

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-12404-1 - Identity and Stability in Marriage  
Janet Askham  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

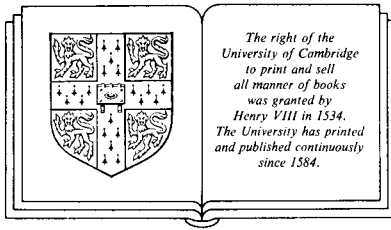
*Identity and stability in marriage*

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-12404-1 - Identity and Stability in Marriage  
Janet Askham  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

# *Identity and stability in marriage*

---

JANET ASKHAM  
*Research Fellow, University of Aberdeen*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Cambridge  
London New York New Rochelle  
Melbourne Sydney*

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-12404-1 - Identity and Stability in Marriage  
Janet Askham  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521124041](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521124041)

© Cambridge University Press 1984

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written  
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1984  
This digitally printed version 2009

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 83-26150*

ISBN 978-0-521-25996-5 Hardback  
ISBN 978-0-521-12404-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is,  
or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

---

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page vii</i>
1 Prologue	1
2 Ways of looking at marriage: an introduction to the study	14
3 Knowing and talking to each other	32
4 Separate and joint activity	55
5 Constraints on behaviour within marriage	84
6 Changes in self and in activities	129
7 Relationships outside marriage	158
8 Conclusion	183
Appendix 1 Sample selection	196
Appendix 2 Interview guide	199
Appendix 3 Profiles of the couples	206
<i>Glossary</i>	211
<i>Bibliography</i>	212
<i>Index</i>	218

## *Preface*

---

The idea for this study was born in the mid-1970s, a time when there was much discussion, but little research, on new forms of intimate relationship: cohabitation, serial monogamy, group marriage, sexual freedom within marriage. The problem for the researcher at that time – and still the problem now – is that there was very little systematic evidence about the nature of ‘ordinary’ marriage (if there is such a thing) with which to compare any changes that might be occurring. Apart from the occasional light thrown upon aspects of the relationship between wives and husbands (for example, whether they have joint or segregated roles, whether they are dependent upon each other or upon outsiders for help and companionship, whether one partner has more power to impose his or her wishes than the other), the internal lives of married couples have remained obscure. Marriage is a very private matter. This has deterred much research, but those few brave enough to persevere have been able to obtain useful findings. The aim of the study which forms the substance of this book was a further contribution to this understanding of what takes place within marriage.

Since the aim was to explore some of the complexities of the joint lives of married couples it was decided that it should be a small-scale investigation. It was small in the sense that it relied upon a sample of twenty wives and their twenty husbands; in that it was carried out by the author alone; and in the sense that it was confined to couples living in just one geographical area, namely Aberdeen. It is not, however, a study of marriage in north-east Scotland; it is a study which happened to be carried out there because it was where the author lived. There is no reason to suppose that Aberdeen marriages are atypical of marriages anywhere else in provincial Britain. There is no way of knowing how representative any sample of twenty couples is, whether selected in

viii *Preface*

Aberdeen or elsewhere in Britain. What a small-scale study can do is explore its subject in greater detail than can be achieved by the larger-scale survey. It is hoped that the findings presented here will provide a useful way of looking at marriage and suggest new approaches for understanding such aspects of people's behaviour as why they get married, their levels of satisfaction with marriage, and their reasons for disenchantment and conflict. It is hoped that these new approaches will encourage others to re-examine and develop the findings through further investigations.

Single-handed research is often a solitary pursuit. I obtained much enjoyment from this study, however, through the friendliness and co-operation of the men and women who agreed to be interviewed, to whom many thanks are due. I would also like to thank my colleagues at the Institute of Medical Sociology in Aberdeen for their help and encouragement.