4 A step back in time: the union’s bargaining agenda

As has been stated in Chapter 1, two of the many labour-related developments that can be discerned between 1993 and 2003 are the increasing share of women working in the Dutch labour market and the rapid development of childcare and other work-family provisions in collective labour agreements. The female labour market participation increased from 42 to 54 per cent during this time, and of the total active labour force, the share of women increased from 36.3 per cent to 41.5 per cent (Statistics Netherlands/STATLINE data 2004)\(^39\). Together with the growing female labour participation, attention for work-family provisions in CLAs increased. While in 1996, 59 per cent of all FNV bargained CLAs included one or more work-family provisions, in 2003 this percentage had increased to 84.\(^40\)

The advantages of including work-family provisions in CLAs are obvious. From the employee’s point of view, childcare provisions make it interesting for women to join or stay in the labour market; from the employer’s point of view, although it may be a costly issue, these provisions may help retain existing and attract new female employees. Work-family provisions are especially interesting for women, because according to Tijdens et al. (2002), it is usually women who take care of combining work and family care. Tijdens’ empirical research shows that in the situation of one-and-a-half earners, which is typical for Dutch households with young children, women are responsible for childcare twenty times more often than men. From the union’s point of view, bargaining over work-family provisions means that they are responding not only to specific needs of female employees, but also to the Scientific Council of the Government’s target of stimulating emancipation and equality processes, by facilitating women in joining the labour market (WRR 1991; De Beer 2002).

The aforementioned empirical and theoretical relationship between female labour participation and work-family provisions in CLAs suggest a causal relationship. In the previous chapter, this relationship has been researched. A model was constructed and tested to explain the level of work-family provisions in collective labour agreements, with the following independent variables: share of female em-

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\(^39\) Female labour force: all women aged 15 to 64 who are either entrepreneur, in dependent employment or looking for a job.

\(^40\) Source: DUCADAM dataset, years 1995 to 2003.
Trade Unions and the Work-Family Balance

employees, the negotiator's gender, size of the annual structural wage increase, CLA size, sector type (private or public), and CLA type (sectoral or company CLA). Unexpectedly, the share of female employees covered by the CLA was not a significant factor in this model. Rather, economic factors seem to underlie work-family developments in CLAs, as indicated by the fact that the extent of work-family provisions and yearly wage increase levels are related. That is, CLAs with generous work-family provisions are also generous in terms of wage increase percentages, while CLAs where the employer has a less than favourable financial situation tend to score low on both accounts. CLA type was the only other significant predictor; sectoral CLAs tended to have higher levels of work-family provisions than company CLAs.

Apparently, the amount of work-family provisions in CLAs is not related to the number of female employees covered by the CLA. As already concluded in Chapter 3, the influence of the employer on the contents of a CLA may cloud the effect a trade union has on the contents of a CLA. Since the focus is on the role of the trade union in establishing work-family provisions, and only their input is to be considered, the unit to be researched should be the union's bargaining agenda rather than the resulting collective labour agreement. This realisation is echoed by Booth (1995b, p.86), who asserts that collective agreements reflect the preferences and objectives of both trade unions and management, which clouds the objectives of the union. Following the assumption that the share of female employees covered by a CLA is a measure for the amount of work-family provisions in the CLA, we should thus expect the share of female employees to be an indicator for the extent to which the work-family balance is an item on the union's bargaining agenda. Charlesworth (1997), for instance, asserts that if the needs of female employees are to be recognised, their working time preferences should be part of the bargaining agenda. Nationwide research by Lake Snell Perry & Associates (2002) also shows that American women and men are strongly in favour of an agenda in which work-family issues are addressed seriously. Although the American situation is not automatically relevant for the Netherlands, articles in Dutch newspapers regularly suggest similarities.

This chapter aims to answer this question by investigating FNV bargaining agendas that are used during CLA negotiations. A new model will be constructed, including as explanatory variables not only the shares of women covered by the
CLA, but also work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, the prominence of work-family items in central recommendations, and nearness of other negotiators.

4.1 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Issues related to female labour participation appeared on unions’ bargaining agendas as early as 1989, after recommendations of the Social-Economic Council (Van der Meer 2002). When setting up their bargaining agenda for a specific collective labour agreement, do trade union negotiators take account of preferences of employees covered by the CLA? Until the end of the 1980s, Dutch trade unions viewed part-time labour as inferior, but at that time, especially the female FNV trade union officials began to change their point of view (Visser 1999). In 1990, the FNV started promoting part-time jobs, the right for employees to work part-time, and labour conditions for part-timers equal to those of fulltime employees (Visser 1999). Research by Tijdens (2002b) suggests that “the Dutch part-time economy facilitates a good fit between employers’ demands and employees’ preferences with regard to working hours” 41. This may imply that negotiators have indeed looked at work-family preferences of employees whose CLA they are bargaining over, at least with respect to part-time work.

Hypothesis 5, which has already been introduced in the previous section, is listed below concisely.

\textit{Hypothesis 5: The larger the share of female employees that are covered by a specific CLA, the more work-family proposals are included in the agenda of the trade union bargaining for this CLA.} 42

As pointed out in Section 3.1, a unidirectional causality is implied here: from the share of female employees covered by a CLA to the extent to which work-family provisions have been included in the CLA. It is equally possible that female employees are affected by the CLA’s terms and conditions when deciding upon where

\footnotesize{41 Otten and Smulders (2002) also come to the conclusion that Dutch employees are largely satisfied with their working hours.
42 This hypothesis is largely based on prescriptive and normative research, rather than empirical research in which female labour market participation is linked to labour terms and conditions.}
to work, and the most likely situation is that both issues are enforcing one another. However, since our data do not allow eliminating possible effects in the last mentioned direction, the implied causality will remain as described, at the cost of reduced strength of the model.

The apparent preferences of female employees concerning work family arrangements probably cannot explain all the variance of trade unions’ agenda setting by themselves. In the next sections, new theorems are developed in order to shed some light on the agenda setting process, resulting in new hypotheses.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights being the core of the FNV federation’s vision, and its ideals concentrating on equality of people, solidarity, freedom, justice and durability, it seems obvious that the FNV is in favour of collective bargaining that benefits every employee equally. This idea is called the equalising or egalitarian principle. One type of equalising principle is the ‘fair innings’ argument that everyone is entitled to a similarly long and healthy life (Cookson and Dolan 2000). In other words, it is considered fair that, irrespective of their background, all people receive similar benefits (‘innings’). Translated to the field of the work-family balance, this implies that every employee covered by a collective labour agreement is entitled to a similar package of work-family provisions. One may therefore assume that trade union negotiators will not exert strenuous efforts to improve work-family arrangements in a specific collective labour agreement that already has beneficial provisions, since that would only increase the gap between employees covered by this CLA and employees covered by CLAs that include less favourable work-family provisions. Therefore, the content of the preceding CLA must be taken into account when trying to explain unions’ agenda setting. Depicted graphically as a longitudinal picture, shown below in Figure 4.1, the preceding CLA precedes the bargaining agenda, which in its turn precedes the current CLA. Note that this figure is not intended as a causal model but a historical, or chronological model.

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CLA\textsubscript{0} is the set of CLAs that chronologically precede the bargaining agenda, whereas CLA\textsubscript{1} is the collection of CLAs that are the result of the collective bargaining. This may help envision hypothesis 6.

\textit{Hypothesis 6: The more work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, the fewer work-family proposals are included in the agenda of the trade union bargaining for the next CLA.}

One could object that, given the theory of path dependency, it would be more logical to assume the opposite hypothesis. If the previous CLA comprised a large number of work-family provisions, then this could be an indicator for the trade union’s bargaining power, or perhaps the employer’s positive attitude with respect to work-family issues. In view of the relatively easy bargaining successes to be achieved by the trade union in this situation, we could expect to see extensive bargaining proposals on the union’s agenda. However, when taking the indexation of the precise work-family score as described in Section 3.4 into account, it is obvious that the level of work-family provisions in a CLA cannot increase indefinitely. The maximum or ceiling value is 100. Thus, the ‘ceiling effect’, or ‘saturation effect’, inherently causes proposed improvements to CLA\textsubscript{0} (i.e. proposals on the union’s bargaining agenda) to be smaller if the precise work-family score of CLA\textsubscript{1} is relatively large.

Recommendations at central union level can be seen as guidelines for trade union negotiators in setting up their agenda. Van den Toren (1996, 2001) has researched the impact of recommendations of the Foundation of Labour\textsuperscript{44} on CLAs. His results show that, although the influence of the Foundation itself is modest, the translation of their recommendations into the internal coordination policy of the FNV federation heavily influences collective bargaining, for instance with re-

\textsuperscript{44} The Foundation of Labour (in Dutch: ‘STichting van de ARbeid’, or STAR) is a bipartite institution of employers and trade unions, primarily giving advice on national employment policy issues.
spect to wage setting and employability issues. This means that the content of
decentralised bargaining agendas is determined by recommendations at central
union level.45

Van Houten (2004) has investigated the effects of two policy documents of the
Foundation of Labour on the decentralised bargaining agenda of the CLA ‘Metalek-
tro’, the sectoral CLA of the Dutch metal industry. The documents, ‘Agenda 2002’
(drawn up in 1997) and ‘Er is meer nodig’ (drawn up in 2000), consisted of cen-
tral recommendations for collective bargaining issues. Interviewing six experts
who were closely tied to shaping the Metalectro CLA gave Van Houten insight
into, on the one hand, the importance of each item of both policy documents, and
on the other hand, the importance of each item on the CLA’s bargaining agenda.
For each collective bargaining item, Van Houten used a T-test to test the differ-
ence between the central recommendations and the bargaining agenda. He con-
firmed that for most of the items, the difference is not significant. In other words,
central recommendations are copied into decentralised bargaining agendas.
Therefore, hypothesis 7 reads as follows.

Hypothesis 7: If work-family issues are included in central recommenda-
tions, the likelihood of work-family issues on the trade union’s CLA agenda
increases.

An important observation in relation to the influence of central recommendations
is that negotiators often have their own personal agendas. During the span of
several years, they bargain with employers; and what cannot be achieved during
the negotiation rounds of one year, they try to achieve in the next year, or the
one after that. Nowadays, the FNV federation actually facilitates this form of ne-
gotiator strategising by letting negotiators remain in one branch of industry for as
long as they prefer, rather than the former system of changing negotiators’ CLA
package every one or two years. Although the old rotation system at FNV had the
advantage of giving negotiators a wide range of experience,46 the new one offers
them the opportunity to build a network, get to know bargaining parties, and in-

45 The FNV trade union federation publishes these central recommendations once a year, in Septem-
ber.
46 Source: M. van Klaveren, STZ Eindhoven, the Netherlands.
fluence opponents slowly. An implication of this new system is that if central union policies change during this time, negotiators may be faced with having to abandon their current agenda, in favour of concentrating on another theme. A conflicting situation may arise when a negotiator is not willing to give up on years of ‘pushing the employer in a preferred direction’; the hypothesised relationship between central recommendations and decentralised agendas might be thwarted by this phenomenon. If the analysis shows no significant relationship, the existence of negotiators’ personal agendas as described above may serve as an explanation.

In the previous section, a vertical or downward effect was discussed. However, coordination processes also take place horizontally. Trade union negotiators usually do not operate alone, but to a certain extent, they confer and collaborate with colleagues. This gives rise to the thought that negotiators who work in the same industry, and are therefore professionally close, may share ideas more often than those who work in different branches of industry. In other words, when two negotiators are part of the same ‘community of practice’, it is more likely that they will put similar items on their agenda, irrespective of central recommendations, union membership composition or the company they are bargaining with. Brown and Duguid (1991), who were one of the first researchers to use the term ‘communities of practice’, stated in an article on organisational learning that most efficient learning processes take place horizontally rather than through official training. In communities of practice – small groups of professionals with similar jobs – knowledge is passed along much more efficiently. Their research concentrated on Xerox repair technicians, who started out by learning about the machines they had to repair from manuals. After a while, however, they encountered technical problems they could not solve with just the manuals. They thought up solutions themselves and passed this knowledge informally along to colleagues, thus creating a shared knowledge database in the community of technicians. When translating the concept ‘knowledge’ to ‘ideas’, Brown and Duguid’s finding may underscore the possibility that trade union negotiators exchange information that is relevant for their job, thereby possibly influencing each other with respect to what items to include in their agenda. Hypothesis 8 reads as follows.

Hypothesis 8: CLA agendas from union negotiators operating within the same community of practice are more similar with respect to work-family
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issues than agendas from negotiators from different communities of practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FNV industry group</th>
<th>Number of negotiators</th>
<th>Number of CLAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G&amp;G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaelectro</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packing industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>278</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Distribution of FNV industry groups in the sample, including average agenda work-family scores.

The most obvious demarcations for the communities of practice in this dissertation are the boundaries of the specific FNV trade unions. Since there are fifteen different FNV trade unions in the sample, negotiators belong to one of fifteen communities of practice. However, since only five of the possible communities of practice contain cases, one of which, FNV Bondgenoten, holds 92 per cent of the cases⁴⁷, this structure is less than ideal for determining the existence of communities of practice. Therefore, the sample will be subdivided into different types of communities, defined by their respective fields of industry. The FNV calls these fields 'FNV bedrijfsgroepen', which can be roughly translated to 'FNV industry groups'. The distribution of cases over the industry groups is better suited for analysis, with six groups larger than five negotiators. In Table 4.1, the size of

⁴⁷ The distribution is as follows: FNV Bondgenoten (256 cases), FWZ (10 cases), AbvaKabo (5 cases), AOb (4 cases), FNV KIEM (3 cases).
each industry group is listed, both in terms of negotiators and in terms of the number of CLAs.

When the four hypotheses are combined into one model, it has the following appearance (see Figure 4.2).

![Figure 4.2. The theoretical model of factors related to the bargaining agenda.](image)

The trade union agenda is the central element, and the dependent variable is the extent to which work-family items have been included in it. There are four different factors hypothetically influencing the agenda: the central recommendations, in a top-down way; the union members, in a bottom-up way; communities of practice, which can be said to have a horizontal effect on the agenda; and the work-family balance (WFb) in the preceding CLA. It is quite likely that the media and public opinion affect the first three mentioned factors, so they are not entirely independent factors, but since no direct connections between them are suspected, the model will be tested as it is.

Other factors that may explain specific union agenda setting with respect to work-family issues include structural wage increases in the CLA, sector type, economic growth, gender of the negotiator, and CLA size, as has been explicated earlier in Chapter 3. Structural wage increase is an indicator for the financial situation of the employer, and if this situation is favourable, the employer may well use this reserve for financing labour conditions like work-family arrangements. Yearly indexed economic growth may have a similar effect on the dependent variable. In
times of growth, negotiators will likely make farther-reaching bargaining proposals than during times of recession. It is quite likely, however, that economic growth positively influences wage increase; analysis will have to show whether this is the case.

Negotiator’s gender may have an effect on agenda setting, following the idea that female negotiators have a more direct feel for the need for work-family arrangements, being women themselves, and thus possibly more involved (Dickens 1998).

CLA size might have ambiguous effects: on the one hand, the larger the company or branch of industry, the more members the union will have, on average, which will create a larger social pressure to put work-family arrangements on the agenda. This effect is amplified by media attention for this issue. On the other hand, the expenses for the employer will probably rise as the number of employees covered by the CLA increases. If we assume that trade union negotiators base their bargaining proposals on what they expect to be able to realise, they might moderate their work-family proposals in case of large CLAs. This argument is not very strong, however, because it is only valid for company CLAs, and because larger companies tend to have more resources available than smaller companies. Besides, in collective bargaining, negotiators expect to give in on some proposals in order to be able to gain on others. Therefore, proposals are always stated thus, proposals that seem unreasonable at first glance are not uncommon.

Although the four hypotheses represent different theoretical points of view on the central research issue, they will be tested in one empirical model. In the next chapter, the sample, the variables and the test methods are described.

4.2 METHODS

In this section, I will describe the sample, how the agendas were coded, how the independent variables were measured and which methods were used to test the hypotheses.
The sample consists of 278 FNV agendas, related to the set of FNV negotiated current CLAs as used in Chapter 3. The starting point is the selection of current CLAs (CLA₁ in Figure 4.1) that are contained in the DUCADAM dataset. The selection of current CLAs was made in 2004, and consists of as many distinct CLAs as possible that are valid in 2003 and have a starting date in 2001 or later⁴⁸. In principle, every one of these CLAs can be linked to an agenda, a letter with union proposals that was sent to the employer or employers’ organisation before the negotiations took place. To be able to test the model, however, the agendas need to be linked not only to the following CLA, but also to the preceding CLA (CLA₀ in Figure 4.1). Only in comparison to the level work-family provisions existing in the preceding CLA can the strength of the proposals on the bargaining agenda be determined⁴⁹. As illustrated in Figure 4.3, the selection of preceding CLAs (N= 598) is smaller than the selection of following, or current CLAs (N= 769). The first reason for this is that some of the 769 recent CLAs have no preceding CLA – the company or branch of industry has decided to agree on a CLA for the first time. This is for example true for the Veronica broadcasting company. The second reason is simply lack of data; the relevant CLAs have not been coded by the FNV, and are therefore not included in the DUCADAM dataset. This is for example the case for the Tires and wheels industry. Thus, 171 CLAs in CLA₁ have no complement in CLA₀, which is illustrated in the bottom right corner of Figure 4.3. The next step is to find all bargaining agendas that can be linked to both the preceding CLA₀ and the current CLA₁, on the condition that the agendas are available in the FNV CAO-databank. For 320 CLA₀-CLA₁ pairs, no agenda information was available, which means that the CLA₀-agenda-CLA₁ linkage could be made for 278 of the 598 CLA₀-CLA₁ pairs. In other words, the sample used in this chapter consists of 278 cases.

⁴⁸ This is described in Section 3.2.
⁴⁹ Procedures and calculations will be described in more detail in the next section.
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Figure 4.3. Restricted availability of CLA and agenda data resulting in an agenda sample of N=278.

The DUCADAM dataset is organised in such a way that each case is a unique CLA. The 2003 CLA of the Rabobank is a different case from the 2002 CLA of the Rabobank, for example. For the analysis in this chapter, though, the two CLAs need to be connected with each other and to the variables pertaining to the agenda, in such a way that each case contains variables about CLA₀, the agenda and CLA₁. Another reason for the necessity of this linkage is that the dependent variable, the proposed improvement of work-family provisions, is defined on the basis of both the contents of the preceding CLA and of the bargaining agenda. This is described in more detail in the next section. Thus, I have transposed the original DUCADAM dataset by moving the group of preceding CLAs (CLA₀) before the group of recent CLAs (CLA₁), after which data on work-family agenda proposals were added. Each case now consists of an agenda and two distinct CLAs that have the same name but different, consecutive validity periods.

Figure 4.4. Frequency distribution of agendas (and CLAs) per FNV industry group.
As has been stated before, the ‘FNV CAO-databank’ was used to collect information about work-family proposals in the agendas. A name-by-name search based on the 598 CLA names yielded 278 distinct agendas. The distribution of these agendas, which relate to the years 2001 to 2003, can be seen in Figure 4.4; the distribution is shown per FNV industry group. This is a representative sample of agendas in the Netherlands since each industry group is represented to an equal degree. The number of agendas per branch of industry in the sample correlates almost perfectly with the number of CLAs per FNV industry group in the DU-CADAM dataset \( r = 0.988 \). This implies that the method of selecting the bargaining agendas did not result in a selection bias with respect to how well represented the branches of industry are.

**SCORING THE AGENDA — THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

In the previous chapter, all FNV negotiated CLAs were scored on the extent to which work-family arrangements are integrated in the CLA. This score was called the ‘precise work-family score’. Depending on how potentially beneficial the work-family provisions are to the employee, the CLA is scored from 0 to 100, 0 being the precise work-family score least beneficial to employees. An exact account of the computation of this score is given in Section 3.4.

The objective of this chapter is to explain the contents of the bargaining agenda with respect to work-family arrangements, so we must create a measure for this too. The question that must be answered in order to measure the dependent variable is: how much does the union want to improve the work-family provisions in the CLA? Or, in other words: how much does the agenda add to the precise work-family score of the preceding CLA, in the hypothetical situation that all proposals on the agenda were fully met by the employer? To arrive at the answer to this question, I compute the fictitious precise work-family score of CLA \( i \) if all proposals on the agenda were fully realised into the CLA, and subtract the precise work-family score in CLA\( _0 \) from that. This is the mathematical definition of the
dependent variable, which is called the 'Agenda work-family score'. For instance, if the precise work-family score in the preceding CLA were 23, and realizing all agenda proposals made the score in the new CLA 29, then the agenda score would be 6. Intuitively, it may seem logical that the agenda work-family score and the precise work-family score of CLA0 (the variables from hypothesis 6) are correlated, since the latter is used to compute the first. In theory, however, the only implication is that a high work-family score of CLA0 cannot generate a high agenda work-family score. To be precise, the sum of both scores cannot exceed 100. Otherwise, all combinations of values for these two variables are possible, without any precondition as to which value should necessarily be the larger one. Obviously, this does not automatically imply a correlation. Still, if a relatively sizable share of work-family scores of CLA0 were large, the empirical validity of the model would suffer damage, because then the associated agenda work-family scores would necessarily be small. In the sample, however, less than 5 per cent of the cases has a work-family score of CLA0 of more than 35, and the largest value is no larger than 59. Thus, there is no methodical reason to assume beforehand that the work-family score of CLA0 and the agenda work-family score are correlated. The scattergram in Figure 4.5 may illustrate this, coupled with the fact that the correlation coefficient equals only –0.11 (non-significant).

Another interesting object of research for which this variable can be used would be to determine the level of bargaining success of the trade union. Comparing the agenda work-family score to the work-family balance score of CLA, would then be illustrative.

From the scattergram, it also becomes apparent that none of the agenda work-family scores is negative. In other words, no union proposals for deterioration of work-family provisions (which might possibly seem reasonable if there were no employee demand for this type of provision) are made.
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The agenda work-family score is the sum of five sub-scores; one for each of the five types of work-family provision. These are part-time provisions, childcare provisions, parental leave provisions, maternal leave provisions and paternal leave provisions. Since bargaining agenda items are generally not described in such detail as the items in the collective agreement, it is more difficult and sometimes even arbitrary to code the exact proposals in the bargaining agendas. For instance, a proposal to improve the paternal leave provision in the CLA could mean an extension of the number of leave days, or the decision to continue pay during leave, or a combination of these. It cannot be deduced how much improvement the union negotiator had intended, even assuming that the mentioned negotiator had an exact idea about this in mind. It is feasible to determine the type of proposal, however, and based on this, it is possible to attribute points to a bargaining agenda. Three different types of proposal are discerned. These are:

1. Proposals for the introduction of a new work-family provision into the CLA;

Figure 4.5. Scattergram of the work-family score of CLA₂₀ and the agenda work-family score.
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2. Proposals for examining possibilities of introducing a new work-family provision into the CLA, or for improvement of an existing work-family provision in the CLA;

3. Proposals for bringing the work-family provision of the CLA up to the level of what either the Work & Care Act (WA&Z) or the Working Hours Adjustment Act (WAA) prescribe.\textsuperscript{52}

The idea is for each work-family provision that is mentioned in the bargaining agenda to determine the type of proposal, and based on the type, add a number of points to the running total of the agenda work-family score. In Table 4.2, the amounts of points are listed that are added to the agenda work-family score, depending on the type of proposal (new, improvement of law) and the type of work-family provision (part-time, childcare, parental leave, paternity leave or maternity leave provision). The calculation for the type ‘improve to the level of the law’ is slightly different from the first two, because one has to take the initial work-family score into account.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & Part-time & Childcare & Paternity leave & Parental leave & Maternity leave \\
\hline
New & +10 & +10 & +3 & +5 & +5 \\
Improvement & +3 & +3 & +1 & +1.5 & +1.5 \\
Law & +15-CLA_{0;\text{Pt}} & n.a. & +5-CLA_{0;\text{PL}} & +11-CLA_{0;\text{PrL}} & +8-CLA_{0;\text{ML}} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Allocation of points to compute the agenda work-family score, divided by type of work-family provision (columns) and type of proposal (rows).}
\end{table}

For instance, if a new part-time provision is proposed, 10 points are added to the agenda work-family score. If the CLA already included a part-time provision, and an improvement is proposed, 3 points are added to the agenda work-family score.\textsuperscript{53} If a proposal involves improving the part-time provision up to the level of

\textsuperscript{52} Putting this kind of proposal on an agenda makes sense when realising the explicit statement in this law that CLAs are not bound by it in every aspect. For instance, the Work & Care Act states that female employees are entitled to six weeks of fully paid pregnancy leave, but also that social partners may deviate from this in their CLA by agreeing on a shorter period.

\textsuperscript{53} Improving an existing work-family provision is considered less progressive than creating a work-family provision that was previously not included in the CLA, and therefore receives a lower score.

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the Working Hours Adjustment Act, whether or not the provision was included in the CLA before, 15 points are added to the agenda work-family score, after which the sub-score for the part-time provision in the preceding CLA (CLA_{0;Pt}) is deducted. This amount of points corresponds to the proposed improvement of the part-time provision. Note that the amount of 15 points is not arbitrary: this is the precise work-family score for the sub-item 'part-time provisions in the CLA' when the provision is included exactly as formulated in the law. Obviously, no points are added to the agenda work-family score if no proposals for introduction or improvements are done. Similar calculations to the above-mentioned are valid for the other four work-family provisions, with the exception of improving childcare provisions up to legislation standards, since the law on childcare only took form in 2004. The difference between 10, 5 and 3 points for the first and second type of proposal reflects the difference in points attributed to the sub-scores of the precise work-family score introduced in Chapter 3, since the relative weight of each sub-item should be the same for the agenda work-family score as for the precise work-family score.

Many trade union bargaining agendas contain propositions on part-time constructions for older workers. Although these can be interpreted as part-time regulations for a specific target population, they are not intended to help women – or, more broadly, parents with young children – combine work and family life. Since the central issue in this dissertation is the work-family balance rather than the work-life balance, part-time provisions for older workers are not included in the agenda work-family score.

**Operationalisation of the Independent Variables**

As in Chapter 3, the share of female employees covered by a CLA is estimated by the share of female employees in the branch of industry, this being the closest approximation possible. This is operationalised as the number of women working within a SBI-2-digit-level branch of industry, divided by the total number of workers within the SBI-2-digit-level branch. These data are obtained from Statistics Netherlands/STATLINE. After assigning one of the SBI-2-digit-level branch codes to each collective labour agreement, the share of female employees that corresponds to that SBI-2-digit-level branch is attributed to the CLA.
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The computation of the precise work-family score in the preceding CLA is identical to that of the current CLA. The description of this variable can be found in Section 3.4.

As mentioned before in subsection ‘FNV policy formation’ in Section 2.1, the document with central recommendations that are supposed to be leading for FNV union bargaining agendas is known as the ‘FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota’. This document typically consists of four sections: an introduction that describes the relevance of the trade union’s bargaining topics, a section about the union’s wage claim, a few pages in which the union’s main bargaining issues for the coming year are explained, and a section about several less important side issues for the bargaining agenda. The main issues are deemed the most important bargaining stakes for the coming year and are expected to be incorporated in all bargaining agendas at decentralised levels, while the side issues are also important but need only be included in bargaining agendas if negotiators expect it to be relevant issues for the collective agreements they are bargaining over. Issues can include work pressure, labour market participation, employee voice, the work-family balance, and so forth.

Including the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota in the analysis generates two potentially problematic issues, however. First, the extent to which the work-family balance is included in FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennotas is difficult to measure, because their content is rather broad and unspecific. Second, since the bargaining agendas in the sample originate from only three distinct years, researching the influence of the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota on these agendas implies that only three Arbeidsvoorwaardennotas can be used and scored, resulting in three distinct values for this variable. Still, we deemed it important to include FNV central recommendations in the analysis, principally because of their theoretical influence on bargaining agendas. If the results of the analysis with respect to this variable turn out to be ambiguous or non-significant, the question of central recommendations’ effects will be put to trade union negotiators, through interviews.

Depending on whether the work-family balance is a main issue or a side issue, or perhaps not an issue at all, the importance of the work-family issue in central recommendations will be characterised as great, medium or zero, corresponding
to scores of 2, 1 and 0 respectively. In FNV central recommendations, the work-family balance issue is treated as a single topic; specific work-family arrangements, like parental leave provisions, are dealt with only in the following, decentralised bargaining processes.

The variables ‘FNV trade union’ and ‘FNV industry group’ mentioned in hypothesis 8 are measured at nominal level. They can take 5 and 16 different values, respectively. The values are listed in the Section 4.3, in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7.

The last four variables are the control variables. Structural wage increase is measured at CLA level, and is computed as the total of the agreed wage increases in the CLA, divided by the duration of the CLA in years. Note that data from CLA1 are used to compute values for this variable, rather than data from CLA0, since the first-mentioned data give a more accurate picture of the current economic situation in the sector than the latter. Economic growth is computed as the Gross National Product (GNP) of the relevant year, divided by the GNP of the year before. ‘Relevant’ year means the year of CLA1. If the main FNV union negotiator who bargained over the CLA, and thus who drew up the bargaining agenda, is a woman, the variable ‘negotiator’s gender’ is 0; it is 1 in case of a male negotiator. The last control variable, CLA size or the number of employees that are covered by the CLA, is obtained from the DUCADAM dataset.

**Test methods**

Five different models will be tested, the first consisting of just the variables of hypothesis 5. Models 2 to 4 each consist of the variables of the previous model, extended with one independent variable. In other words, in model 2 hypotheses 5 and 6 will be tested simultaneously, in model 3 this is true for hypotheses 5, 6 and 7, and in model 4, hypotheses 5 to 8 are tested. Finally, in model 5, the control variables are added. There is no obvious reason for this order of testing, other than following the graphical model in a clockwise way. However, using different orders of model building yielded similar results in terms of strength and significance of the factors.
The first objective of this chapter is to explain a score that reflects the number and extensiveness of work-family items on trade unions’ agendas, by looking at the share of female employees that are covered by a CLA. The analytic procedure used to test model 1 is OLS regression.

The level or extent of work-family provisions in the preceding CLA, as described in hypothesis 6, will then be added to the analysis, generating model 2. This will also be tested using OLS regression.

Hypothesis 7 is the next step in the building of the model. The importance of work-family issues in central recommendations will be related to the content of the agenda’s negotiated in 2001 to 2003, once more by means of OLS regression.

The communities of practice from hypothesis 8 receive a slightly different treatment. First, cluster analysis was used to determine whether specific trade unions, or, at a more decentralised level, FNV industry groups, form natural clusters. The cases were labelled by the variable ‘agenda work-family score’. If the clusters turned out to approximately overlap with the different trade unions or FNV industry groups, then that would be a clue that agendas are similar within communities of practice, but dissimilar between them. In other words, the specific trade union or FNV industry group would have an effect on the dependent variable. However, cluster analysis yielded unsatisfying results\(^54\), so a series of T-tests was performed to measure differences between average agenda work-family scores, first between trade unions and then between FNV industry groups. A significant difference between the average agenda work-family scores of trade unions X and Y would suggest that these trade unions have set different priorities with respect to work-family issues. The sub-section ‘Descriptives of independent variables’ in Section 4.3 will show that differences do appear to exist, so dummy variables of the communities of practice that consist of more than five negotiators will be created. These dummy variables are of the type ‘Does the negotiator work in industry group X (yes/no)’, and they will be added to the regression analysis in model 4, in order to confirm the hypothesis about communities of practice and the spreading of ideas. The industry groups that consist of more than five negotiators

\(^{54}\) For details, see Appendix 4.1.
A step back in time: the union’s bargaining agenda

are Shipping, Manufacturing, Services, Trading and Transportation. The remaining industry groups put together (eleven in total) will serve as the reference category.

Trade union negotiators are clustered within trade unions, which can be considered as distinct entities themselves. An obvious method of analysis to research multi-layered empirical structures is multilevel modelling, which takes account of these different layers. However, for multilevel modelling to make sense, the number of groups should be sufficiently large (e.g. 25), as well as the number of cases per group (Snijders and Bosker 2000, Chapter 10). As will become clear in Section 4.3, there are only seven trade unions containing more than one case represented in the sample. Therefore, regression analysis will be used instead of multilevel analysis.

Finally, structural wage increase, gender of the negotiator, and CLA size are added to the model. Economic growth is left out of the model because the correlation between economic growth and structural wage increase turns out to be large ($r= 0.47$) and highly significant. The reason for choosing structural wage increase over economic growth is that it has more variation. See Appendix 4.2 for details.

Since the large majority of employees in the manufacturing industry are male, it is possible that interaction effects may exist between the independent variables ‘share of female employees’ and ‘industry group manufacturing’. A similar notion can be voiced for the trading sector, which employs relatively many women. Therefore, a correlation matrix of all independent variables is included in Appendix 4.3. It turns out that none of the correlation coefficients is larger than 0.50, which suggests that it is safe to include all variables in the same analysis.

4.3 Results

This section is divided into three sub-sections. In the first sub-section, statistical information is provided on work-family arrangement proposals as they are formulated on trade unions’ agendas, followed by some descriptive facts about these
Trade Unions and the Work-Family Balance

proposals in relation to the actual work-family provisions, both in the preceding and in the following CLA. In the second sub-section, descriptive data on the independent variables is summarised and tabulated, intended to give the reader an insight into the steering factors in the agenda formation process. In the last section, data on the agenda work-family scores and the independent variables are combined to come up with answers to the four hypotheses.

BARGAINING AGENDAS’ CONTENTS

158 of the 278 agendas have proposals in them to implement or improve work-family arrangements. Of these 158 agendas, just over half include proposals on childcare arrangements (see Table 4.3). In a slightly smaller number of bargaining agendas, parental leave proposals can be found, while the remaining three types of work-family balance arrangements exist in around 50 agendas each.

The issue of increasing the level of work-family balance provisions up to the level described in the part-time law (the WAA) is addressed in only three agendas. The Work & Care Act is a much more prominent subject on the agenda: increasing the quality of work-family arrangements to match the level described in this act is addressed in 29 agendas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work-family provision</th>
<th>Incidence in agendas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working part-time</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare provisions</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternity leave</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental leave</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and maternity leave</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. Distribution of work-family provisions on the trade unions’ agendas. The numbers refer to the number of agendas in which mentioned provision is included.

The absolute improvements that trade unions wish to make are, on average, small. On a scale from 0 (no work-family balance arrangements in the CLA) to
A step back in time: the union’s bargaining agenda

100 (best possible work-family balance arrangements in the CLA), most proposed improvements lie around 3 to 5 points, with a few exceptions of up to 37 points. The average agenda work-family score is 5. Still, in a substantial group of agendas, improvements of about 25 points are proposed.

Figure 4.6. Trade unions’ work-family provision proposals for improvement. Each bar of the histogram depicts the number of agendas whose agenda work-family scores fall in the relevant range. Ranges include [0,2>, [2,4>, [4,6>, et cetera.

A complete distribution of agenda work-family scores is given in the histogram in Figure 4.6. The leftmost histogram bar ranges from 0 to 2 and has a magnitude of 131, which means that of the 278 bargaining agendas, 131 have an agenda work-family score of at least 0 but less than 2.

What has become of the proposals for improvement, when looking at the resulting CLAs? In 6 of the 158 agendas that include proposals for improving work-family provisions, the precise work-family score actually deteriorated slightly after the bargaining over CLA1 was concluded. In exactly half of them (79 CLAs), no change has taken place, and in the remaining 73 CLAs, actual improvements have been accomplished.
The improvements of the precise work-family score between the preceding and the current CLA are quite large: on average, they amount to 1.75 times the agenda work-family score. This means that if, for instance, the agenda work-family score of a bargaining agenda were 10, the improvement of the precise work-family score of CLA₁ compared to CLA₀ would be 17.5 points. The value of 1.75, computed by subtracting the precise work-family score in CLA₀ from the precise work-family score in CLA₁ and dividing it by the agenda work-family score, is called the ‘increase factor’. In 37 of the 73 CLAs, increase factors of up to 1 have been realised, and in the remaining 36 CLAs, the level of work-family provisions in the collective agreement has been improved to well over what was proposed in the union’s bargaining agendas. In the histogram of Figure 4.7, these results are represented graphically. Note that the increase factors do not actually confirm that the trade union has realised the exact bargaining proposals – only that the precise work-family score of the collective agreement has increased.
DESCRIPTIVES OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

In this section, some descriptive statistics on the independent variables of the research model are detailed, in the same order as the hypotheses.

In Table 4.4, descriptives are given of the two first independent variables. In the first column, the related hypothesis number is listed. There is a wide variety in the share of female employees per branch of industry, ranging from 4 per cent in two CLAs in the metal industry to 79 per cent in the Welfare CLA. The distribution of this variable is illustrated by the histogram in Figure 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Variable Description</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Share of female employees [0,100%]</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Precise work-family score in CLA0 [0,100]</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Descriptives of the share of women the work-family scores in the preceding CLA.
As can be seen in Figure 4.9, most of the precise work-family scores of the preceding CLAs lie between 0 and 30 points, with a peak at 0 points. These are the CLAs that have no work-family provisions whatsoever. No clear statements can be made about which branches of industry take good care of their employees work-family-wise, although relatively many banks and insurance companies can be found among them. The CLAs without work-family provisions appear not to have much in common either, sector-wise.
Each year, the FNV trade union federation spends time in concert with employers’ organisations in the Foundation of Labour and with the government, in order to draw up a list of recommendations that is passed on to all decentralised level FNV trade unions. Recommendations are expressed in September, and take effect in the next year. In 2001, the work-family balance was the most important element in their recommendations. Two other issues main were addressed: schooling of employees and reduction of work pressure (FNV 2000). In 2002, increasing individual employees’ voice and options in both time and schooling issues were the union’s main objectives, with childcare, amongst others, as a secondary issue (FNV 2001). And in 2003, three main issues could be discerned: the life career, stimulation of disabled and unemployed people (re)entering the labour market, and thorough reforms in pension systems (FNV 2002). As a less important issue, again, childcare is mentioned. In Appendix 4.4, a table is constructed listing all main and side issues of the central FNV recommendations. Translating these data to numerical scores for each year yields the following results. In 2001, the work-family theme is a core issue in the recommendations, resulting in a score of 2. In

Figure 4.9. Histogram of the work-family score of CLA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Std. Dev = 12.39
Mean = 15
N = 278
Trade Unions and the Work-Family Balance

2002 and 2003, this theme has moved to a secondary position, which means these years are given a score of 1. Table 4.5 lists these scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Work-family importance score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5. The importance of the work-family issue in the FNV central recommendations.

As can be seen in Table 4.6, the distribution of trade unions is quite skewed. Most bargaining agendas by far can be found with FNV Bondgenoten, which is understandable, since FNV Bondgenoten are responsible for bargaining over CLAs in the manufacturing industry, and in that branch of industry, the majority of CLAs are in force. The other four trade unions are rather small in comparison, although if the number of employees covered is taken into consideration, the difference is less severe. Still, these numbers imply that communities of practice based on FNV trade union cannot be used in the analysis, since only two of the five trade unions have enough (i.e. more than five) cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FNV trade union</th>
<th>Number of negotiators</th>
<th>Number of agendas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FNV Bondgenoten</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWZ</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABVAKABO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A0b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNV Kiem</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>98</strong></td>
<td><strong>278</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Trade unions in the sample.

This means that FNV industry groups will be the focus when constructing communities of practice. Using FNV industry groups as a community criterion yields more suitable groups: six of them contain at least five negotiators. In Table 4.7, the five largest groups will be selected for the analysis of models 4 and 5.
A step back in time: the union’s bargaining agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FNV industry group</th>
<th>Number of negotiators</th>
<th>Number of agendas</th>
<th>Average agenda work-family score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G&amp;G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packing industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100*</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7. Distribution of FNV industry groups in the sample, including average agenda work-family scores.

* This number is larger than the total number of negotiators mentioned in Table 4.6, because two negotiators conduct collective bargaining in two instead of one industry group.

Preliminary T-tests show that between these five groups, a few significant differences exist\(^{55}\), which is reason to construct dummy variables for the groups, so that regression analysis can be performed on them. The results of the analyses will be described in the next section.

**Bargaining agendas’ content explained?**

In the previous section, the content and the negotiation outcomes of trade unions’ agendas have been described with respect to work-family provisions. In this section, we will try to explain the work-family balance of FNV agendas.

\(^{55}\) The results of the tests are listed in Appendix 4.5.
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Employees

Regression analysis shows that, contrary to expectations, the composition of covered employees in terms of gender does not appear to influence union negotiators’ bargaining agendas with respect to work-family provisions. As can be seen in the top row in Table 4.8, the strengths of the effect of the share of female employees covered by the CLA vary between −0.077 and 0.056, depending on how many other explanatory and control variables are added to the model. The coefficients are never significant, however. Hypothesis 5 must therefore be refuted.

Table 4.8. Overview of the regression results. Dependent variable: the agenda work-family score. The numbers in the first column (H) refer to the hypothesis tested. c stands for control variable. a The reference category consists of all industry groups related to government or semi-government (education, government, arts, G&G and public market).

*significant at 10% level. **significant at 5% level.

These results are comparable to those in Chapter 3, where the share of female employees could not empirically be linked to both the simple and the precise work-family balance scores in the collective agreement. Now, as in Chapter 3, the coarse level of measurement regarding the share of female employees may have influence on the lack of correlation. Although a finer measurement, had it been possible to use data at the level of the collective agreement, may have changed the outcome, we cannot be positive.
This raises the question if union negotiators are at all aware of non-members’ preferences with respect to work-family issues, and how they would come into that kind of knowledge. It is only or at least primarily lay officials and union members who bring about bottom-up coordination within trade unions, so the influence of female employees, who are more often than not a non-member, may not reach very far.

**Equalising principle: the preceding CLA**

In all models, the importance of the preceding CLA becomes clear. The results are significant at the 5% level and confirm the hypothesis: if the work-family provisions are already well worked out in the CLA, new proposals on the union’s agenda are modest with respect to this topic. And, vice versa, negotiators tend to propose a lot of improvements for the work-family balance in CLAs in which these provisions are scarce. Viewed in a longitudinal way, this effect boils down to a trade union strategy of first putting a lot of energy into introducing work-family provisions into the CLA, and then, after this part has turned out to be successful and these CLA provisions have been realised to a certain extent, reducing the importance of, and thus the time spent on of this issue.

Plotting the CLA’s precise work-family balance score against the agenda work-family balance score yields the scatterplot displayed in Figure 4.10. The skewed line represents the best linear fit line between the two variables. Clearly, the cases that have a relatively high score on the y-axis are located in the left-hand half of the graph, while cases that score relatively high on the x-axis are found in the lower part of the graph. Most markers are situated in the lower left-hand corner, while none can be seen in the top right-hand corner. Together with the slanting best fit line, this illustrates the negative relationship between the extent to which work-family provisions have been worked out in the preceding collective agreement and the extent to which the work-family balance forms a central issue on the trade union’s next bargaining agenda.
The implication of this is that trade unions seem to have an ideal amount of work-family provisions in mind, and they strive to achieve that goal equally for all CLAs – the equalising principle. The remarkable thing is that they do so irrespective of the employees covered by the CLA, which is illustrated by the fact that there is no effect of female employees on the union agenda. One way to understand this is to realise that a union negotiator who has achieved a good bargaining result within company X in terms of initiating or improving work-family provisions, may want to relax the agenda issue at Company X and try to create similar provisions within other companies Y and Z instead, especially if the negotiator is of the opinion that these companies do not have as generous work-family provisions. Methodologically speaking, having increased the precise work-family score of Company X’s collective agreement, and having thus decreased the agenda work-family score of the next bargaining agenda relating to Company X, it may be profitable to increase the agenda work-family score of Companies Y and Z whose collective agreements do not have as high precise work-family scores as that of Company X.
Central recommendations

The central recommendations that the FNV issues each year in September appear to be unrelated to the content of the decentralised trade unions’ agendas. The analysis shows that the effect is negative, although it is not significant at 5% or even 10% level. In the three models that incorporate the effect of the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota, β hovers between -0.12 and -0.15 while the significance level α varies between 0.10 and 0.15. If the results were significant, it would imply that a strong recommendation at central level leads negotiators to devote little attention in their agendas to this subject, and that if the work-family balance were only a side issue in the central recommendations, negotiators would tend to put it prominently on the agenda. This would contradict research results of Van den Toren (1996, 2001) and Van Houten (2004), who both had strong reason to assume that central recommendations affected decentralised agendas.

Even though the results concerning the influence of central recommendations are not significant, it may seem odd that the effect itself is contrary to expectations. As indicated in the methods section on the operationalisation of the independent variables (Section 4.2), an easy explanation might lie in the fact that the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota does not have a lot of variation in the values for the work-family score: only the values 1 and 2, which could make the results unreliable. However, it may be enlightening to observe the data a bit closer.

In Table 4.9, the data that concerns the relationship between central recommendations and bargaining agendas is shown. The CLA year refers to the time interval of the starting dates of each CLA. The CLA year of the FNV runs from October 1st to September 30th, which means that CLAs with any starting date between October 1st 2001 and September 30th 2002 are categorised in the CLA year 2002. ‘WFb score (Nota)’ refers to the Work-family score in FNV’s central recommendations (the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota). The value ‘2’ in the top row means that the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota for the CLA year 2000, published in September 1999, includes the work-family balance as one of its high priorities. In order to be able to place the development of agenda work-family scores in a wider time perspective, the work-family scores of the CLA years 1998 to 2005 are tabulated. The numbers in the next column represent the agenda work-family scores, as an
average over all agendas in the listed CLA year. The fourth column lists the number of bargaining agendas that were drawn up in the relevant year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLA Year</th>
<th>Wfb score (Nota)</th>
<th>Agenda work-family score</th>
<th>Number of agendas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.9. Relationship between central and decentralised policy on work-family issues. A CLA year runs from October until October. For example, the CLA year 2002 starts on October 1st 2001 and ends on September 30th 2002.*

Observing the column 'Wfb score (Nota)', it appears that in 1999, the work-family balance has first become a major rather than a minor issue for the FNV. For three years, the item has been placed centrally on the FNV’s central recommendations, after which it became a side issue once more. The development of the agenda work-family score shows only an increasing trend, starting in 2001. Holding on to the assumption that the contents of bargaining agendas logically follow the directives of the central recommendations, it would appear that there is a time lag between these two. Figure 4.11 may help illustrate this point. The line with the dark points shows the importance of the work-family balance on the FNV central recommendations from 1998 to 2005. The line with the light points shows the proposed work-family provision increase on the agenda, of which the values in 2001, 2002 and 2003 have actually been measured, and the values in the other years are assumed by the researcher. It would seem that the steering effects of the central recommendations have taken some time to reach the bargaining agendas at the decentralised level. An explanation for this phenomenon may be that negotiators usually try to achieve their goals in periods of five to even ten years, rather than during the short period of one set of bargaining rounds. This implies that when a new FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota is introduced, the negotiator has not concluded his or her current bargaining issues yet, and may decide to postpone pursuing the newly set central goals until his or her current issues are
resolved. This assumption can be tested by adding three new variables to the analysis: the work-family score of the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota of the previous CLA year, the same score of two years hence and the one of three years ago.

![Figure 4.11. Agenda work-family scores related to the work-family score in FNV central recommendations.](image)

Running this analysis yields no new strong effects or any significant results, however. The strength of the effect of FNV's central recommendations for the previous year is close to zero ($\beta=-0.052$, $\alpha=0.517$). The effect of the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota dated two years before the relevant bargaining agendas could not be measured due to lack of variation in this variable: all values are 2. The effect of the Arbeidsvoorwaardennota of three years before is slightly larger once more, although it is not significant ($\beta=0.126$, $\alpha=0.103$). Perhaps the results would have been more enlightening if bargaining agenda data from more different CLA years had been used; now, however, no clear conclusion can be drawn. Rather than trying to collect, code and examine large quantities of new bargaining agendas, qualitative data analysis based on interviews with trade union negotiators will be used to shed light on the effects the FNV Arbeidsvoorwaardennota might have on negotiators' bargaining agendas. If this effect exists and whether or not it suffers from a time lag is described in the next chapter.
Communities of practice and control variables

In line with the expectations, the importance attached to the work-family issue by negotiators varies across industry groups. It turns out to be important which industry group a negotiator works in, as can be seen in Table 4.8. In three of the five large industry groups, an effect can be found. Remarkably, all of the effects are negative. What this means is that the negotiators’ bargaining proposals for improving work-family provisions in the collective agreement are relatively modest in these industry groups, when compared to proposals in the reference group. This finding may be explained by realising that the reference group is composed of government related branches of industry, traditionally a pioneer in the area of ‘social’ terms and conditions of employment. A simple listing of the means per industry group shows that the mean work-family agenda score for the reference group is indeed higher than each of the averages of the five industry groups. A table with descriptive measures on work-family agenda scores can be found in Appendix 4.6.

The similarity of agendas within one FNV industry group confirms the hypothesis that ideas are shared more easily within communities of practice than between them. It may be interesting to observe the analogy with employers within the same branch of industry, who tend to copy ideas with respect to labour terms and conditions. Trend setting and trend following behaviour, which usually takes place within the boundaries of a branch of industry, may be another proof of the importance of communities of practice influencing the union’s agenda.

As can be seen in Table 4.8, none of the control variables play a significant role. Structural wage increase, as an indicator for the financial slack the employer has, was expected to positively influence the extent to which union negotiators made demands through their agenda, but neither the regression analysis nor simple bivariate correlation ($r = -0.026$) confirm this idea. Apparently, negotiators do not take the employer’s financial situation into account when forming their agenda, but rather concentrate on following central recommendations and creating a set of work-family arrangements in the CLA that could be considered adequate for the average employee. Whether this is indeed the case could be checked through personal interviews.
Interestingly enough, when a selection is made of cases in which the agenda work-family scores are larger than zero (N= 154), gender does seem to play a role (β= -0.24, α= 0.009). In these cases, female negotiators appear to attach more value to the work-family issue than their male colleagues, which is translated into a higher agenda work-family score. It appears as if both male and female negotiators are aware of the importance of introducing work-family provisions into the collective agreement, but when it comes to expanding these provisions, it is the women who take the lead in collective bargaining. This is in line with Dickens’ (1998) assertion that female negotiators will put more energy into bargaining for work-family provisions than their male colleagues, because they are of the same gender and therefore better understand women’s concerns and working conditions, which leads to more effective collective agreements – at least as far as the work-family balance is concerned.

The fact that CLA size shows no significant effect illustrates the idea mentioned at the end of Section 4.1 that two, or even more opposing forces are in play. On the one hand, a large CLA size may increase pressure on negotiators to make the work-family issue a main item on the agenda; on the other hand, a large CLA size may decrease willingness of employers to meet the agenda proposal because it will mean increased costs.

4.4 Conclusions

When proposing and creating work-family provisions in collective labour agreements, unions do not appear to base their exact proposals on the share of female workers covered by the CLA, as the concept of demand and supply would suggest. Rather, the emergence and improvement of these provisions seems to be a large-scale, nation level development, propelled by unions in an attempt to set universal work-family standards for employees in all business sectors. This is illustrated by the finding that work-family proposals are weak if the work-family arrangements in the current CLA are good, whereas if these arrangements are underdeveloped, negotiators make strong proposals. So, as hypothesised, the extent to which work-family provisions have been worked out in the preceding CLA is an important factor influencing the work-family content of the agenda. Here, a union policy is revealed to bring the work-family balance in each CLA to similar standards, irrespective of branch of industry: the ‘equalising principle’. This is
even more likely when considering the basic union prepositions of democracy and equality: every employee should be treated alike, and no employee should fall below or rise above a specific boundary of economic conditions. The same idea is underscored by the World Bank in its latest World Development Report, in which unions were stated to play an important role in the fair distribution of welfare (The World Bank 2005). If trade unions actively execute the equalising principle, and draw up their agendas with more of an eye to the work-family balance in the preceding collective agreement than to member or employee preferences, then it increases the importance of internal horizontal and vertical coordination and decreases the significance of their rank and file.

The union attitude described above may very well explain why unions do not relate work-family issues on their decentralised agendas to the characteristics of the employees covered by those decentralised CLAs. Terms and conditions should be adequate in all business sectors, irrespective of the gender distribution. This is called the ‘equalising principle’. The main advantage of this approach is that all parts of the labour market remain attractive to women, and dynamic job flow will not be hindered by a lack of satisfactory work-family CLA provisions. Whether or not trade unions do indeed actively execute this ‘equalising’ principle will be researched closer by means of interviews with FNV negotiators. Chapter 5 describes the results of these interviews.

There may not be much difference between FNV trade unions concerning the goal to create satisfactory labour market-wide work-family provisions; there are differences in the magnitude of the proposals they make. The marked differences in attention for work-family issues between the FNV industry groups points to the existence of communities of practice within the entire FNV union, defined by the boundaries of industry groups. Negotiators who operate in the same field tend to ‘borrow’ ideas from one another; at least where the work-family balance is concerned. This is the ‘borrowing principle’. The same can be said for employers within one branch of industry, who sometimes look to one or more organisations that make innovative labour conditions (trend following behaviour).
4.5 DISCUSSION

The chapter started out with the evidence-based assumption that the primary beneficiaries of work-family provisions are women, especially women who care for one or more young children. It was assumed that a union bargaining agenda would contain more work-family related issues if the CLA to which the agenda was linked covered more women. However, for unions to be able to respond to apparent women’s preferences, these women need to be a member of the union. Only then can they exert direct influence on the content of the CLA they are covered by. Before and during the CLA negotiations, several member meetings are held to which each member is invited. Moreover, members can express their wishes through (online) questionnaires, they have the right to vote for or against an agreement, and they can even become active board members, giving them the opportunity to participate in collective bargaining. However, union members interested in visiting member meetings and expressing their preferences are usually older, male employees. Therefore, trade union negotiators have fewer opportunities to take notice of preferences of female employees and include these in their bargaining agendas.

This is a good illustration of a continual dilemma trade unions have to deal with. On the one hand, unions strive to achieve satisfactory wage and working conditions for everyone, whether they are union member or not. The government, with the public interest in mind, also makes recommendations along these lines. On the other hand, a union is essentially an association with members whose interests they support. It would sound logical that unions work primarily for their members, who pay union contribution.

The lack of correlation between the share of female employees and work-family items on the union agenda may seem partly explained, but it is still unclear exactly how trade union negotiators deal with female employees’ preferences. This issue may be scrutinised in more detail by interviewing FNV negotiators. In the next chapter, interview data are used to shed more light on the negotiator’s role in the CLA formation process.
In this respect, it will also be interesting to find out how negotiators react to the yearly central recommendations of the FNV trade union federation. To what extent and within how much time will they adjust their agendas to these recommendations? What happens when central recommendations conflict with a negotiator’s personal goals; will the negotiator still pursue his or her own goals, adjust them or entirely follow the recommendations?

The horizontal coordination between negotiators within a trade union or within an industry group may not be the result of negotiators influencing one another, but of union policies at the level of the distinct trade unions, which steer negotiators. There may be guidelines, specific for the industry group that negotiators operate in, which they follow. This would imply that agenda work-family scores do look alike, as concluded in Section 4.3, but it would not necessarily corroborate the idea of communities of practice behind it.

As a final discussion point, one may remark that since unions try to create balanced work-family provisions in the labour market, so that all employees can more or less achieve a comparable work-family balance, a more logical dependent variable would be the resulting CLA as the unions would like to see it. In other words, what the new CLA would look like if all union proposals were fully accepted by the employer or employers’ association. Analysis with this dependent variable yields very similar results as those that have been described in this chapter, however.