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# Roles and meanings of childrearing for a couple

-A basis for family psychotherapy-

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# I . Background

- Change of the sex role in Japan

In Japan, the way of seeing that " a man does mainly work, and a woman does mainly housework" has been generalized after the Meiji era.

However, women acquired a social position in the latter half of the 1960's, and the way of seeing " a man does mainly work, and a woman does mainly housework " has been faded.

Sexual equality is emphasized in the present society.

Such society calls for the way of seeing that "a man and a woman work similarly, and a man and a woman do housework similarly".

Moreover, the relation between the childrearing and nuclear family is noticed and discussed in Japan.

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# I . Background

## ■ Studies of childrearing in Japan

Studies of anxiety about childrearing began since the 1970s. From the beginning , many studies focused on mothers. Fathers were a support resource in those studies. But the importance of fathers' role on childrearing is noticed in recent years, and the studies have begun to focused on fathers.

There are a lot of quantitative studies of childrearing until now. But there are few qualitative studies of childrearing. The significance of qualitative studies is to gain new knowledge.

Environment of childrearing in Japan has been changing as some public policies and services have been made. Now, what kind of images do husbands and wives who raise young children have on childrearing?

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## II . Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to

(1) clarify the structures associated with the images of childrearing among husbands and wives

(2) explore effective psychological supports for husbands and wives by taking into account the similarities and differences of those structures

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## III. Method

A total of 4 couples who raise children participated in the study. They are interviewed individually twice. This study uses Mix method , which is consisted with interview, multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis in the same study.

The purposes of the study, a permission to record the interview, the duty to protect the privileged information and etc. (informed consent) were explained to each respondent prior to take the interviews.

Since the analysis of the results from the first interview would be shown to participants' spouses, the permission was taken from every respondent and was asked to sign the approval.

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# III. Method

[The first interview]

Procedure: structured interview

To receive the basic information of the respondents, the different questionnaires for mothers and fathers were created. Then respondents were asked to answer each question.

1. The researcher read out the 12 childrearing behaviors and respondents were asked to answer each of the six evaluation criteria (listed below) by using a scale of 0 to 100. The researcher filled out the evaluation sheet.
2. After filling out all 12 columns, the researcher showed the evaluation sheet to the respondent and went over the sheet together to make sure they were correct.

## **Evaluation criteria**

enjoyable, easy, responsibility, routine, a sense of fulfillment, peaceful

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# III. Method

## Childrearing behavior

- Taking a bath with children (bath)
- Taking care of children by changing clothes and diapers (change clothes)
- Taking care of children by cooking meals and feeding them (meal)
- Giving instructions to children (teaching)
- Playing outside with children (at a park, go for a walking) (outdoor play)
- Playing inside with children (with toys and games) (indoor play)
- Reading picture books to children (storytelling)
- Putting children to sleep/to bed (bed down)
- Soothing children when they are crying (calm down)
- Taking care of children when they wake up at night (night care)
- Taking children to kindergartens (take to and from)
- Going to shopping with children (shopping together)

### III. Method

Table 1. Husbands' characteristics

	age	occupation	time of coming home	busyness of the work	the ratio of work to home	time of childrearing on weekdays	time of childrearing on holiday
Mr. A	34	company employee	19~20	slightly	8:2	1 hour	expect when he sleeps
Mr. B	30	public employee	22~23	very	9:1	0 hour	3 hours
Mr. C	37	company employee	22	slightly	6:4	2 hours	5 hours
Mr. D	34	company employee	21	very	7:3	30 minutes	4.5 hours



# III. Method

Table 2. Wives' characteristics

	age	occupation	evaluation to husbands' ratio of work to home	evaluation to her husband	time of childrearing on weekdays	time of childrearing on holiday
Mrs. A	32	public employee (at maternity leave)	5:5	80 points	all day long	all day long
Mrs. B	28	public employee (at maternity leave)	7:3	70 points	all day long	20 hours
Mrs. C	33	public employee (at maternity leave)	6:4	70 points	all day long	all day long
Mrs. D	32	part-time (pregnancy)	8:2	90 points	10 hours	all day long

Table 3. Children's characteristics / family members

	child's age / child's sex	family members
Mr. and Mrs. A	a boy of four years (preschool) a girl of one year	husband's father husband's mother
Mr. and Mrs. B	a boy of five months	none
Mr. and Mrs. C	a girl of one year	none
Mr. and Mrs. D	a boy of two years (preschool)	none

### III. Method

Table 4. the evaluation sheet

	bath	change clothes	meal	teaching	outdoor play	indoor play	storytelling	bed down	calm down	night care	take to and from	shopping together
enjoyable												
easy												
responsibility												
routine												
a sense of fulfillment												
peaceful												

The interviewer asked if it is enjoyable for you to take a bath with your child. If you think that it is very easy put 100. If it's not easy at all, please put 0.

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## III. Method

### ■ Analysis

The evaluation sheet data from the first interview were used for the analysis.

1. Multidimensional scaling (MDS: ALSCAL program) was used to clarify the structures associated with the images of childrearing among husbands and wives.
2. Cluster analysis was used for the analysis, and created “lands” in the constellation.

MDS is a generic name of the method to clarify the most basic latent structure (Kruskal, 1980). It can examine that how much similarity is there among objects by figuring out degrees of non-similarity among them and plotting them on some dimensions. And Kruskal pointed out that it is effective to use MDS and Cluster analysis together. So, this study uses them to interpret the constellation effectively.

# III. Method

[The second interview]

An individual interview was conducted by showing the results from the first interview and the respondents were asked about their thoughts, impressions, and specific episodes.

## ■ Steps

1. Asked respondent's thoughts and impressions from the first interview
2. Showed MDS figure and explained how to read the figure to respondent. Then, asked what he/she has discovered from the figure.  
✘the figure shown to the respondent was the figure without axis names and lands
3. Handing a MDS figure to the respondent and asked him/her to classify the 12 childrearing behavior items into groups. Then, asked the respondent on what basis did he/she has classified the groups.
4. Showed a MDS figure, which have classified into groups by using cluster analysis, to the respondent and asked him/her to compare it with the MDS figure classified by him/her on the step3. Then, asked his/her findings from the two figures.
5. Showed the respondent's spouse's figure and asked his/her thought and impressions on the spouse's figure.

## IV. Results and Discussion

The result from 8 respondents is on the figure shown below.

The stress value is the value used in the two-dimensional MDS. It is said that two-dimensional is useful when using MDS constellation by visual. It is shown that when the stress value is smaller, the constellations fit better. Also,  $R^2$  value is indicating coefficient of determination.

Table 5. Stress /  $R^2$  / axis's name

	Stress	$R^2$	axis' s name
Mr. A	.080	.967	preference / easy
Mrs. A	.080	.972	preference
Mr. B	.105	.959	preference / easy
Mrs. B	.104	.970	peaceful / responsibility
Mr. C	.082	.970	active / easy
Mrs. C	.058	.996	responsibility / preference
Mr. D	.105	.953	preference / easy
Mr. D	.136	.936	responsibility / preference

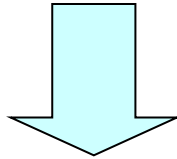
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## IV. Results and Discussion

- Comparison between fathers

There are common images of childrearing behavior in the structure of childrearing image. (e.g.) bath, outdoor playing

The overall structure of childrearing image is different by each father. (e.g.) shopping, changing clothes



All the fathers in the study have more positive image on childrearing with “playful elements” interacting with children.

It is possible to suggest that the structure of childrearing image can be affected by many reasons such as children’s age and number.

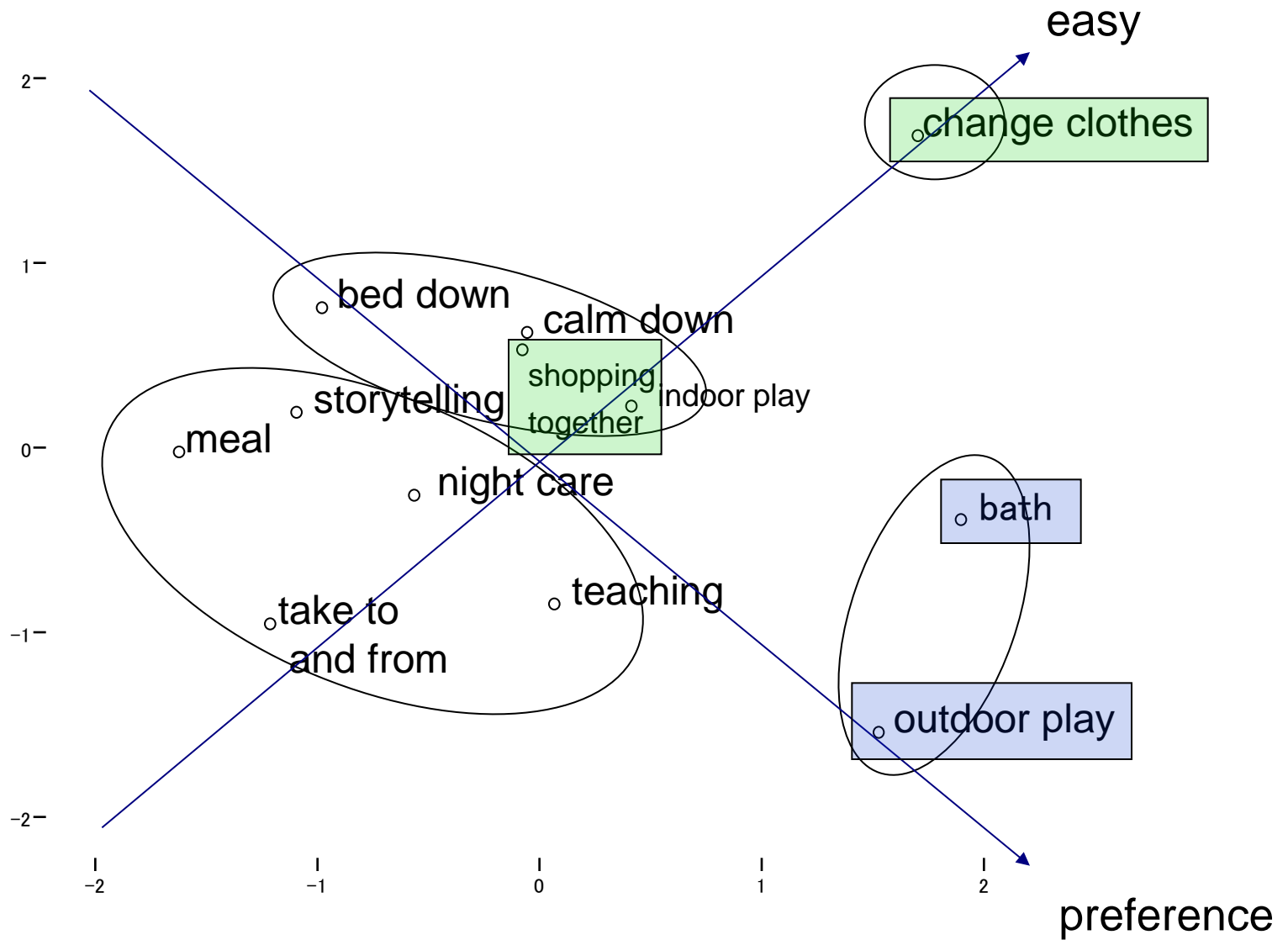


Figure 1. A constellation of childrearing by Father of A

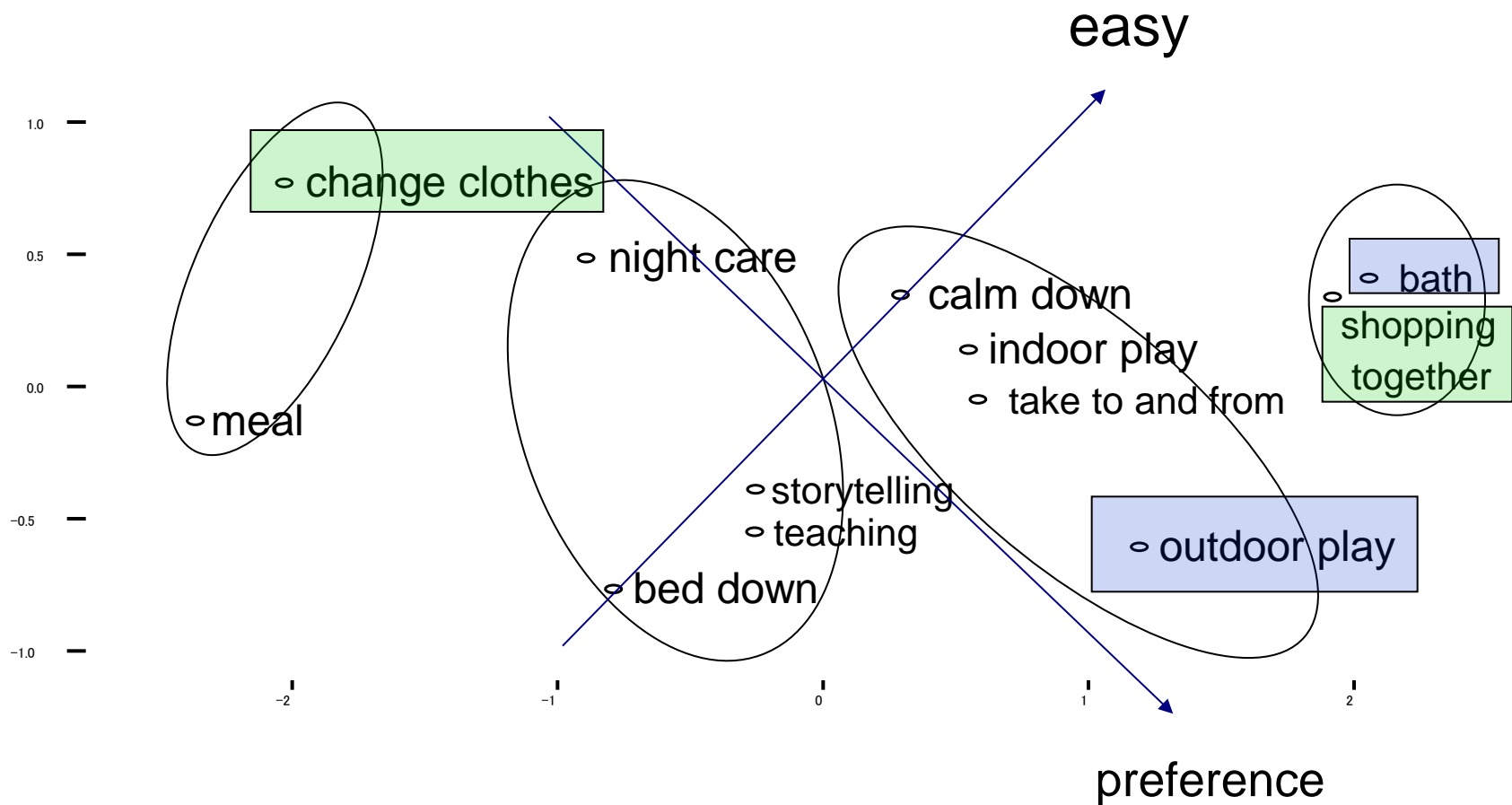


Figure 2. A constellation of childrearing by Father of D



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- MDS figure

There are two axes in the figure. The axes are named by the researcher as looking at the constellation and “lands” created by Cluster analysis. In Figure 1 and Figure 2, the axes are “easiness” and “preferable”. For example, as arrow’s direction indicates the easier childrearing behaviors for Mr. A and Mr. D, and as arrow’s direction indicates the more preferable childrearing behaviors for Mr. A and Mr. D.

The circles are the lands created by Cluster analysis, the childrearing behaviors circled in the same land are thought to be similar to Mr. A and Mr. D.

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By paying attention to “bath” and “outdoor play” with blue square, we can see that for both Mr. A and Mr. D, these behaviors are preferable. And, they also seem to be easy. There are the common images of Mr. A and Mr. D toward childrearing behavior.

But, please look at “shopping together” and “change clothes” with green squares. For Mr. A, “change clothes” seems to be very easy childrearing behavior, however, for Mr. D, it is not as easy. In addition, for Mr. D, this is not preferable neither. As for “shopping together” we can see some difference. For Mr. A, “shopping together” seems to be rather easy but not very preferable, and for Mr. D this is very easy and preferable. These are the differences between images of Mr. A and Mr. D.

As regard to these differences, it is clear from the contents of the interview that ages and numbers of children are influenced.

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## IV. Results and Discussion

- Comparison within a couple

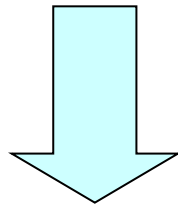
The structure of childrearing image differs between wife and husband.

(e.g.) shopping, outdoor playing

A wife and a husband have different value in terms of childrearing.

(e.g.) husband: attach greater importance to playfulness elements

wife: attach greater importance to her own responsibility



It can be considered that these differences in the structure of childrearing images are influenced by factors such as family situations, sex roles, environment in which the husband and wife has been brought up, and the trends of childrearing in the society.

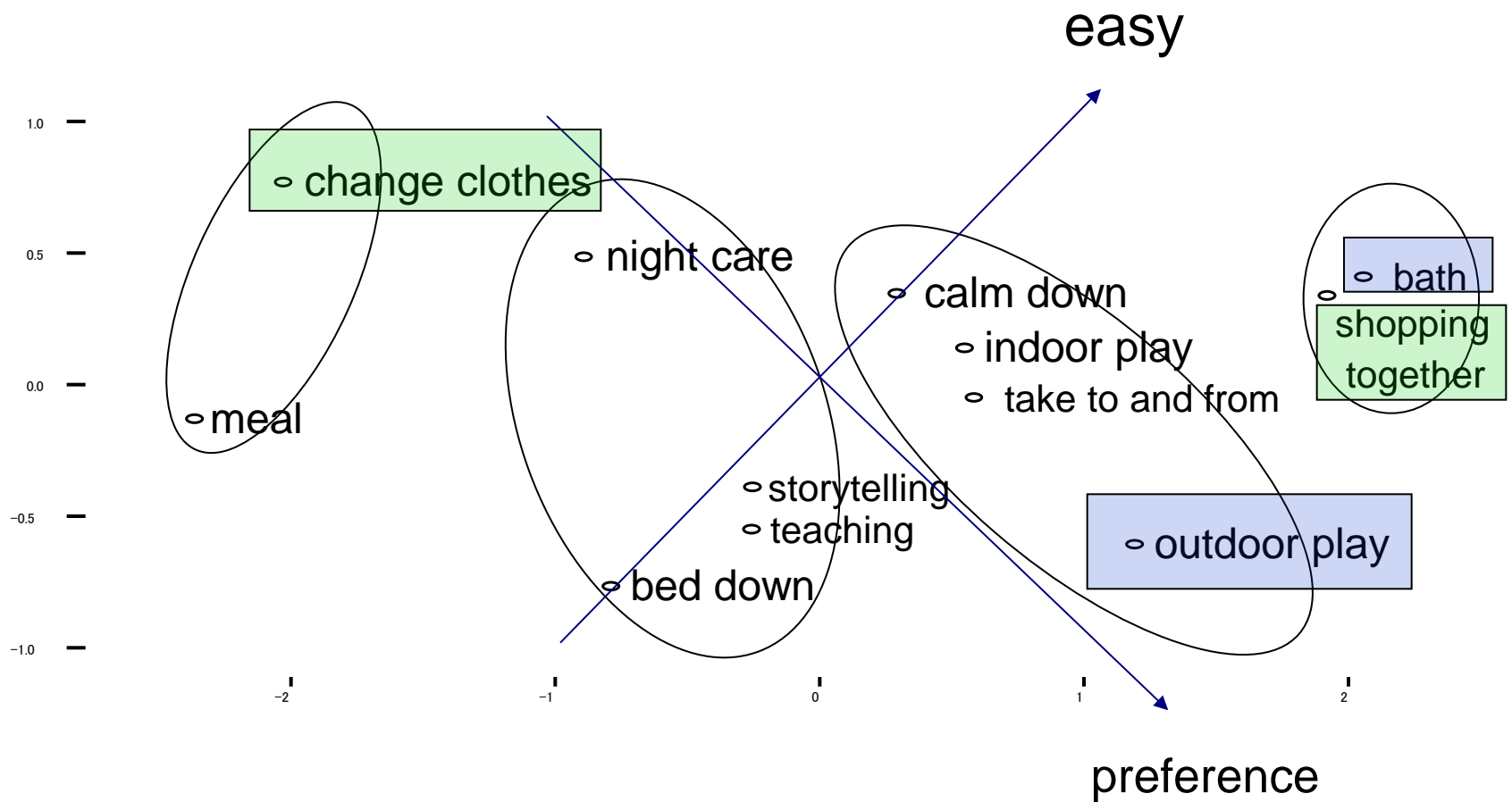


Figure 2. A constellation of childrearing by Father of D

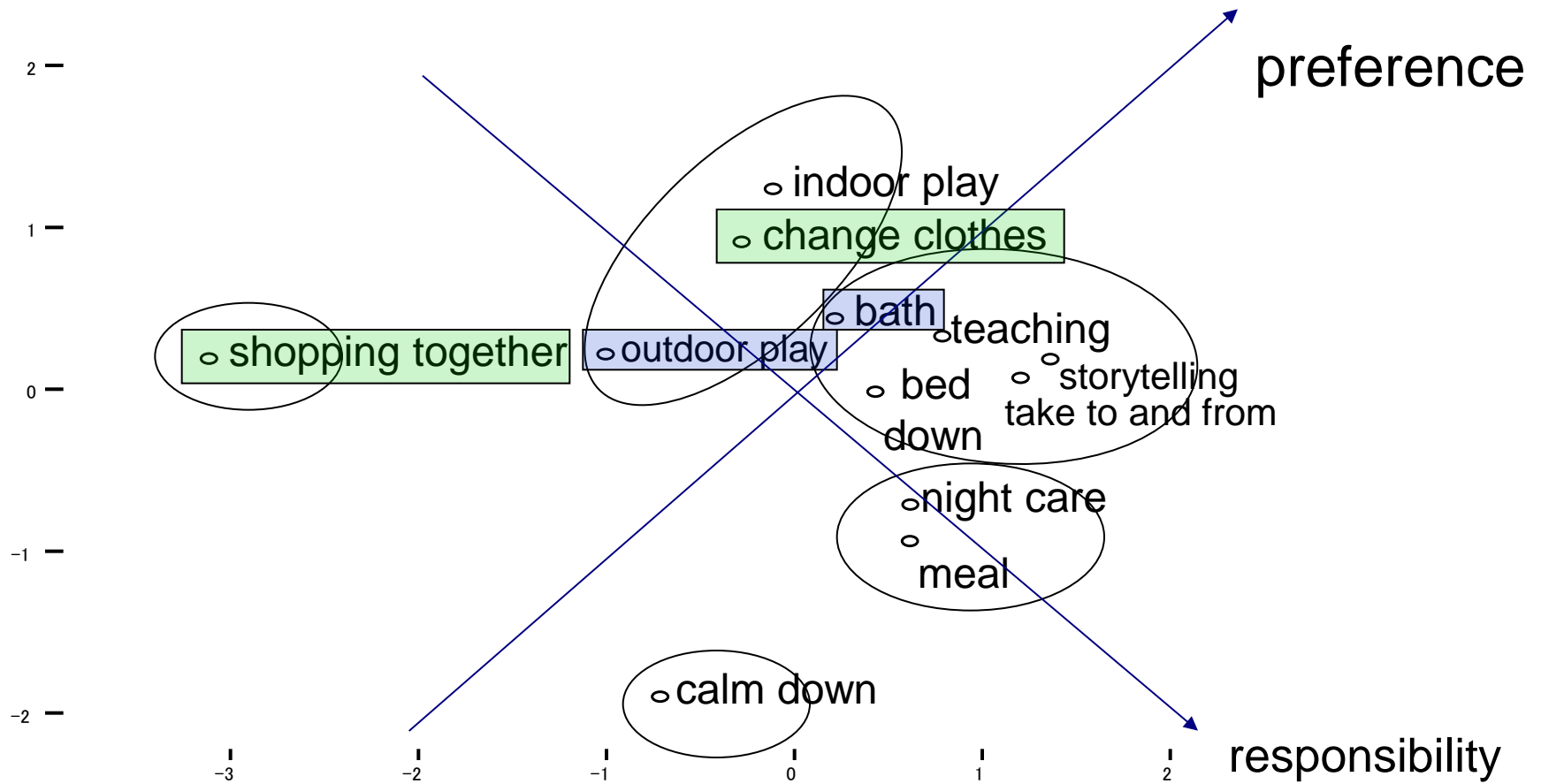


Figure 3. A constellation of childrearing by Mother of D

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- the differences between a husband and wife

The names of the axis are different. For husband, “easiness” and “preferable” and for wife “preferable” and “responsibility”. In Figure 3 , the direction indicates the more preferable childrearing behavior for the wife and the direction indicates the childrearing behavior that she feels more responsibility. Different names of the axis mean different value of the childrearing behavior. The husband values “easiness” and “preferable” on childrearing behaviors, and the wife values “preferable” and “responsibility” on childrearing behaviors. “Shopping together” seems to be very preferable to the father, but it is not preferable to the wife. Similarly, “outdoor play” seems to be preferable to the husband but not to the wife.

The reason for these differences are revealed by the contents of the interview shown in the next slide.

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## IV. Results and Discussion

- Contents of the interview with Mr. and Mrs. D

Mr. D : “My wife is pregnant and she seems to have difficulties shopping. If I do that for her, there will be a balance.”

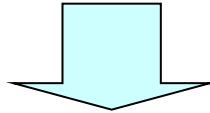
Mrs. D : “Now that I am pregnant, shopping has become a burden for me. I didn’t know that my husband liked things like that, and now I am glad to know how he has been feeling about childrearing. I used to speak to my husband in authoritative tone, but now it seems that he would do things he likes (such as shopping and giving children a bath) even if I speak to him less authoritative tone.”

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## IV. Results and Discussion

In brief, by understanding a structure of childrearing images of the spouse, one can gain awareness of the burden to his/her spouse and there is a possibility of bringing a change in willingness to childrearing.



It can be considered that by understanding each other's structures of childrearing image, a couple can compromise, bridge the gap between each other's childrearing ideas, and raise children hand in hand with less burden.



# V. Conclusion

- The structure of childrearing image of a father
  1. A common criterion of childrearing image is whether the behaviors can be done with willingness. Those behaviors that fathers are willing to do are those that are fun and playful such as “playing outside” and “giving a bath.”
  2. The structure of childrearing image is influenced by the child’s age, sex, and the number of children, and differences could be seen among individuals.
- The structure of childrearing image of a mother
  1. A common criterion of childrearing image is “whether a mother has a big responsibility in a particular childrearing behavior”. There is a variety in childrearing behaviors for which a mother is responsible.

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## V. Conclusion

As suggested from the contents of the interview, it is possible that mutual understanding of the structure of childrearing images leads a couple to cooperative childrearing.

It means that by facilitating understanding of commonalities and differences between the couple's childrearing ideas, mutual "compromise" seems to appear.

To provide psychotherapy by using the methods of this research can enable an interviewer to know an image structure of each interviewee. In addition, the interviewer can predict where the causes of the problem lie and provide effective psychological supports.

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