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

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Oral Presentation O6.1

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

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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.