

A Journey to The Country of Origin (Taiwan)



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About Me

- A social worker & a mother
- Worked with adoptees during reunion since 2014

Lessons Learned

- Love is a magical connection
- Reunion is a chance to be resilient
- Voices of Adoptees and Birth Mothers are heard
- Adoptive Parents provide Extra Love

Cathwel Service



Our mission is to help children search for a permanent home.

Since 1971, more than 2289 children have found their adoptive parents around the world through Cathwel.

Cathwel Service



2006~2017

243 adoptees applied for the reunion, and we successfully helped 190 adoptees (78.1%) reunite with their original families.

Roadmap

I. What Is a Return Trip?

- I) Group Root-Finding Program
- II) Reunion With Original Family

II. A Closer Look: The Journey

- Expectations from Triad Perspectives
- The Social Worker's Role

III. Conclusion

- Identity Issues
- Benefits And Challenges After Reunions
- New Insights for Adoption Services

Part I What Is a Return Trip

I) Group Root-Finding Program



II) Reunion with Original Family



Group Root-Finding

A trip to Taiwan for 18 to 25-year-old adoptees

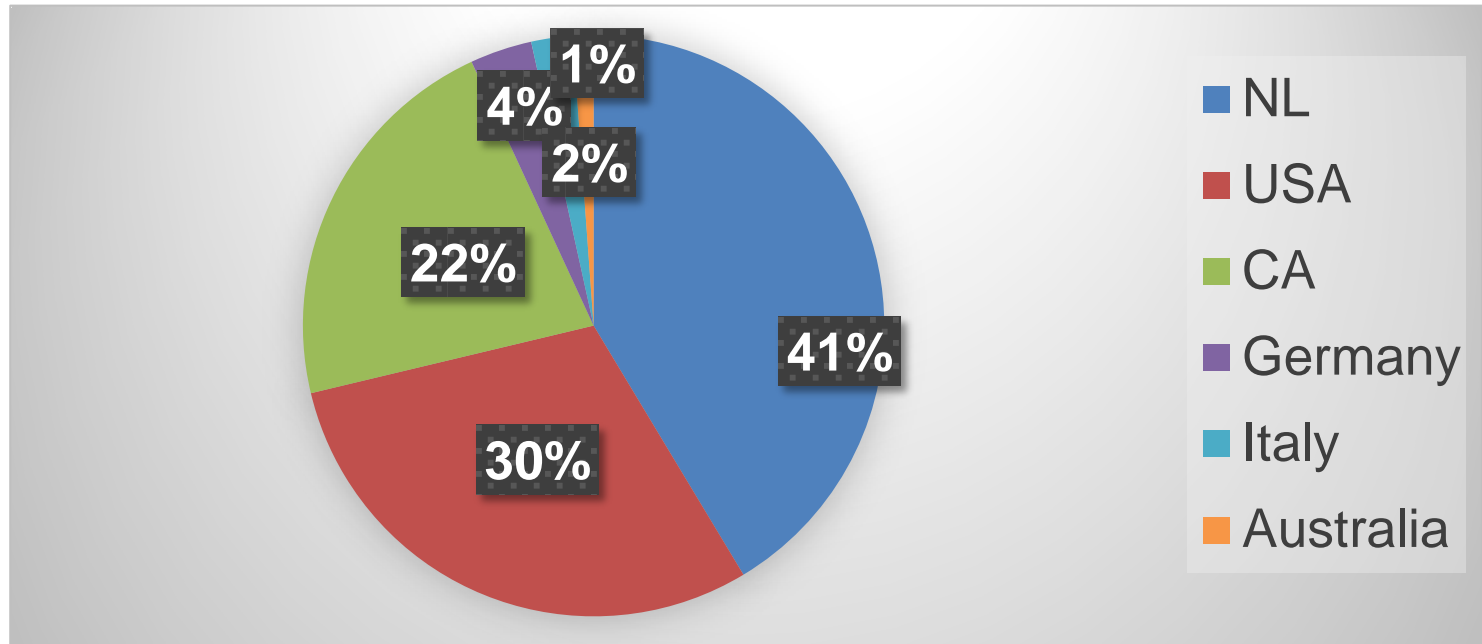


87 participants between 2006 and 2017

Demographics (Gender & Age)

Years Old	Male	Female	total
16-17	9	5	14
18-20	24	24	48
21-25	10	15	25
Total	43	44	87

Demographics (Countries)



Benefits of the Group Program

- Cultivating a strong support network
- Connecting with Taiwan
- Strengthening identity

71.3% of our participants successfully reunite with their original families



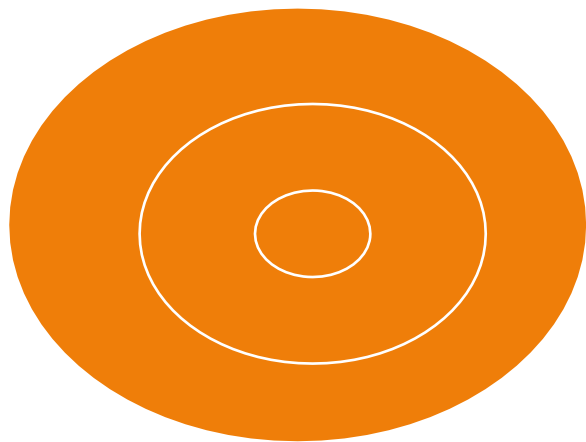
Taiwan



- In Cathwel, birth mothers choose adoptive parents.
- Cathwel follows up for at least 7 years.
- The 2003 Children and Youth Welfare Act
 - All three parties have the right to search.

The Search and Reunion

Essential Questions



Why Motivations/Expectations

When Age/Years After Adoption

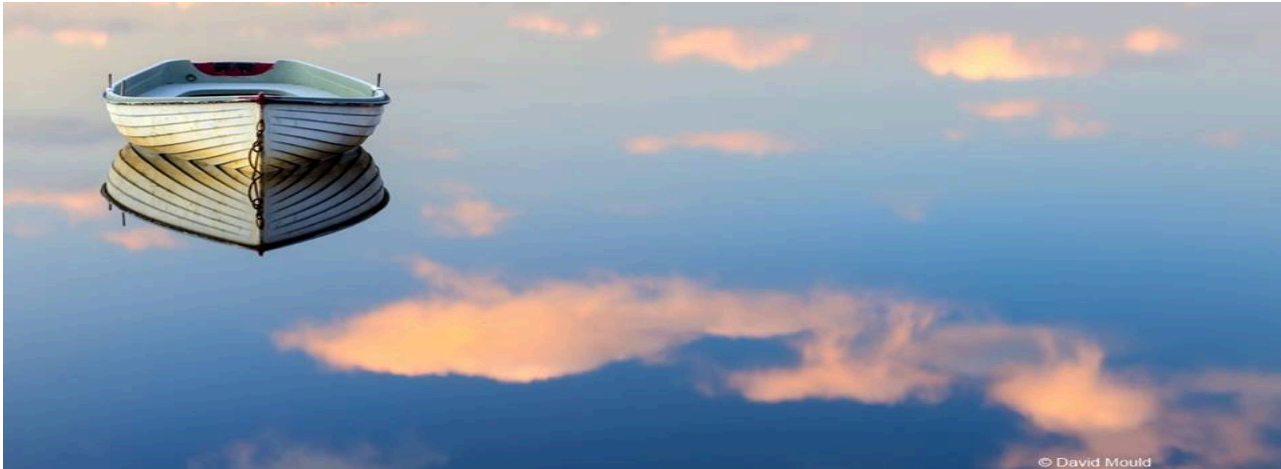
Who Birth Parents & Relatives

Where Meeting Location

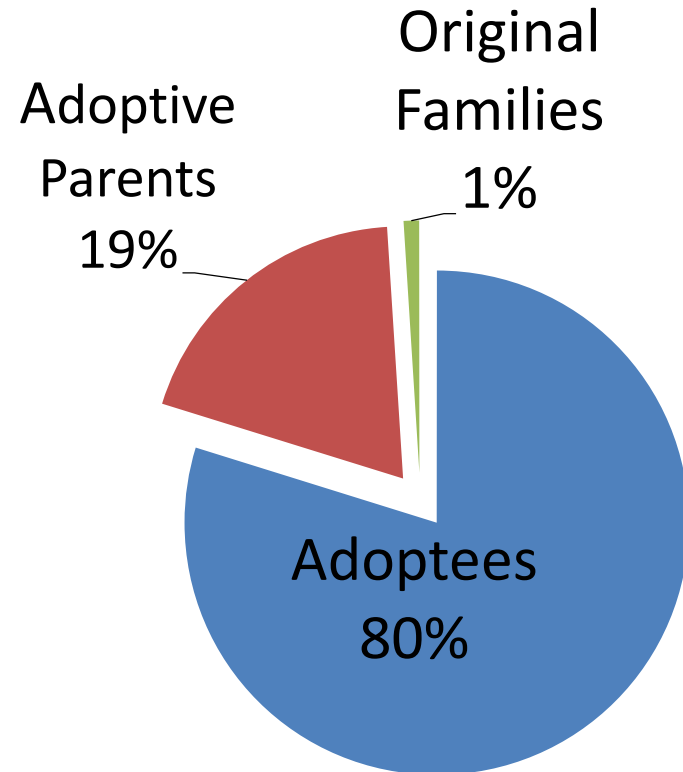
How Encounter/Dialogue

The Social Worker's Role

1. Email a questionnaire to participants.
2. Search for the original family.
3. Set up individual preparation meetings.
4. Facilitate the 1st meeting.



Reunion Applicants



- ☯ Adoptive parents must apply on minors' behalf.

Adoptive Parents

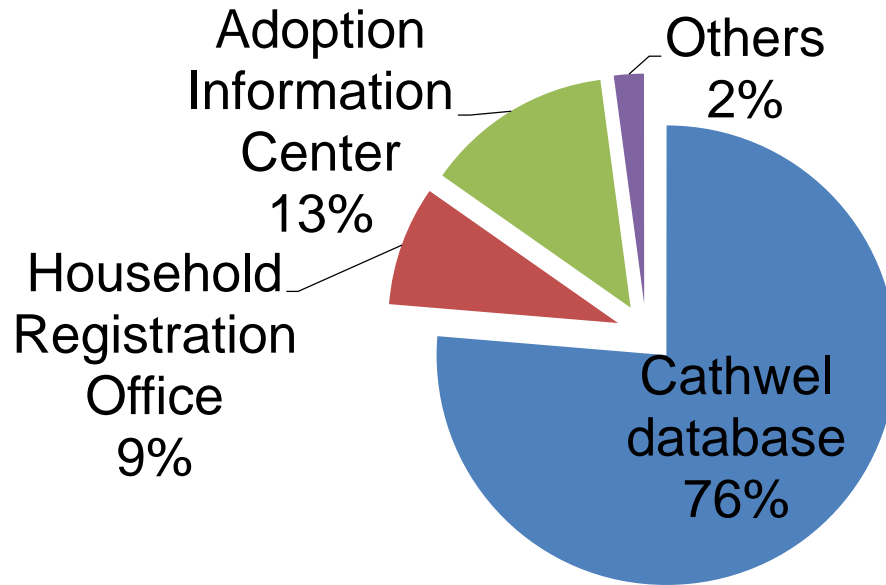
- **Role (Accompanying Adoptees during visits)**
 - All minor & 62.2% adult adoptees (1st meeting)
- **Motivations**
- **Concerns**
 - Expectations vs. Worries
 - Loyalty



Preparing Adoptees and Parents

1. Clarifying Expectations and Motivations
2. Reviewing Experiences of Previous Contact
3. Preparing for the Worst
4. Building Supportive System
5. Identifying Loose Ends
6. Scheduling the Reunion

How We Try to Locate Original Families



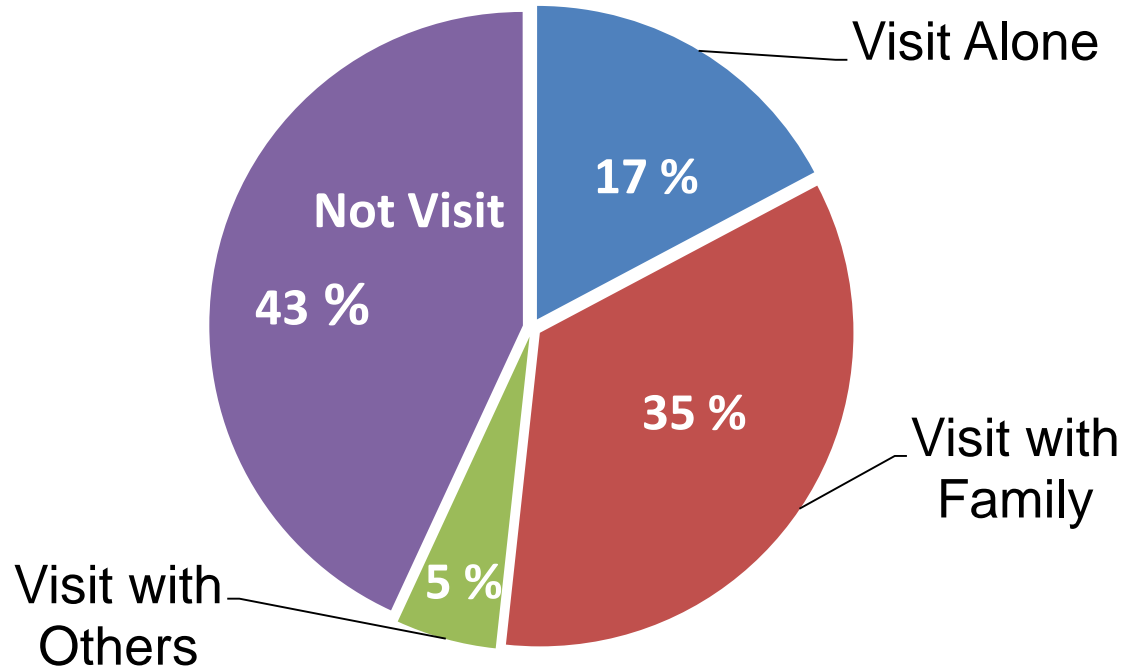
Factors Preventing Successful Reunions

53 Applicant

Factors	Percentage
Lack of contact info	39.6%
BM wasn't prepared	20.8%
Participants dropped out	13.2%

Do They Still Visit Taiwan?

53 Applicants

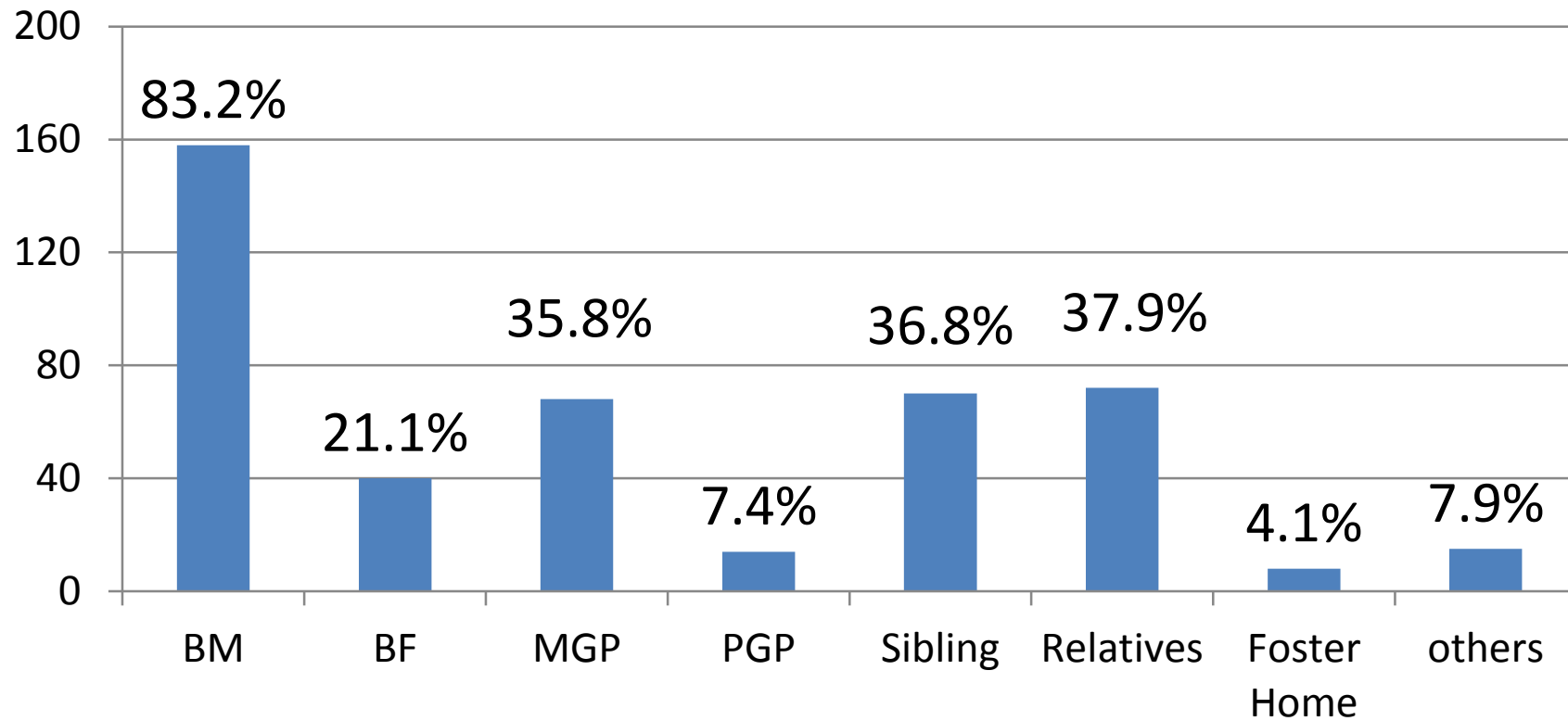


The 1st Meeting

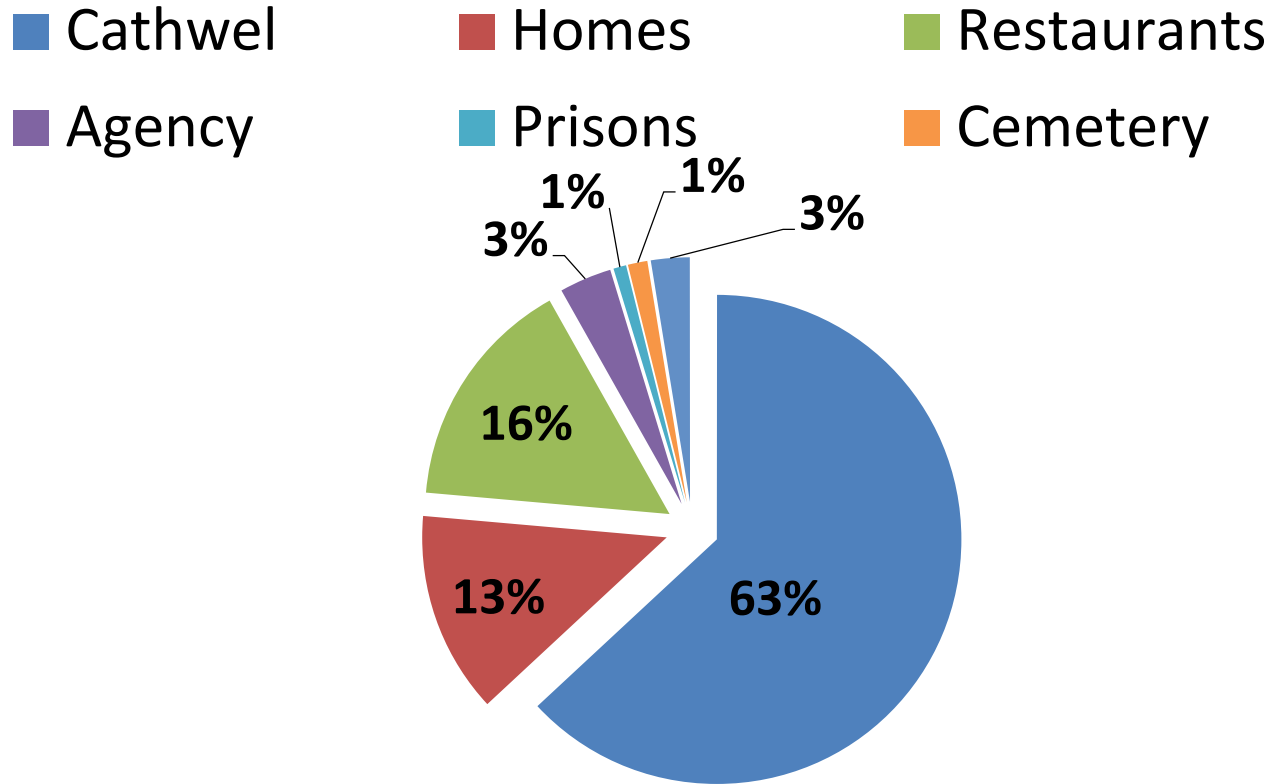


- **Engagement** breaking the ice
- **Dialogue** reconnection / life sharing / Q&A
- **Enactment** resolving issues / completing therapeutic processes
- **Goodbye** parting ways and give blessings

Whom Our Participants Meet With



Places of Reunion



Goals of The Reunion... from Adoptees' Respective

- Fulfilling Curiosity
- Finding Out Reasons of Being Adopted
- Understanding Roots and Family Background
- Establishing a Relationship
- Collecting the Medical History
- Asking Specific Questions or Attending Life Events
- Expressing Gratitude for Their Life and Sharing Their Achievements

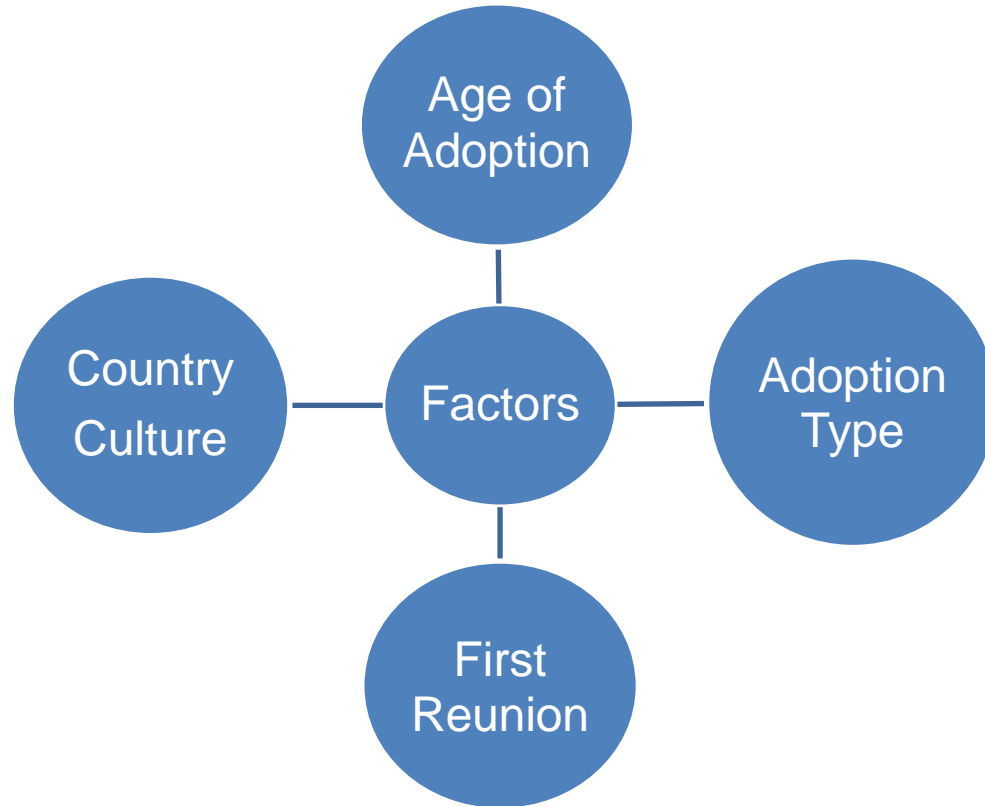
☯ It is possible to have no any expectations.

General Perceptions (Adoptees)

- **A Missing Piece of the Puzzle**
- **Painful Reminder or Healing?**
- **Confusion or Clarity?**

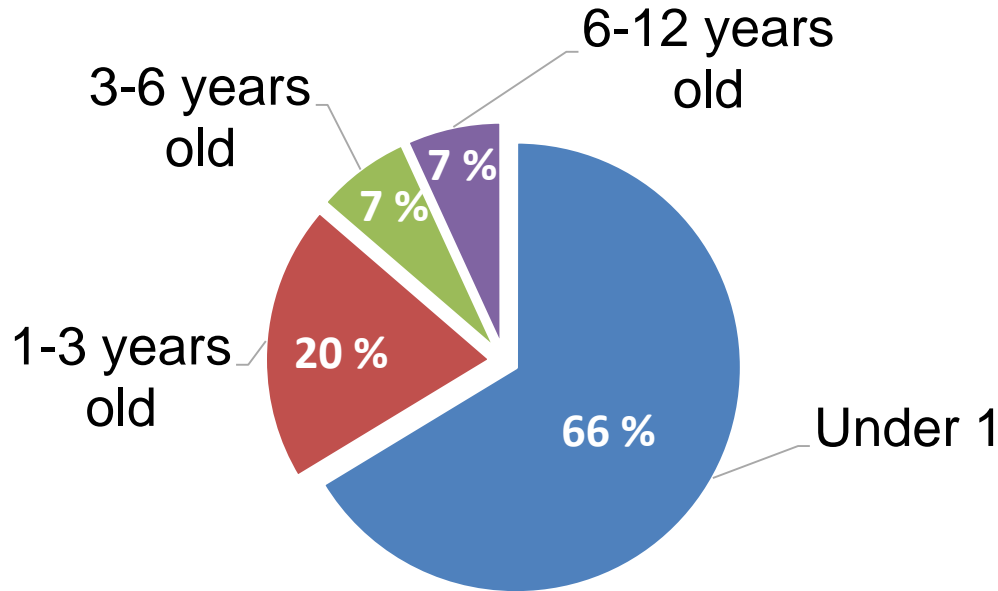


“Will I Meet My Birthmother?”



Age of Adoption

86% of the adoptees were **younger than 3 years** old when they were adopted.

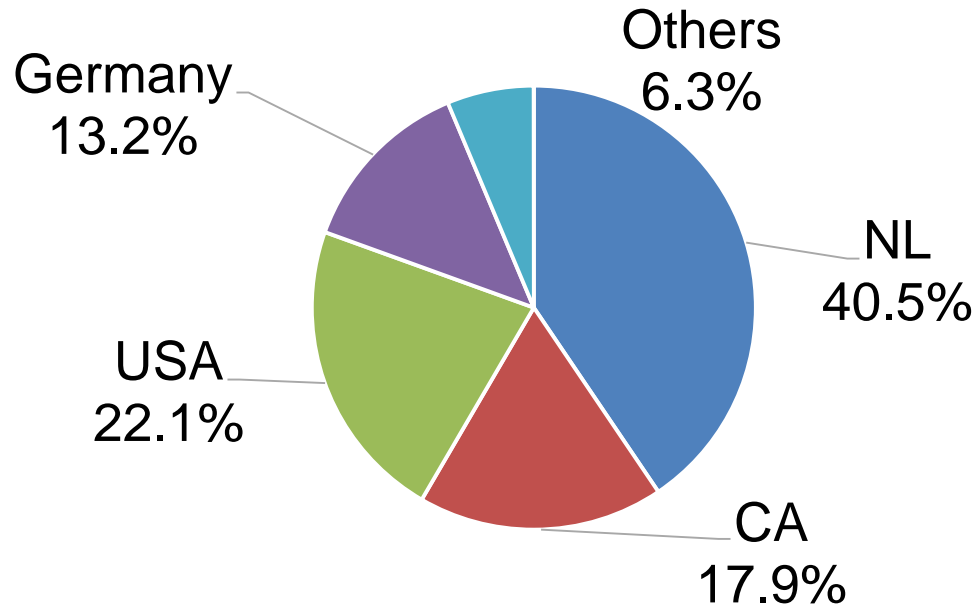


Age of the First Reunion

➤ The need of reunion comes early

age	Percentage	
Under 6	5.3 %	Minor 47.9 %
6-12	21.6 %	
12-18	21.0 %	
18-25	43.7 %	Adult 52.1%
Over 25	8.4 %	

Countries of Adoption



Adoption Types

Open

Semi-Open

Close

Example1 [vedio\Frederik.mp4](#)

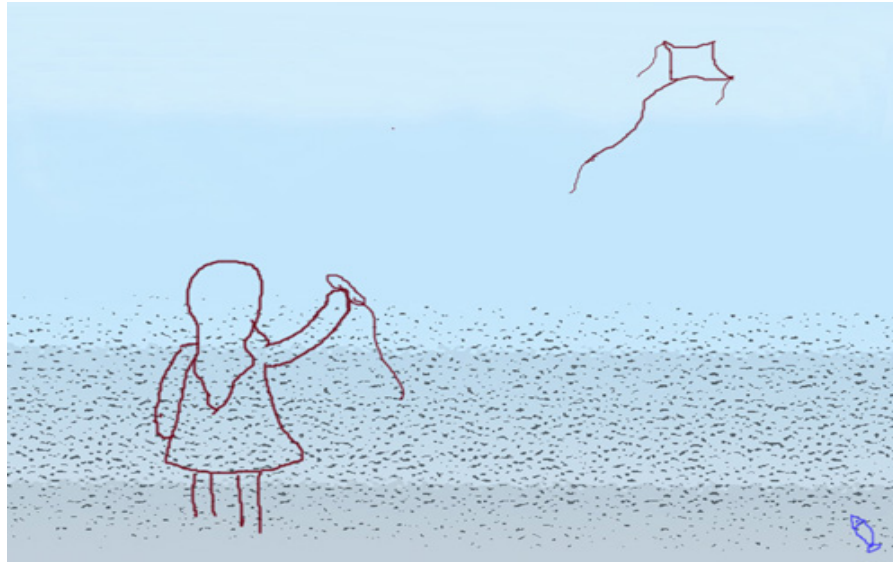
Example2 [vedio\Suki.mp4](#)

Example3 [vedio\Matthew.mp4](#)

Example4 [vedio\Tim's sister.mp4](#)

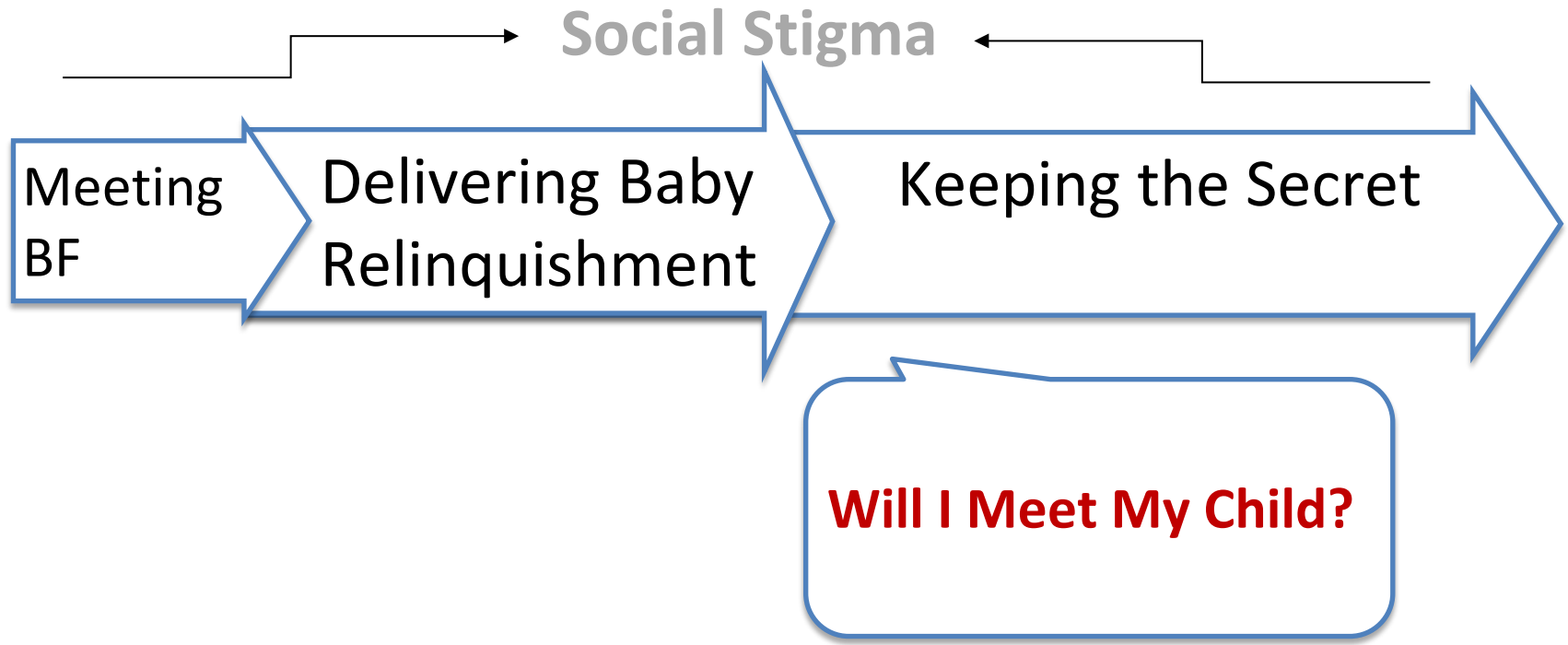
Example5 [vedio\Luka.mp4](#)

General Perceptions (Birthmothers)



- **A Chance to Get Closure**
- **Regret vs. Relief?**
- **Old Wound vs. New Beginning?**

Birth Mother's Journey



WHY Relinquish?



- Too Young
- Lacking Commitment
- Vulnerable or Traumatized
- Lacking Support and/or Resources
- Giving in to Social Pressure

Secrets vs. Disclosure



- Stigma for Unwed Mother
- Blame on Birth Mother If she puts her baby for adoption
- Hiding the fact of adoptees' existence
 - @ 7.9% BMs' husbands
 - @ 56.8% grandparents
 - @ 51.6% uncles & aunts
 - @ 23.7% Siblings
- Keeping Away Painful Experience
 - @Trauma of parting away from kids
 - @Can't forgive herself

Empathizing With Birth Mothers

Attitude

Eagerness

Ambivalence

Avoidance

Feelings

Excited

Guilt

Fear

Regret

Why to Meet Again

- Curiosity About What Children Look Like
- Learning about Children's life
- Does She/He Blame Me?
- Explaining Adoption Story
- Responding to Kid's Questions or Needs

Benefits

After the Reunion

➤ Adoptees

- Becoming whole
- Finding out their BM didn't abandon them but loved them
- Feeling a true sense of belonging
- Getting a sense of relief and can go forward

➤ Birth Mother

- Feeling Empowered by telling their stories
- Learning about the lives of their children
- Finding peace of mind
- Relief the shame and guilty feeling

Challenges

After the Reunion

➤ Keeping Relationships Healthy

- Reconnect With Both Sides Parents

➤ Our recommendations:

- Start by Keeping in Touch via Cathwel
- Maintaining Realistic Expectations



What We Have Learned

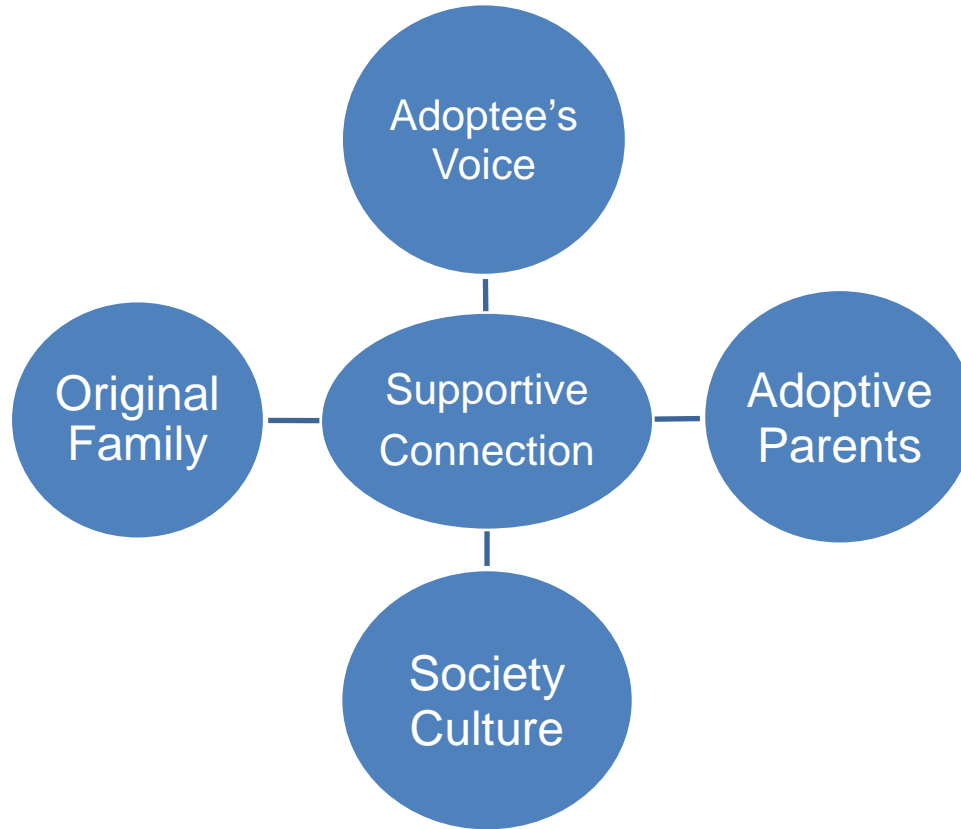
☯ Identity Issues

☯ Resilience from Abandonment

☯ Key to successful reunions

1. Help BMs trust the system
2. Provide professional support to everyone involved
3. Encourage patience toward the process

New Insights for Adoption Services



Thank You