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## Being a Mother in a Foreign Land: Negotiating Motherhood of Foreign Wives in Taiwan

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### Abstract

This article aims to explore foreign wives' understandings of their motherhood experiences in Taiwan. Recently, more and more women from Southeast Asia, mainly Vietnam, marry into Taiwan through the operation of profit-pursuing cross-border marriage agencies. The majority of them are poorly educated, do not speak Chinese, and are married to men some 10-20 years older than themselves. Plus the perceived backwardness of their home countries, these women and now their children are increasingly being depicted as a social problem. Thus, foreign wives' motherhood practices do not take place independent of these discriminatory discourses which view them as 'incompetent mothers' and label their children as 'developmental disability'. Based on in-depth interviews with 18 foreign wives who married into Taiwan from Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cambodia, this article shows how these women become mothers under the impacts of patriarchal idealisation of women as mothers and their marriages associated with commodification. It also reveals how these women ambivalently and contradictorily practise their motherhood in a space where the norm of maternal instincts, the discrimination of their commodified marriages, and the effect of racialisation intertwine together. As well, it discloses how foreign wives can cultivate a sense of belonging in Taiwan after becoming mothers.

Key words : Motherhood; Foreign wives/brides; Transnational marriages; Taiwan; Southeast Asia