Why participation works
Bouma, J.T.

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5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the discussion regarding the current research will be described. First the central research question will be answered in the light of the results, followed by a discussion on the theoretical and practical implications. After that, the discussion on the research limitations and several recommendations for future research will be presented.

5.1 DISCUSSION ON COMBINED RESULTS

The central objective of this dissertation is to add insights to the academic literature and to the professional practitioners’ knowledge regarding the role of employee participation and several mediating entities –intrapersonal attitudes, interpersonal relations, job pressures and job contents– in the customer relationship management (CRM) type of organizational change in Dutch financial organizations.

To achieve the research objective as outlined above, the central research question is: in which way does employee participation and its supposedly mediating entities – intrapersonal attitudes, interpersonal relations, job pressures and job contents– influence the effectiveness of the customer relationship management (CRM) type of organizational change in Dutch financial organizations? This research question will be answered in the upcoming sections of this chapter.

Confirmed model vii: employee participation, mediators, CRM effectiveness

The results from the current research have provided several answers to the foregoing question. It has been found that employee participation was related to CRM organizational change effectiveness via the mediating roles of most of the foregoing mediating entities. These mediating entities consist out of several mediators. The current research adds to existing academic literature that all these mediators were combined. Figure vii –which can be found on the previous page– represents the combined research model with an overview of all supported relationships.

Discussion on employee participation

The current research results points at an overall positive influence of individual employees participating in organizational change of the customer relationship management type.
among 732 employees working in sixteen financial organizations in the Netherlands. The relationship between employee participation and CRM effectiveness is mainly indirect and occurs via several mediators, which will be described in the next section.

In the current research, the average amount of employee participation was relatively low in all CRM organizational changes under study. This indicates that the majority of the employees did not actively participate in the CRM organizational change. Such low average amount was not unexpected. Throughout literature, several explanations were described, based on the expectancy view, the control view, the philosophical view and the psychological view:

- Heller (1998) described the expectancy view on low participation. In such view, participation success or failure is often measured against expectations. Academics as well as practitioners set idealistic expectations regarding corresponding high levels of participation. The real world does not reflect such idealism. In reality, generations of owners and managers in organizations were brought up to regard autocracy with hardly any democratic employee involvement as the only appropriate way to keep control over their organizations (Heller, 1998). As a consequence, low levels of (employee) participation can be expected in the real world instead of high levels.

- Spreitzer & Mishra (1999) added their control view on low participation and wrote that the fundamental problem with participation is how owners and managers can give up control through the involvement of employees in decision making without losing control. Most of those owners and managers would fear losing control over the organization as soon as they would grant individual employees high amounts of participation. Therefore, high participation levels in an organization are uncommon.

- Kaler (1999) described a philosophical view on low participation. He stated that participation strives for equality among everyone in an organization. This implies, that management and employees make joint decisions and that everyone provides the others with their knowledge and skills. In such view, there has to be a natural limit to the amount of participation in an organization. Participation cannot amount to total possession, total control and total profits to the employees, because then nothing will be left for the previous owners. In such situation equality would be disturbed. Arguably, the exact average level of employee participation should not exceed the average amount of decisions in an organization (Kaler, 1999).

- From a psychological view on low participation, Cooper (2002) wrote that usually organizations consist out of different employees, with different needs, different goals and different perspectives. It is almost impossible to find an organization in
which every employee is enthusiastic about organizational change. Usually not all employees like participation, nor organizational change. Caldwell (2003) wrote that the first issue for individuals is: would he or she be willing to participate voluntarily. Some personalities like participating and change, while others simply do not (Blake, Mouton & McCanse, 1989; Caldwell, 2003; Kanter, 1983; Miller & Monge, 1986). Certainly not all individuals make similar choices under similar circumstances, which can explain why some participate in organizational change while many others do not (Cooper, 2002; Kanter, 1983; Miller & Monge, 1986). When employees are appointed to participate against their will, they may even resist or sabotage the change. Some motivational traits might affect an individual’s choice (not) to participate, which Caldwell (2003) called high self-determination and high approach individuals. Some are motivated by a higher need for self control, others are seeking for equality, or show a high need for independence (Cooper, 2002). Some possess more information, more skills, more experience, or more ambition than others. Depending on their skills and intelligence, individuals may be able to handle more or less job pressures before they will sense them as negative influences (Grove, 2004). For example, a skilled worker may be able to handle more workload in a certain time frame than another inexperienced worker. As a consequence, the inexperienced worker may report excessive workload earlier than the skilled worker. Furthermore, internal locus of control refers to a perception of self control over the environment, while external locus of control refers to a perception that events are due to luck and fate (Elias, 2009). In such view, external locus of control provides certain individuals with a view that they cannot control the pressures on them. Thus, individuals who possess incompatible skills and/or external locus of control would logically be the first to report excessive workload, stress and conflict levels. Any individual who perceives too high job pressures will indicate that these job pressures are too much for him or her to handle. Meanwhile, the exact same high job pressures are not perceived too high for another individual with more internal locus of control, or with more skills, or with more intelligence (Elias, 2009). Fok, Hartman, Patti & Razek (1999) found evidence on several personality factors moderating the relationship between participation and resistance in the context of total quality management organizational change among 85 accounting professionals in the US. An employee with a high need for personal growth may be the first to volunteer for participation because that is often reported to bring personal growth (Elias, 2009). Other personality factors may influence an individual’s receptiveness to organizational change. Elias (2009) wrote that flexible individuals can be more receptive to organizational change, while inflexible individuals can be more reluctant to change. Stoker & Verweij (2003) stated that different employees have different needs for guidance towards an organizational (change) goal. For example, an employee with a high need for guidance or support may wish to be guided by his or her manager instead of making choices as a participant. In such way, personality factors may influence someone’s choice to participate or not (Blake, Mouton & McCanse, 1989). Thus, differences between individual
personality factors could explain why not every employee participated in the CRM organizational change. In the current research, some employees were reported to have volunteered to participate, while many others may not have been interested in participation. Unfortunately no control variables regarding skills, experience levels and personality factors were included in the current research, based on the assumptions stated in the beginning of the methodological chapter.

As a consequence of the relatively low average amount of employee participation in the current research, together with the fact that employee participation correlated significantly with all related variables, also those scores were not expected to be on the high end of their corresponding scales, based on Glew, O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Van Fleet (1995, page 397) who literally wrote: ‘limited participation has limited effects’. Nevertheless, several effects were found in the current research.

Discussion on all mediators

The following variables were expected to mediate the relationship between employee participation and CRM effectiveness: ownership, satisfaction, being trusted, trusting others, workload, stress, conflict and local fit. All mediating variables showed average scores around the middle of their scales. Some played their expected roles, while the roles of others were less obvious.

The mediation of variables between employee participation and CRM effectiveness were tested by applying regression analysis to the dataset with individual respondents. While testing each potential mediator separately from the other mediators, support was found for ownership, satisfaction, being trusted, trusting others, local fit, conflict and stress as mediators. When tested separately from each other, each of these variables plays a mediating role between employee participation and CRM effectiveness on the individual employees’ aggregation level -regardless their organization-. Thus, all variables besides workload play their hypothesized mediating roles. The previously described conclusions were reconfirmed by the results from multilevel regression analysis, which takes differences between organizations into consideration.

The hypothesized positive correlation between employee participation and workload was not supported, while all other variables within the research model correlate significantly with both employee participation and CRM effectiveness. Interview outcomes revealed the reason for this unexpected finding: management had released participating employees from excessive workload and shifted their regular tasks to non-participants. In this way, employees participating in the organizational change were not confronted with workload
from their regular tasks plus their change related tasks, but only with the latter. That intervention probably disturbed the outcomes on the workload variable.

So far, the results supported the hypothesized correlation and mediation effects except for the workload variable. However, when all foregoing variables were integrated into a combined research model, more unexpected findings occurred.

Regression analysis on the individual level showed that the mediating contributions of stress and ownership diminish upon addition of the other mediators. These results point out that there is a so-called cannibalization effect between mediators. It shows, that the contributions of especially stress and ownership shrink heavily when the other mediators are added to the research model: other mediators take over these roles in the combined research model. A possible explanation for this finding is, that theoretically related variables to stress like workload and conflict tend to interact with each other (Grove, 2004; House, 1971; Jackson, 1983). As a consequence, these closely related variables may lead to similar effects. Logically, when conflict would lead to a specific effect, then stress might have a similar influence and lead to the same effect, while in the case when conflict and stress would be combined the total effect of both would not deviate much from the single effect from one of these variables. Such theoretical explanation was supported by the findings in the current study. Employee participation is positively associated with CRM effectiveness via conflict and via stress, but when both conflict and stress are combined then the added value of stress over conflict is small. Something similar goes for commitment when combined with other variables like conflict (Janssen, 2004). He reported a moderating influence from conflict on the relationship between empowerment and commitment. In such view, while empowerment is closely related to employee participation and commitment is closely related to ownership, conflict may influence that relationship as a moderator. With the use of the current research dataset such moderating relationship cannot be confirmed, although the more generic idea of conflict somehow influencing employee participation and ownership seems logical. Thus, ownership and stress do play the expected role when viewed alone, but play a less important role when similar other variables with the same effects are added to the combined research model.

The foregoing combined analyses did not account for influences from specific organizations. Therefore, in the final tests multilevel regression analysis was applied to the combined research model. The latter analysis also reconfirmed the marginal mediating role of stress and ownership upon the addition of the other mediators. Furthermore, this analysis also revealed another mediator with a diminishing role: local fit. The effect of local fit as a mediator was cannibalized by the other mediators when differences between organizations were controlled using multilevel analysis. Thus, the other mediators together have a similar effect on CRM effectiveness which does not improve much further upon the addition of local fit.
Based on the foregoing, it shows that all mediators do not play their mediating roles in isolation from other variables. These mediating variables influence each other. Some of these cannibalize the effects of others. The current research model is obviously too simplistic to show all of the relationships between mediating variables. A much more complicated research model showing all correlations represented by lines between all variables would resemble a plate of spaghetti. Many variables influencing each other make causes and effects difficult to disentangle. Possibly chain reactions may occur in such complicated research model.

Thus, only the mediating roles of being trusted, trusting others, satisfaction and conflict clearly stood all statistical tests. All outcomes point in the same direction: trusting others, being trusted and satisfaction play the most important mediating roles in the research model, followed by conflict. This means, that for reaching CRM effectiveness through employee participation, both trust variables are critical mediators. Furthermore, satisfaction and conflict are also important for reaching CRM effectiveness.

Discussion on CRM effectiveness

The dependent variable of the current research -CRM effectiveness- showed an average level relatively close to the middle of the scale in all organizations, which did not indicate overly successful implementations. Moreover, such average to low level of CRM effectiveness was expected in the light of CRM research reports from four global consultancy firms. These firms did not report many great successes. A field study by IBM Consulting among 372 CRM implementations in 2004 reported that CRM was a full success in 14 per cent of the organizations, while 25 per cent of the organizations that implemented CRM had some success and the remaining 60 per cent were found struggling, indicating failure. Another field study from Gartner in 2003 reported that 55 per cent of all CRM implementations in North America failed (Campbell, 2003). The next field study performed by Ernst & Young in 2001 stated that the biggest challenges in implementing CRM were internal organizational issues (53 per cent of respondents). Furthermore, field research among 62 CRM implementations indicated that the most important indicators for CRM change success were related to the efforts of participating employees (Deloitte Consulting, 2004).

\*\*\* These non-academic field studies have two downsides that need to be mentioned. First, those reports nor the underlying data were made available for public use nor further research. Second, the authors did not use the same definitions for success and failure, which makes interpreting these results difficult.
5.2 Research Implications

The current research adds insights to two academic research areas and may also be interesting for practitioners in the field. Each of these target audiences will be addressed in the upcoming sections with potentially interesting insights that can be derived from the current research.

Theoretical implications for scholars

The current research extends and links the human resource management (HRM) and the customer relationship management (CRM) academic literature. As a consequence, these extensions and links have implications for scholars in both research areas. Those may differ between the HRM and the CRM research area, therefore both will be addressed separately.

- In the human resource management research area, the current research contributes to the current understanding of human resource behavior in organizational change. Individual employees participating in the current specific type of organizational change were found to establish many positive effects within their organizations. Not only was the organizational change effectiveness improved by them, they also experienced increased levels of trust, ownership and satisfaction. Furthermore, they established an improved local fit between their own job contents and the organizational change contents. And the employees were able to decrease their levels of workload, stress and conflict. Obviously, the managers helped them to lower workload levels, which influenced the levels of stress and conflict among them. A relatively small number of participants was able to establish the foregoing positive effects. It remains questionable whether a larger number of participants would reach the same effects, but at least the current study adds to the academic understanding of the effects of limited employee participation which can be considered positive for both the individual employee and the organization.

- In the customer relationship management research area, the current research contributes to the current understanding regarding the effectiveness of CRM organizational change. In the current research, the average CRM effectiveness was relatively close to the average of the scale, although there were certain influences found to contribute to a greater CRM effectiveness. These influences were all closely related to employee participation. In the current research, employee participation referred to being actively involved in the implementation of CRM organizational change. So-called participants were able to make a difference.
These employees were able to make CRM more effective via increased levels of trust, ownership, satisfaction and local fit and via decreased levels of conflict. Logically, the relatively low level of employee participation in the current research could not establish a high level of CRM effectiveness.

A final contribution to both CRM and HRM research areas was the development of specific context related scales that made it possible to link both worlds. These scales can be re-used in follow-up studies combining HRM with CRM. Scholars from both research areas may benefit from these now existing scales in the future.

Practical implications for consultants

Consultants usually encounter many organizations and can be considered excellent ambassadors to spread business insights throughout a wide variety of firms and industries. In particular customer research management (CRM) consultants may use the insights from the current research in their own organizations and in their client organizations. Using the current research insights, they can point out to managers that employee participation can be an useful organizational change instrument. Employee participation has been found to have many advantages, that in turn are an important drivers for successful CRM implementations. Apparently, even a low average level of employee participation can contribute positively to the effectiveness of CRM organizational change. The foregoing insights are interesting for organizations striving towards more successful CRM implementations. In order to improve CRM effectiveness in such way, the message from the current research needs to be delivered to many organizations in the market place.

Consultants can do more than only play an advisory role in what should be improved, they can make a difference. It is recommended to monitor and measure all variables that positively or negatively contribute to CRM effectiveness, like satisfaction, trust, workload and conflict throughout every CRM organizational change. When consultants measure those variables repeatedly on all their CRM projects, then they may obtain information that can be used for steering the organizational change towards more success. For example, when relatively high and/or increasing workload levels are found among certain employees in certain teams or certain departments, this information indicates a possible threat of CRM effectiveness. Consequently, the workload for those employees should be lowered or distributed to employees facing less workload. When consultants gather such data in many different organizations and on multiple CRM organizational changes, then analyses can be performed on differences or similarities between organizations, organizational changes and even industries. Those analyses may reveal further insights in the success factors of CRM organizational change. For raising the CRM organizational success rate to a higher level, actions based on these insights are important. Consultants
can pro-actively confront managers with these insights and point out to them where possible threats and opportunities exist on the path to improved customer relationships.

Practical implications for managers

Many managers are struggling to improve customer relationships. Managers being involved in or considering to implement CRM should, just like consultants, be aware of the findings and insights from the current research. Human resource managers and other managers may use the current research findings to convince their peers and supervisors that employee participation plays a major role in the effectiveness of CRM organizational change. The current research indicates that 51 per cent of the variance in CRM effectiveness is explained by employee participation together with several mediators. The main contribution of the current research to managers is that the influence from employee participation is now captured in a number that can be used to convince others. Such number makes reasoning in any discussion tangible.

Furthermore, managers can promote employee participation among those workers that report to them. Based on the current research findings, managers are recommended to actively involve employees in CRM organizational change processes and provide them with the opportunity to participate. Employees who are provided such opportunity, may not only build increased levels of local fit throughout the organization, they also experience more ownership, satisfaction, being trusted and trusting others that all positively influence CRM effectiveness. Some employees will volunteer to participate because of their own increased influence, control, power and responsibility. Other employees may not volunteer to participate for many possible reasons. Already a relatively small number of participants can make a difference in CRM organizational change effectiveness. Participants are the front-runners guiding an organization into improved customer relationships. While doing so, they are usually busy and may have less time left for their non-change related tasks. The non-participants can be directed by managers to take follower roles and to perform all regular daily tasks during the change process, because business must go on at all times, even during organizational change preparations.

Like consultants, managers are recommended to gather more information using measurements on all variables influencing CRM effectiveness. For example, the variables from the current research that are negatively associated with CRM effectiveness – workload, stress and conflict- may jeopardize CRM success and need to be monitored in order to steer the CRM organizational change towards more success. Managers play an important role in guiding employees in the right direction. Whenever a substantial group of employees are working towards improved customer relations, then the CRM effectiveness can follow.
In order to motivate a substantial group of employees into a desired strategic direction, human resource management (HRM) programs may be necessarily aimed at increasing the employee participation level. These programs should aim at supporting trust among employees, providing room for attitudes of ownership and satisfaction, reducing heavy workload, large amounts of conflict and high stress levels among employees. Managers need to understand that employee participation is not established by a HRM program itself. They must show full support to such a program and give it time and dedication. They themselves should become actively involved in such a program and guide employees towards the desired strategic direction. Stated differently: they should play an active role in employee participation processes themselves. Organizational changes like CRM and HRM programs do not happen overnight. It takes a long time before changes within employees and organizations are established. Change programs require a long-term ongoing process with small incremental improvements.

Practical implications for employees

Findings from the current research show that employees participating in CRM organizational change can make a difference in the local fit of the change contents. While being actively involved in the CRM organizational change, they are able to make small alterations in their own job contents –like for example task contents, work activities, planning, procedures– that by itself contribute directly to the effectiveness of a CRM organizational change. When several employees change the local fit in their own jobs, ultimately the entire organization will become changed.

The current research showed that the foregoing is not all that employees can do towards improved customer relationship management. Whenever employees are provided with the choice to participate or not to participate, it may be wise to choose the first because of the many advantages it brings to themselves and their organization. Being involved in organizational change can positively influence participants’ intrapersonal attitudes – ownership and satisfaction– together with their interpersonal relations –being trusted and trusting others–. Furthermore, employees should watch out for too much pressures –like workload, stress and conflict–. These pressures were less among participants and more often found among non-participants in the current research.

Unfortunately, hardly any employee, manager and consultant will ever read the foregoing recommendations, based on the simple fact that dissertations are seldom read by these audiences. For that reason, the author of this dissertation will be participating in two activities to communicate the foregoing practical implications to employees, managers and consultants. First, a separate book will be published especially for managers and consultants by publisher Academic Service. Second, courses will be taught to employees of many different organizations in close cooperation with the Academy for Management. The
underlying rationale is to make employees, managers and consultants understand in which way they can make a difference in improving CRM effectiveness via employee participation and its mediators. The foregoing activities are expected to have more impact among practitioners than any text in this dissertation will ever accomplish.

5.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

As with all studies, this study has a number of limitations. This study has limitations from the self reporting instrument on the individual employee level, limitations from studying perceptions instead of more objective measures and limitations from respondent characteristics. These limitations will be discussed hereafter.

Limitations from the individual instead of the organizational aggregation level

In this dissertation, the focus was on individual employees and the effects of their employee participation in several similar organizational changes. The current research did not aim for findings on the organizational level.

An explicit assumption applied to the current research stated no differences between organizations and organizational changes. However, the ANOVA test proved that there were significant differences in the scores of individual employees from different organizations. Based on that test, the homogeneity assumption regarding similar organizations operating in the same market with the same culture was no longer valid. For that reason, all regression analyses were performed twice. First on the individual level regardless any organizational differences, then multilevel while the differences between organizations were controlled. It appeared that each model fit and all regression slopes differed somewhat between both regression analysis methods, although those differences were not large enough to reject any conclusions. The individual level analyses and the multilevel analyses led to similar findings.

Despite the foregoing, neglecting all differences between organizations in the current research is too far fetched and too simple. These organizations were not identical. All offered financial products, but not exactly the same products to the same customers. These organizations operated in the same Dutch country culture in the same time era, although probably their internal organizational culture differed and might have influenced individual employees working there. Therefore, the addition of variables measuring organizational characteristics –for example: strategic view, efficiency, effectiveness, financial performance, organizational culture, customer orientation and product base-
might have added richer information to the insights in the process of employee participation in CRM organizational change.

Limitations from the subjective instead of more objective measurements

The current research was performed using subjective perceptions from individual employees, together with subjective opinions from managers and consultants in interviews. The use of such perceptions implies that conclusions might be biased by colored views. This dissertation needs to be read with the following limitations in mind that are normally the direct consequences of subjectivity.

Subjective views were captured by a self-report questionnaire in which the employees could score their personal opinions and perceptions. Field (2002) described that such self-report instrument could cause inflated correlations between variables. Several mediators correlate significantly (p<.05 or even p<.01) with other mediators. For example, local fit correlates strongly with being trusted, trusting others, satisfaction and conflict. These mediators clearly influence each other. Additional regression analyses reveal that being trusted and trusting others have a positive relationship with local fit and vice versa. A discussion on reverse causality is applicable regarding these mediators, similar to the previously described discussion on the reverse causality among the interpersonal relations mediators. Thus, many mediators influence each other and the causal order may often not be one-directional. In the research model from Figure vii, each mediator was linked to one independent variable (employee participation) and one dependent variable (CRM effectiveness), while a dotted line indicated significant correlations between mediators within each underlying mediating entity. That research model showed clearly an oversimplification of reality, based on the fact that not only the mediators within each mediating entity were found to correlate; mediators also correlated with mediators from other mediating entities xxii. Statistical software like Lisrel does not allow models with all

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xxii Elias (2007) warned that in cases of many significant correlations, all data should be tested against lack of multicollinearity and common method variance. In the current research no unacceptable lack of multicollinearity nor unacceptable common method variance is found.
variables correlating\textsuperscript{xiii}. The significant correlations between many variables in the current research may be viewed as a potential weakness but can be explained by the self-reporting instrument and earlier in this dissertation it was reported that these high correlations did not lead to unacceptable lack of multicollinearity nor unacceptable common method variance.

\textbf{Limitations from the non-repeated measurements}

All measurements took place on a single moment. At that particular moment, for example the moods from (groups of) employees might have caused certain biases. Furthermore, findings should be evaluated against the background that several of (the employees of) the organizations implementing CRM were still in the early stages of adoption and, thus, probably still learning. Repeated measurements would have added insights over time on such learning process. For several reasons it was not possible to repeat the questionnaire measurements several times to gather data over time. In the first place, this was impossible because many employees wanted to stay completely anonymous, while others left their organizations during or shortly after organizational change and could not be reached again. Two of them revealed during interviews their intentions to leave, which was mostly based on the fact that they didn't feel comfortable with the more customer oriented new way of working. In the second place, it was impossible because the management of the organizations did not want their employees to put too much time in filling out questionnaires and conducting interviews. Instead, they wanted their employees to get the work done, leaving no room for further investigations. In the third place, a very complicated and highly time consuming logistics operation would have been required to repeat all questionnaires in all organizations for several times at exactly the same moments in time calculated from the implementation start. Only that would have

\textsuperscript{xiii} Not only the research model from Figure vii seems to fit the research data, some alternative research models may fit as well. Such an alternative research model could resemble the shape of a spider web, with employee participation and CRM effectiveness connecting to all mediators, while those mediators all connect to each other as well. A speculative alternative research model could even show all variables forming a circular causal chain. In such view, employee participation influences being trusted, which influences trusting others, which influences ownership, which influences satisfaction, which influences local fit, which influences CRM effectiveness, which influences conflict, which influences stress, which influences workload, which influences employee participation. Such causal chain model implies the view that a circular loop might occur repeatedly over time while adding learning effects every time it runs. The foregoing might explain why variables being relatively far from each other in the same chain appear being related to each other: they could have affected each other the previous time the chain has run.
made conclusions over time regarding most or even all employees possible. Thus, no longitudinal data is available in the current research.

Limitations from the specific scope of the current research

Besides the fact that the current research results have added insights in the relationship between employee participation and CRM effectiveness in sixteen financial organizations, the general applicability remains discussable. For example, different types of organizational change –for example purely ICT-based platform migrations that hardly influence organizational members– may be less influenced by employee participation and consequently show different outcomes.

Another related potential weakness of the current research can be found in the fact that the level of employee participation and the CRM effectiveness were both not very high. The foregoing leads to the caution against generalization: the findings of this research may not be applicable to different types of organizational change than CRM or at other organizations than financial institutions in the Netherlands. Therefore, the foregoing results cannot simply be applied to other settings.

5.4 Future research

Future research could surely overcome several limitations from the foregoing section and add further insights to the research areas underlying this dissertation. Earlier in this chapter already several follow-up research directions were suggested. Many of those resulted from current findings, logical reasoning, theories and speculation. Hereafter, these suggestions for future research will be summarized and clarified.

Future research on employee participation

The low employee participation level of the current research led to conclusions that are not necessarily applicable to similar situations with higher employee participation levels. The previously reported low participation level raises the question: in retrospective, would the current research have found similar or different results if (many) more employees would have fully participated?

Such question is almost impossible to answer, because of the limited number of high-participative respondents in the current research. A well-known researcher of participation
should know more about high levels of participation. Pusic is from Croatia – the former Yugoslavia – and did extensive research in so-called kolchoz farms. In those farms, the communist principles aimed at maximum participation. Each worker on every kolchoz farm was also a participant in all decisions. Pusic (1998) wrote, that over-participation is likely to reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of such organizations below the economic tolerable limit. He reasoned that when everyone participates in decision making, then many meetings are needed to discuss and confirm decisions. Kanter (1983) added that large amount of meetings cost extensive amounts of time and energy and keep participants away from doing the necessary work. Furthermore, participants will limit their contribution to just satisfying their own interests instead of the organizational interest and assuming that the other work will simply be done by others (Pusic, 1998, page 81). Because everyone is considered equal, there are no career opportunities for outstanding personnel. As a consequence, no one feels motivated to do even a little more than others. The foregoing formed a serious threat to productivity in the kolchoz farms, which may have been a reason for their disappearance. Thus, maximum participation would logically harm organizational success and organizational change effectiveness.

Further research will be necessary to bring more clarity on different levels of employee participation. Organizations or organizational changes with much higher employee participation levels would be interesting to compare to the sixteen organizations that were subject to the current research. Which participation level, or how many participants, are at minimum required to successfully change an entire organization? What would happen to the effectiveness of organizational change if the majority of the individual employees within an organization participated? Could differences between individual participants cause different organizational change outcomes? Can decision makers make the difference between organizational change success and a failure, or do they need workers to get the decisions implemented? Such questions remain to be answered. Future research could shine more light on the impact from high versus low employee participation on (CRM) organizational change. Possibly in high or low employee participation circumstances more or less negative outcomes of participation might be expected, which would be an avenue for further research.

Some scholars described different views on the negative outcomes of participation like workload, conflict and stress. For example Heller (1998) wrote that participation could lead to several increased job pressures with negative consequences. He wrote that people like stability and have a natural tendency to oppose any force that attempts to change what biologists call homeostasis. Heller (1998) expected participants in an organizational change to be faced with increased job pressure levels. Whether employee participation would cause more or less conflict, may at least partly be explained by different definitions of
conflict. Some describe conflict in terms of relatively small disagreements or discussions, while others equal conflict to relatively large collisions or fights. Similar to the foregoing expectations, Koopman (1983) and Janssen (2004) reported that other forms of participation led to different outcomes depending on low or high levels of conflictxxiv. In the current research, conflict was equated with collisions being rooted in opposing organizational change forces, which is a clear indication of the latter. Probably, employee participation increases the number of discussions, because participants need to convince each other in the process towards joint decisions and that process may require discussions. Piderit (2000) added that participation may lead to dissent, disagreement and divergent opinions. These would contribute to making wiser group decisions and more effective organizational change. In such view, employee participation would lead to more small conflicts and to less large conflicts. Only the latter is confirmed in the current study, while the first has not been tested in the current research and therefore further research is recommended. The outcomes of the post-research interviews with managers and consultants did not add more clarity to the foregoing discussion. None of the interviewees disregarded any of the foregoing theories as impossible. Most called these theories plausible, but were not overly convinced. Future research is recommended to bring more clarity.

Future research on CRM effectiveness

The bottom-line research results presented in this chapter indicated a model fit hardly over fifty per cent. As this is much lower than 100 per cent, this means that there must be other influences beside the currently used mediators to play a (mediating) role in the relationship between employee participation and CRM effectiveness. There may be more mediators or moderators influencing the relationship between employee participation and CRM effectiveness. Some could be caused by chaotic influences from the empirical field, while others could be caused by variables that are currently still to be discovered. Consequently, a suggestion for further research is to enlarge the scope of the research and search for unknown effects that play a mediating or moderating role in this relationship.

Furthermore, the current research focused on perceptions on success from individual employees. Several of those employees participated and were found to influence the CRM organizational change outcomes. Those individual employee perceptions may not reflect...
objectivity. Gupta & Zeithaml (2005) suggested to combine unobserved perceptual measures with observed behavioral and performance outcomes –like for example customer behavior and organizational profitability– on several aggregation levels. Based on the foregoing, it would be interesting to perform future research on unobserved variables related to individual employees’ perceptions –e.g. employee satisfaction– with unobserved and observed variables related to individual customers –e.g. customer satisfaction and customer purchase behavior– together with observed variables on the organizational aggregation level –e.g. organizational profitability–. Gupta & Zeithaml (2006) provided an interesting overview of academic literature regarding the asymmetrical and nonlinear relationship between customer satisfaction and organizational financial performance. It would not be surprising if relationships between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction and between employee satisfaction and organizational financial performance would exist and would show similar patterns. Because when certain employees are more satisfied, they may build customer relations more effectively, which may improve customer satisfaction as well. Or employee participation might add to customer satisfaction and via customer satisfaction improve organizational financial performance. If such relationships would be present, then it might be interesting to find out how much impact an increase in employee participation would have on financial performance measures like return on investment, or customer profitability. Verhoef, Van Doorn & Dorotic (2007) suggested further research on variables influencing the optimization of customer profitability.

Future longitudinal research

Based upon the generic assumption that nothing sustains forever, organizational change effects and CRM effectiveness would logically erode over time. In this particular case study, organizational change CRM effectiveness was measured shortly after the implementation of the CRM type of change. Three respondents wrote in the free comments field underneath their questionnaire that they found that moment quite early to identify organizational change CRM effectiveness. They needed time to get used to the change and to be able to identify and report the CRM effectiveness of organizational change. Similarly, in an interview a manager complained about the CRM effectiveness measured at a fixed, non-repeated moment in time that was unknown to change later. Nevertheless, this manager admitted that soon circumstances could be disturbing the CRM effectiveness, like for example the credit crisis that hit financial organizations after the research was conducted.

Huzzard (2004) stated, that it takes varying amounts of time before individual employees gain sufficient knowledge and skills before they feel confident to participate extensively. Participants are expected to advance up a learning curve at different speeds and from different starting points (Blake et al., 1989). Learning was also suggested to play a role in
the formation of attitudes. Grasping those learning curves is only possible when measures are repeated over time. Furthermore, Glew, O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin & Van Fleet (1995) suggested that (employee) participation would be more appropriate being researched as a process and not as a state. The foregoing may raise the following questions which require further research to be answered. What would be the effects of employee participation on organizational change CRM effectiveness over time? Would employee participation cause any lasting increases in CRM effectiveness, or would such influence diminish over time?

Schein (2002) added to the foregoing that different outcomes would be expected in different organizational change phases. In the first unlearning phase during the very first start of an organizational change, he expected several negative consequences, which he called organizational instability consequences. Based on his view, it could be possible that the job pressures levels –workload, conflict and stress– would increase in the beginning of an organizational change. After the unlearning change phase, a learning change phase was expected. In the current research, all data was gathered in that learning change phase, not the unlearning change phase. That might explain why such negative consequences have not negatively impacted CRM effectiveness in the current research. Those negative consequences might well have occurred at an earlier time. Similarly, Spector (1986) wrote that participation is expected to decrease conflict after a while, because participants usually receive increased job control and autonomy to solve conflict in their best interests.

Thus, the variables from the current research might show increasing or decreasing average values, depending on the measuring moment. Longitudinal research may add insights in these processes over time, although such research should be considered with care because in any empirical field situation most variables are subject to uncontrollable side effects from outside a research model. The foregoing means that if different outcomes over time would be found in empirical longitudinal research, these differences might be partly caused by learning curves and partly by uncontrollable side effects.

Future research in a larger scope

In the method chapter it was assumed that the environment outside the current research scope remained stable.

However, environmental circumstances might be influential on employee participation in (CRM) organizational change research outcomes. For example, Gill (1993) researched participation in technological change in twelve member states of the European Union and found that Northern European countries showed much higher participation levels than Southern European countries. Those participation levels were suggested to lead to different change outcomes in different countries and cultures (Gill, 1993).
If the current research would have been performed outside the Netherlands, would then a different level of employee participation been found, causing different outcomes in CRM effectiveness? What if employee participation would have been introduced in other countries with different cultures, or in other types of organizations implementing different types of organizational change? The current research cannot answer those questions, therefore future research on those environmental influences is recommended.