We ran model 2 to test H2a and H2b which predicted the moderating effect of HE. Based on model 1, in model 2, we further included the moderator (HE) and the interaction term between the two latent variables ( $HCIS \times HE$ ). For this interaction model, Mplus does not produce the Chi-square and fit indices (Mooijart & Satorra, 2009; Muthén, 2012; Wu et al., 2017). Therefore, we did the log-likelihood test to compare the fit between the model with the interaction terms and the model without the interaction terms. The log likelihood-ratio was statistically

**Table 2** Latent moderated structure equation results

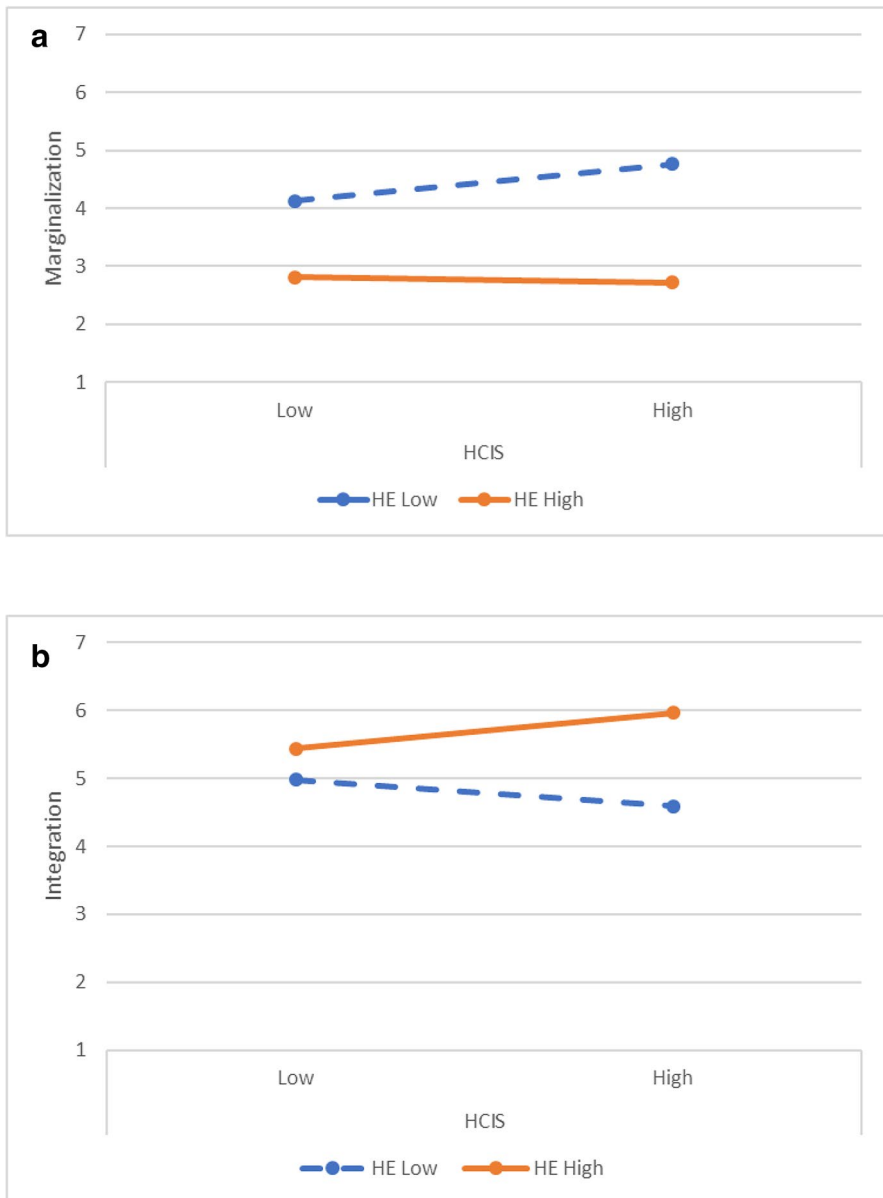
| Variable        | Marginalization        |                        | Integration            |                        | Affective commitment    | Turnover intention     |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|                 | Model 1                | Model 2                | Model 1                | Model 2                | Model 3                 | Model 4                |
|                 | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )  | <i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> ) |
| Age             | -.35***(.06)           | -.24***(.06)           |                        |                        | -.14(.12)               | .12(.12)               |
| Gender          | -.41**(.13)            | -.28*(.12)             |                        |                        | -.52*(.25)              | .36(.25)               |
| Length of stay  | 002(.04)               | -.006(.03)             |                        |                        | .07(.07)                | <.001(.07)             |
| HCIS            | -.42***(.11)           | .13(.12)               |                        |                        | -.006(.21)              | .12(.21)               |
| HE              |                        | -.96***(.12)           |                        |                        |                         |                        |
| HCIS × HE       |                        | -.37**(.11)            |                        |                        |                         |                        |
| Age             |                        |                        | .18***(.04)            | .13**(.04)             |                         |                        |
| Gender          |                        |                        | .10(.07)               | .04(.07)               |                         |                        |
| Length of stay  |                        |                        | -.02(.02)              | -.02(.02)              |                         |                        |
| HCIS            |                        |                        | .34***(.08)            | .12(.07)               |                         |                        |
| HE              |                        |                        |                        | .44***(.09)            |                         |                        |
| HCIS × HE       |                        |                        |                        | .30***(.08)            |                         |                        |
| Marginalization |                        |                        |                        |                        | -.21 <sup>+</sup> (.12) | .14(.11)               |
| Integration     |                        |                        |                        |                        | .71*(.29)               | -.71*(.28)             |

*b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *HCIS* heritage cultural identity salience, *HE* harmony enhancement;  $N_{T1} = 492$ ,  $N_{T2} = 209$

<sup>+</sup> $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

significant:  $\Delta -2LL[df = 2] = 32.17$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , confirming that the latent interaction model (model 2) was better than the model without the interaction terms. Supporting H2a and H2b, HCIS interacted with HE in predicting marginalization ( $\gamma = -0.37$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and integration ( $\gamma = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The simple slope analyses showed that when HE was low, HCIS positively predicted marginalization ( $\gamma = 0.69$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). When HE was high, HCIS negatively predicted marginalization ( $\gamma = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The moderating effect of HE on the relationship between HCIS and marginalization is presented in Fig. 3a. The simple slope analyses showed that when HE was low, HCIS negatively predicted integration ( $\gamma = -0.36$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). When HE was high, HCIS positively predicted integration ( $\gamma = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The moderating effect of HE on the relationship between HCIS and integration is presented in Fig. 3b.

H3a and H3b stated that marginalization and integration would respectively mediate HCIS in relation to employees' affective commitment and turnover intention. We ran model 3 and model 4 to test H3a and H3b. The model fits were moderately satisfactory for model 3 ( $\chi^2 = 1300.64$ ,  $df = 420$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.08) and model 4 ( $\chi^2 = 891.28$ ,  $df = 285$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.89, SRMR = 0.07). We used bootstrapping approach to



**Fig. 3** **a** The moderating effect of harmony enhancement on the relationship between heritage cultural identity salience and marginalization. **b** The moderating effect of harmony enhancement on the relationship between heritage cultural identity salience and integration

test the indirect effects. The results are presented in Table 3. HCIS had significant indirect effect on affective commitment via marginalization (effect=0.09, with 95%CI of [0.001, 0.25]). The indirect effect was not significant for turnover

**Table 3** The indirect effects of heritage cultural identity salience on employees' affective commitment and turnover intention via marginalization and integration at different level of harmony enhancement

| Predictor | Mediator        | Moderator:          | Affective commitment |                     | Turnover intention |                     |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
|           |                 |                     | Estimate (SE)        | Bootstrapping 95%CI | Estimate (SE)      | Bootstrapping 95%CI |
| HCIS      | Marginalization | Harmony Enhancement |                      |                     |                    |                     |
|           |                 | Indirect effect     | .09 (.06)            | [.001, .25]         | -.06 (.05)         | [-.20, .03]         |
|           |                 | Low                 | -.14 (.10)           | [-.40, .008]        | .09 (.09)          | [-.04, .34]         |
| HCIS      | Integration     | Harmony Enhancement |                      |                     |                    |                     |
|           |                 | Indirect effect     | .22 (.17)            | [-.01, .36]         | -.06 (.07)         | [-.30, .02]         |
|           |                 | Low                 | .25 (.11)            | [-.02, .73]         | -.15 (.15)         | [-.59, .06]         |
| HCIS      | Integration     | Harmony Enhancement |                      |                     |                    |                     |
|           |                 | Indirect effect     | -.27 (.15)           | [.09, .55]          | -.25 (.11)         | [-.52, -.08]        |
|           |                 | Low                 | .44 (.20)            | [-.66, -.04]        | .24 (.14)          | [.01, .56]          |
| HCIS      | Integration     | Harmony Enhancement |                      |                     |                    |                     |
|           |                 | Indirect effect     | .71 (.32)            | [.16, 1.08]         | -.40 (.18)         | [-.88, -.12]        |
|           |                 | Low                 | .71 (.32)            | [.22, 1.69]         | -.64 (.29)         | [-1.47, -.18]       |

HCIS heritage cultural identity salience.  $N_{bootstrapping} = 1000$

intention (effect =  $-0.06$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.20, 0.03]$ ). Hypothesis 3a was partly supported. HCIS had significant indirect effect on both affective commitment (effect =  $0.25$ , with 95%CI of  $[0.09, 0.55]$ ) and turnover intention (effect =  $-0.25$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.52, -0.08]$ ) via integration. Hypothesis 3b was supported.

Finally, we ran two moderated mediation models test H4a and H4b, which stated that the indirect effect of HCIS on employees' affective commitment and turnover intention via marginalization and integration would be dependent upon HE. Based on model 3 and 4, in model 5 and 6 we further included the moderator (HE) and the interaction terms between the two latent variables (HCIS $\times$ HE). The log likelihood-ratio test confirmed that model 5 ( $\Delta-2LL[df=2]=34.38$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and model 6 ( $\Delta-2LL[df=2]=33.36$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) was significantly better than the models without the interaction terms. We then used bootstrapping method to test H4a and H4b and the results are presented in Table 3. The indirect effect via marginalization was not significant at either low level of HE (for affective commitment, effect =  $-0.14$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.40, 0.008]$ ; for turnover intention, effect =  $0.09$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.04, 0.34]$ ) or high level of HE (for affective commitment, effect =  $0.09$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.01, 0.36]$ ; for turnover intention, effect =  $-0.06$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.30, 0.02]$ ). Hypothesis 4a was not supported.

The indirect effect via integration was significant at both low level of HE (for affective commitment, effect =  $-0.27$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.66, -0.04]$ ; for turnover intention, effect =  $0.24$ , with 95%CI of  $[0.01, 0.56]$ ) and high level of HE (for affective commitment, effect =  $0.44$ , with 95%CI of  $[0.16, 1.08]$ ; for turnover intention, effect =  $-0.40$ , with 95%CI of  $[-0.88, -0.12]$ ). The effects were also significantly different at low vs. high level of HE (for affective commitment, effect =  $0.71$ , with 95%CI of  $[0.22, 1.69]$ ; for turnover intention, effect =  $-0.64$ , with 95%CI of  $[-1.47, -0.18]$ ), providing support to Hypothesis 4b.

## Discussion

This research study examined heritage cultural identity salience (HCIS) and harmony enhancement (HE) in predicting acculturation strategies, affective commitment, and turnover intention among immigrant employees in the USA. In this time-lagged research study, we found that HCIS was negatively related to marginalization and positively related to integration. HE significantly moderated these relationships. HCIS had a significant indirect effect on affective commitment via marginalization and on both affective commitment and turnover intention via integration. Our data supported two first-stage moderated mediation models in which the indirect effects of HCIS on immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intention via integration were dependent upon the levels of HE.

## Theoretical Contributions

Our study answers a call to examine the antecedents of acculturation strategy (Samnani et al., 2013) and fills this research gap by showing the degree to which



immigrant employees' HCIS predicts their selection of acculturation strategies and impacts job-related outcomes. We explored these relationships through Berry's (1997) acculturation strategy model, a widely used and accepted model in other research domains, but less frequently used in organizational studies (Samnani et al., 2013). Our results are consistent with previous findings in that immigrant worker who have no interest in cultural maintenance and contact and participation select marginalization strategies, while those who want to maintain their cultural identity and maintain relationships with native co-workers, select integration strategy (Kosic, 2004; Lu et al., 2011; Luijters et al., 2006). We found that HE moderated HCIS in relation to marginalization and integration strategies, respectively. HCIS was negatively related to marginalization and positively related to integration when HE was high. When HE was low, our data showed that HCIS was positively related to marginalization and negatively related to integration. The results are consistent with previous research on majority-minority intergroup relationships which has shown that individuals who are more likely to invest energy into establishing strong positive relationships with members of the host culture are more likely to choose integration strategy, while those with no desire of maintaining relationships with others select marginalization strategies (Kosic et al., 2005; Zagefka & Brown, 2002).

We found integration strategy mediated HCIS in relation to affective commitment and turnover intention. These results lend support to Berry's (1997) assumptions in the acculturation framework which states that acculturation strategies are protective factors that help immigrants adapt to the host culture. When immigrant employees integrate, they may find a working environment that is supportive and encouraging of freedom and expression. They may have a sense of belonging to and shared identity with the organization, will be more affectively committed to the organization, and are less likely to quit. These results are similar to previous research which has shown integration is related to more positive employee outcomes compared to other acculturation strategies (Hajro et al., 2019; Kosic, 2004; Lu et al., 2011; Luijters et al., 2006).

Interestingly, these mediational relationships were contingent upon employees' HE. When HE was high, HCIS significantly positively related to affective commitment and negatively related to turnover intention via integration. For immigrant employees who were open to establishing a relationship with members in the host culture, their HCIS was positively associated with their choice of integration strategy. They had a strong tendency to endorse and value their heritage culture, defining themselves with their heritage root. At the same time, they are open to a new environment and cultural experience and are motivated to connect with local people. These employees were found to score high in integration and demonstrated a high level of affective commitment, and a low level of turnover intention. In contrast, when HE was low, HCIS was negatively related to affective commitment and positively related to turnover intention via a reduced level of integration. Our results revealed that immigrant employees' harmony value played a critical role in how they would adapt to the host country. With a low level of HE, immigrant employees' HCIS backfired. Combined with low interpersonal harmony, their strong identity with their heritage culture related to less integration and more marginalization, which was linked to reduced affective commitment and increased turnover intention.

These findings are similar to previous research on the relationship orientation of other immigrant groups such as international students (Cao et al., 2017), sojourners (Guan et al., 2018), and undocumented immigrants (Meca et al., 2017).

Our study revealed inconsistent findings regarding the mediating effect of marginalization strategy on HCIS and workplace outcomes. Although we found that HCIS had a significant indirect effect on affective commitment via marginalization, the indirect effect on turnover intention was not significant. In addition, none of the moderated mediational effects was significant. There are some possible explanations for these insignificant findings. First, immigrant employees who select marginalization strategy imply that they do not want to interact with members of the host culture. Accordingly, members of the host culture will be less willing to interact with them and provide them with much-needed social support to adapt effectively. Hence, they will have less affective commitment. This result is consistent with other research which has shown that marginalization strategy most negatively affects employee outcomes (Lu et al., 2011).

There may be two potential reasons why we did not get support for turnover intentions. First, potential conflicting social identities might be a factor. It should be noted that marginalization is a social process, spanning multiple levels—from the individual to the social, and the organizational. Selecting marginalization strategy implies that other social identities and not culture are a salient part of the immigrant's identity. The immigrant is, therefore, able to turn to those identities in the host culture or working environment to adapt effectively and reduce turnover intentions. For example, while an immigrant with marginalization might not be affectively committed to the organization, they might have low turnover intentions because of other factors such as the pay (high salary), prestige (e.g., vice president of the company), or the benefits afforded by the position or company fits within their more salient identities.

Second, time intervals between time 1 and time 2 may have played a part in the non-significant findings. Turnover intention was measured at time 2. It is possible that the 1-month time point between time 1 and T2 was insufficient to capture the indirect effects of marginalization, as previous results have shown an effect on turnover intentions at longer periods (Hajro et al., 2019). Again, we did not find that these mediational relationships were contingent upon employees' HE. A possible reason for this might be conflicting salient identities. Future research should examine these identities (e.g., race, gender) in conjunction with HCIS to determine whether or not this might come into play.

## Practical Implications

This paper presents several implications for organizational practice. To better understand and support workplace diversity, organizational researchers should focus on attaining a more in-depth perspective of the acculturation strategies and adaptive process of immigrant employees. During the acculturation process, immigrant employees will experience some form of cognitive dissonance in their cultural identity which might hinder their ability to adapt to the workplace. Acculturation strategies vary based on the environment and location. For example, despite cultural identity being a

significant part of who they are, immigrant employees might not adapt integration strategy, because the organizational culture is not supportive of cultural diversity. Organizations and local employees can help immigrant employees adapt to the new workplace by being open and allowing them to practice their heritage culture.

From the point of view of diversity and inclusion, immigrants are not a monolithic group, yet their struggles are often lumped together with native-born racial and ethnic minority groups to which they also belong (Carter-Sowell et al., 2021; Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016). However, the process of acculturation and immigrant status exacerbate the impact of discrimination that some immigrant employees face due to intersecting identities. For example, white immigrants might be able to fit in and adapt better than immigrants who are in racial/ethnic minority groups; similarly, immigrants from European countries may have a different experience from immigrants who migrate from Mexico, India, or the Caribbean. Practitioners should be aware that every immigrant experience is different and that provisions should be made to create an inclusive environment that embraces all identities.

This research helps managers to better understand immigrant employees' affective commitment and turnover intentions, which can provide the direction needed to formulate policies that are accepting and appreciative of cultural values in ways that increases diversity, inclusion, and creativity in the working environment. For example, if immigrant employees who chose to marginalize are supported, included, and encouraged through organizational practices they might have higher affective commitment. This is particularly important as previous research has shown that marginalized immigrant employees have the worst psychological outcomes due to interpersonal stressors (Carter-Sowell et al., 2021; Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016).

Practitioners can play a particularly important role in fostering a conducive environment for immigrant and local employees alike. First, practitioners can look into incorporating cultural sensitivity into the working environment, recruitment, and hiring process (Samnani et al., 2013). For example, the cultural environment should discourage immigrant employees to feel that they must adopt an integration strategy to get organizational support or be a strong "fit" in the organization. Second, organizational practitioners must create an environment that fosters inclusion and embraces diversity through training and socialization processes which can be used to reinforce messages of cultural diversity and inclusion. As reported by previous studies, individuals who integrate have more positive psychological well-being, organizational/employee outcomes, and long-term adaption (Kosic, 2004; Lu et al., 2011).

## Limitations, Future Research, and Conclusion

This study is not without limitations. First, this study was unable to determine causality because it is a time-lagged survey. Future research should look into designing quasi-experimental or experimental designs to test these relationships. Second, the 1-month time point between data collection might not be sufficient to establish a possible effect, therefore future studies should extend the time lag for at least 3–6 months for outcomes such as turnover intentions. Third, considering HCIS may be dependent on the environment and situation, future research should test

acculturation strategies in different situations (e.g., workplace vs. home). Additionally, due to this population being a hidden and hard-to-reach population, we took extra precautions in ensuring the privacy of our participants, therefore we did not ask for immigrant status. Future research should explore the impact of immigrant status on acculturation strategies and long-term adaptation. Lastly, we conducted this research at the time that Donald Trump was elected as president of the USA. History effects could have possibly impacted the way that our participants responded and our recruitment strategy, hence three recruitment sources. At that time, immigrants were being unfairly treated and targeted with lots of xenophobic remarks and threats. Due to the political climate, immigrants may have had lower intentions to leave the organization out of fear and necessity for survival than anything else.

Regardless of these limitations, the present study looked to examine the relationship between HCIS, HE, marginalization strategy, integration strategy, affective commitment, and turnover intention. Given the current challenges facing immigrants, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the results of our study are timely to provide insight into immigrant identity and adaption in an American workplace. The general population, policymakers, and organizations can learn from this research on how to create a more inclusive working environment for immigrants, how to avoid discrimination and xenophobic behaviors, and how to be more supportive of immigrants. This study will help raise awareness of how immigrants acculturate into the host society and how both political and social issues which are prevalent in American society today can significantly affect them.

**Author Contribution** Myia S. Williams and Cong Liu were involved in the conceptualization and designing of manuscript. Myia S. Williams was involved in literature review. Myia S. Williams and Cong Liu were involved preparation of the manuscript. Cong Liu provided supervision on this project. All authors have contributed in the manuscript revision and read and approved the final version for publication.

## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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