



Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

John Wesley Powell Student Research
Conference

2011, 22nd Annual JWP Conference

Apr 9th, 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

**The Athenian Institution of Adoption During the Fourth Century
BCE: A Reflection of and Contribution to Athens' Patriarchal
Society**

Maria Duda
Illinois Wesleyan University

Nancy Sultan, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc>



Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#)

Duda, Maria and Sultan, Faculty Advisor, Nancy, "The Athenian Institution of Adoption During the Fourth Century BCE: A Reflection of and Contribution to Athens' Patriarchal Society" (2011). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 1.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2011/oralpres6/1>

This Event is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Oral Presentation O6.1

**THE ATHENIAN INSTITUTION OF ADOPTION DURING THE FOURTH CENTURY
BCE: A REFLECTION OF AND CONTRIBUTION TO ATHENS' PATRIARCHAL
SOCIETY**

Maria Duda and Nancy Sultan*

Greek and Roman Studies Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

I argue that the practice of adoption in fourth century Athens served not only to preserve the family line and secure a caretaker for aging parents, but more importantly, adoption was understood as an essential expression of a male citizen's power over women through the continuation of their particular understanding of patriarchy. The process of adoption was restricted to the male sector of the population, was male-centered and misogynistic. The State of Athens did not impose adoption upon its male citizens, but rather made it the responsibility of the individual to find an heir if he did not produce a son; I argue that the male citizens of Athens were self-motivated to adopt a son from a fear of losing their power and their control over women. Through the lens of the philosophy of Althusser in conjunction with Allan Johnson and Adrienne Rich's interpretations of patriarchy, I provide an explanation as to why, as proposed by Lene Rubenstein, Athens did not need to compel citizens to adopt. Rather, the citizens chose to adopt to secure the continuing male control of the city.