

The consistency rule and the voice effect: the influence of expectations on procedural fairness judgements and performance

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Abstract

In procedural justice research it has frequently been found that allowing people an opportunity to voice their opinion enhances their judgements of the fairness of a decision-making procedure. The present study investigated how this voice effect is affected by the consistency over time rule, which dictates that, once people expect a certain procedure, deviation from the expected procedure will lead to a reduction in procedural fairness. Two experiments were conducted. In both experiments the independent variables manipulated were whether subjects were explicitly told to expect a voice procedure, were explicitly told to expect a no-voice procedure, or were told nothing about a subsequent procedure, and whether or not subjects subsequently received an opportunity to voice their opinion. The manipulations were induced by means of scenarios in Experiment 1, and by means of the Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) paradigm in Experiment 2. In both experiments it was found that subjects who expected a voice procedure or who expected nothing judged receiving the voice procedure as more fair than receiving the no-voice procedure, but that subjects who expected a no-voice procedure judged receiving the voice procedure (inconsistency) as less fair than receiving the no-voice procedure (consistency). Furthermore, effects of the manipulated variables on subjects' task performance were found in Experiment 2.

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INTRODUCTION

In the field of procedural justice, the most generally accepted and best-documented finding is that allowing people an opportunity to voice their opinion about a decision enhances their judgements of the fairness of the decision-making procedure (e.g. Lind, Kanfer & Early, 1990; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975, 1978; Tyler, 1987; Tyler & Lind, 1992; Tyler, Rasinski & Spodick, 1985). Folger (1977) has termed this finding as the voice effect. An experimental paradigm for investigating the voice effect has been developed by Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990). In the Lind, Kanfer and Early paradigm, subjects are requested to complete tasks. Furthermore, it is communicated to subjects that the experimenter will decide on the number of tasks they will have to complete. After a practice trial, the procedure that subjects receive is manipulated: they are either allowed or not allowed an opportunity to voice their opinion about the number of tasks to be completed. Findings of Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) showed a voice effect: subjects judged the procedure to be more fair when they were allowed voice than when they were not allowed voice. Furthermore, the experimental manipulations affected subjects' task performance: subjects who were allowed voice completed more tasks than subjects who were not allowed voice.

Thus, numerous studies show the robustness of the voice effect as one of the forces that operates on the process of evaluating the fairness of procedures. However, research on the voice effect (e.g. Lind, Kanfer and Early, 1990) thus far has been restricted to situations in which people are not informed beforehand of whether or not they will be allowed an opportunity to voice their opinion. For example, at the beginning of the Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) experiment, subjects were not told whether they would, or would not, receive an opportunity to voice their opinion later on in the experiment; instead, the subjects were told nothing about subsequent voice opportunities and after the practice trial was completed they either unexpectedly received a voice opportunity or received no such opportunity. The aim of the present paper is to extend voice research to situations in which people expect a particular procedure. This is an important issue for three reasons.

The first reason may be derived from the field of social justice in general. For example, expectations about outcomes have been an area for special attention in distributive justice research (which is in contrast with procedural justice research, where procedural expectations have not been the central focus of attention): in distributive justice research the influence of expectations on fairness judgements is frequently investigated by examining people's reactions when they are either under-rewarded, equitably rewarded, or over-rewarded in comparison to what they *expect* on the basis of equity considerations. Greenberg (1982) has reviewed this literature, and concludes that the majority of these studies confirm the predictions derived from equity theory: it is not only found that persons who are underpaid show reactions that indicate that they feel they have been less equitably treated than equitably paid persons, it is also found—although the evidence is not entirely unequivocal (e.g. Lawler, 1968; Pritchard, 1969)—that overpaid persons show patterns of behaviours that seem to indicate that they feel they have been less equitably treated than equitably paid persons. This seems to indicate that confirmation of expectations is more important than what is actually received, even in situations where one receives

more than what was expected. Other social justice research has also shown expectations to be an important factor in the psychological process of forming fairness judgements. For example, a significant study in the relative deprivation literature (see Crosby (1976) for an overview) is that of deCarufel and Schopler (1979), who reasoned — among other things — that outcome improvement may be a source of rising *expectations*, and when these rising expectations are violated by improvements that fail to rise at the same rate, people may be dissatisfied with their improved outcomes (see also Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star & Williams, 1949). Furthermore, the findings of a study conducted by Lind, Maccoun, Ebener, Felstiner, Hensler, Resnik and Tyler (1990) also emphasize the importance of expectations in the development of fairness judgements. After reviewing these and other studies, Furby (1986) concluded that 'the notion that meeting expectations is central in the definition of justice' (p. 183).

Second, procedural expectations are an important topic for research because in real life they are more likely to be present than absent. For example, employees who have to complete a certain number of tasks in one day may have learned to expect whether they will be allowed to voice their opinion about the number of tasks to be completed: employees of participative organizations may expect a voice opportunity, whereas employees of autocratic organizations may not expect a voice opportunity. A third reason for investigating procedural expectations in relation to the voice effect is that it provides an opportunity to investigate how the voice effect is affected by procedural rules (see Leventhal, 1980) that have not been taken into consideration in voice research thus far. This will be demonstrated below.

How do people evaluate procedures when they have established procedural expectations? Leventhal's (1980) classic paper on procedural justice is relevant in this respect. Leventhal distinguishes a number of rules that people may use to evaluate the fairness of procedures. The only rule that is relevant for situations in which people expect a particular procedure has been denoted by Leventhal as the consistency over time rule. This rule dictates that, once people expect a procedure, deviation from the expected procedure will lead to a reduction in perceived procedural fairness. Research findings indicate that people do indeed consider consistency over time an important procedural rule. For example, in a study by Greenberg (1986) in which middle managers were asked to rate the importance of various procedural rules, the findings showed that the consistency over time rule was rated as an important rule. In fact, Greenberg's findings seem to indicate that consistency over time was judged as more important than the opportunity to voice one's opinion. This suggests that the consistency over time rule might be even more important than the voice effect. However, the few studies that have examined both the consistency over time rule and the voice effect were either correlational (e.g. Barrett-Howard & Tyler, 1986; Greenberg, 1986) or, when experimental, did not manipulate these two procedural rules independently (e.g. Fry & Leventhal, 1979; Fry & Cheney, 1981; both experiments cited in Lind & Tyler, 1988, pp. 136–138).

What are the implications of manipulating people's expectations about voice independently of voice itself? For example, consider the situation in which people expect an opportunity to voice their opinion, and subsequently either receive a voice opportunity or receive no such opportunity. As we reasoned above, two forces might operate on the process of evaluating the fairness of the procedure that these people subsequently receive: people's expectations and the voice effect. Furthermore, note

that in this situation—where people expect a voice procedure—these two forces should operate in the same direction; that is, when these persons subsequently receive the voice procedure, their expectations are confirmed, and when these persons subsequently receive the no-voice procedure, their expectations are disconfirmed. As a consequence, it seems reasonable to assume that people who expect a voice procedure will judge the procedure that they subsequently receive as more fair when it is a voice procedure than when it is a no-voice procedure.

It is also possible, however, that people may have learned to expect *no* opportunity to voice their opinion. Let us, therefore, now consider the situation in which people expect *no* opportunity to voice their opinion, and subsequently either receive an opportunity to voice their opinion or receive no opportunity to voice their opinion. It seems reasonable to assume that in this situation the same two forces (i.e. people's expectations and the voice effect) operate on the process of evaluating the fairness of the procedure that these people subsequently receive. Note, however, that in this case—where a no-voice procedure is expected—the two forces operate in opposite directions: when these persons subsequently receive the *no*-voice procedure, their expectations are confirmed, and when they subsequently receive the voice procedure, their expectations are disconfirmed. What will these people, who expect no-voice, judge as more fair: receiving voice or receiving no-voice? Equity research, as discussed by Greenberg (1982), as well as relative deprivation theory (e.g. deCarufel & Schopler, 1979; Stouffer *et al.*, 1949), suggests that people may find the confirmation of their expectations more important than what they actually receive. On the basis of these studies, therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that people who expect a no-voice procedure will judge the procedure that they subsequently receive as *less* fair when it is inconsistent with their expectation (i.e. when it allows them an opportunity to voice their opinion) than when it is consistent (i.e. when it does not allow them voice).

EXPERIMENT 1

As a first test of our predictions, subjects were asked to read and respond to stimulus information manipulated by means of scenarios. In the scenarios, subjects are requested to imagine that they are participating in an experiment that uses the Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) paradigm. They are either promised that they will have an opportunity to voice their opinion, promised that they will have no such opportunity, or—as in prior research on the voice effect—told nothing about subsequent opportunities to voice their opinion. Furthermore, it is manipulated whether or not subjects subsequently receive an opportunity to voice their opinion. Subjects' procedural fairness judgements were the dependent variable. As elaborated above, it is hypothesized that subjects who are promised a voice procedure will judge the procedure to be *more* fair when they subsequently receive the voice procedure than when they subsequently receive the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1a*). Furthermore, on the basis of equity theory and relative deprivation theory, it is hypothesized that subjects who are promised a no-voice procedure will judge the procedure to be *less* fair when they subsequently receive the voice procedure than when they subsequently receive the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1b*). Finally,

consistent with what has commonly been found in voice research, it is predicted that subjects to whom no particular procedure is promised will judge receiving the voice procedure as *more* fair than receiving the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1c*).

Method

Subjects and design

One hundred and twenty students (of whom 35 were men and 85 were women) at Leiden University participated in the experiment, and were paid for their participation. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the cells of the 3 (Promised Procedure: voice promised, no voice promised, nothing promised) \times 2 (Received Procedure: voice received, no voice received) factorial design.

Experimental procedure

Subjects read the scenario and answered the question that constituted the dependent variable before participating in another experiment that took one hour of their time, and for which they were paid 10 Dutch guilders. Upon arrival at the laboratory, subjects were led to separate cubicles, each containing a computer screen and a keyboard. The computers were used to present the stimulus information and to measure the dependent variable.

First, subjects were asked to imagine the following situation:

You are participating in an experiment.

You are instructed that you will have to complete tasks.

The experimenter will decide on the number of tasks to be completed.

The procedure promised to the subject was then manipulated. In the conditions where either voice was promised or no-voice was promised, subjects read the sentence (manipulated information in *italics*):

At the beginning of the experiment you *are / are not* promised an opportunity to voice your opinion about the number of tasks to be completed.

This last sentence was not presented to the subjects in the condition where nothing was promised. After this, the procedure that subjects received was manipulated (manipulated information in *italics*):

You receive in this decision process (about the number of tasks to be completed) *an / no* opportunity to voice your opinion.

After subjects had read the scenario, they were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert-type scale how fair they considered the decision process (1 = very unfair; 7 = very fair). When subjects had answered this question, the hour-long experiment began. At the end of this experiment, subjects were thoroughly debriefed and paid for their participation. All subjects agreed to this experimental procedure.

Results and discussion

The means of subjects' procedural fairness judgements are presented in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we conducted a 3 (Promised Procedure) \times 2 (Received

Table 1. Procedural fairness judgements as a function of promised procedure and received procedure—Experiment 1

Received procedure	Voice promised	Promised procedure	
		No voice promised	Nothing promised
Voice received	6.4 _a	4.7 _b	5.8 _a
No voice received	1.6 _b	5.8 _a	3.2 _b

Note. Entries are means of the procedural fairness judgements which were given on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = very unfair; 7 = very fair). For each column, means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.001$).

Procedure) analysis of variance (ANOVA), followed by tests of the *a priori* contrasts. The ANOVA yielded a main effect of Promised Procedure ($F(2, 114) = 13.27, p < 0.001$) as well as a main effect of Received Procedure ($F(1, 114) = 105.64, p < 0.001$), and these main effects were qualified by the predicted interaction effect ($F(2, 114) = 74.49, p < 0.001$): in accordance with hypothesis 1a, subjects in the condition where voice was promised judged the procedure to be more fair when they received voice ($M = 6.4$) than when they did not receive voice ($M = 1.6$; $t(114) = 13.75, p < 0.001$). More importantly, and as predicted by hypothesis 1b, subjects who were promised no voice judged the procedure to be less fair when they received voice ($M = 4.7$) than when they did not receive voice ($M = 5.8$; $t(114) = -3.33, p < 0.001$). Finally, as stated in hypothesis 1c, subjects in the condition where nothing was promised judged the procedure as more fair when they received voice ($M = 5.8$) than when they did not receive voice ($M = 3.2$; $t(114) = 7.38, p < 0.001$).

The findings of Experiment 1 show that the voice effect might be affected by people's procedural expectations. More specifically, the findings provide evidence that persons who expect *no* opportunity to voice their opinion might evaluate the procedure that they subsequently receive as *less* fair when they receive a voice opportunity than when they receive no opportunity to voice their opinion. In Experiment 1, however, subjects read a scenario, in which they were asked to imagine that they were participating in a situation in which they would have to complete tasks, and in which they were asked to judge the fairness of the procedure that was followed in this hypothetical situation. One might wonder, therefore, whether similar results would be obtained when subjects are exposed to a situation in which they actually have to complete tasks, and in which they directly experience the fairness of the procedure that is followed. In the experimental situation developed by Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990), subjects are informed that they will have to complete tasks, and they directly experience the procedure that is followed to decide on the number of tasks they are to complete. As a second test of our predictions, therefore, the same independent variables were manipulated in an experiment using the Lind, Kanfer and Early paradigm.

EXPERIMENT 2

In accordance with the findings of Experiment 1, it is predicted that subjects who are promised a voice procedure will judge the procedure to be more fair when they

subsequently receive the voice procedure than when they subsequently receive the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1a*). Furthermore, it is predicted that subjects who are promised a no-voice procedure will judge the procedure to be less fair when they subsequently receive the voice procedure than when they subsequently receive the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1b*). It is also predicted that subjects to whom nothing is promised will judge receiving the voice procedure as more fair than receiving the no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 1c*).

In accordance with the Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) experiment, a second aim of Experiment 2 is to investigate whether the experimental manipulations affect subjects' task performance. It is predicted that in the condition where a voice procedure is promised, subjects who subsequently receive a voice procedure will perform better than subjects who receive a no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 2a*). In the condition where a no-voice procedure is promised, however, it is predicted that subjects who subsequently receive a voice procedure will perform worse than subjects who receive a no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 2b*). Finally, in the condition where nothing is promised, it is hypothesized that subjects who receive a voice procedure will perform better than subjects who receive a no-voice procedure (*hypothesis 2c*).

Method

Subjects and design

One hundred and thirty-two students (of whom 36 were men and 96 were women) at Leiden University participated in the experiment. They were paid 10 Dutch guilders for their participation. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the cells of the 3 (Promised Procedure: voice promised, no voice promised, nothing promised) \times 2 (Received Procedure: voice received, no voice received) factorial design.

Experimental procedure

Subjects were invited to the laboratory to participate in a study on how people perform tasks. Upon arrival at the laboratory, subjects were led to separate cubicles, each containing a computer screen and a keyboard. Subjects were told that the computers were connected to one another, and that the experimenter could communicate with them by means of the computer network. The computers were used to present stimulus information, and to measure the manipulation checks and the dependent variables.

In the first part of the instructions, the experimental procedure was outlined to the subjects: after the experimental tasks were explained, subjects would practice the tasks for 5 minutes, after which they would work on the tasks for 30 minutes. Furthermore, it was explained that, after the 5-minute practice round and before the 30-minute work round, the experimenter would announce a goal regarding the number of tasks to be completed in the work round.

After this, the procedure that was promised to the subjects was manipulated. Subjects in the *voice promised* condition were informed that, before the experimenter decided on the goal, they would be given an opportunity to voice their opinion about

the number of tasks to be completed in the work round. In the *no voice promised* condition, subjects were informed that they would not be given an opportunity to voice their opinion about the goal. In the *nothing promised* condition, subjects were not told anything about an opportunity to voice their opinion.

The task was then explained to the subjects. Figures would be presented on the upper right part of the computer screen. Each figure consisted of 36 squares, and each square showed one of eight distinct patterns. On the upper left side of the computer screen one of the eight patterns would be presented, and subjects had to count the number of squares with this pattern in the figure on the right side of the screen. When subjects had indicated the correct number of patterns in the figure on the right side of the screen, another figure and another pattern would be presented on the screen. In both the practice round and the work round, the number of tasks that the subject had completed (i.e. the number of figures that the subject had counted) in the present round would be presented on the lower right side of the screen. On the lower left side of the screen the time that was left in the present round would be shown¹.

The practice round then began. After subjects had practised the tasks for 5 minutes, the procedure that subjects received was manipulated. In the *voice received* condition, the experimenter allegedly asked subjects, by means of the computer network, to indicate their opinion about the number of tasks to be completed (i.e. the number of figures to be counted) in the work round. (In reality, however, all stimulus information was preprogrammed.) Subjects in the *no voice received* condition were informed that they would not be asked to indicate their opinion about the number of tasks to be completed in the work round.

It was then communicated to the subject that the experimenter had decided on the number of tasks to be completed in the work round. Actually, the goal was calculated by the computer (the number of tasks completed in the practice round was multiplied by 8, after which 6 tasks were subtracted; on the basis of pilot testing, it was determined that this formula would result in a very difficult, but attainable goal; cf. Lind, Kanfer and Early, 1990). After this, the work round began. After subjects had worked for 30 minutes, they responded to questions pertaining to the manipulation checks and the dependent variables. When the subjects had completed these questions, they were thoroughly debriefed, were paid for their participation, and were asked not to inform other potential subjects about the experiment. All subjects agreed to this experimental procedure.

Results and discussion

Manipulation checks

For each manipulation check, subjects were asked to indicate on a 7-point Likert-type scale to what extent they agreed (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) with a statement pertaining to the manipulation check in question. The means of subjects'

¹Subjects in Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990) performed a very simple task. Therefore, and in agreement with much other social psychological research, our subjects also performed a task that was very simple.

Table 2. Manipulation checks as a function of promised procedure and received procedure—Experiment 2

Manipulation check	Received procedure	Promised procedure		
		Voice promised	No voice promised	Nothing promised
Voice promised check	Voice received	6.4 _a	1.5 _b	1.2 _b
	No voice received	6.9 _a	1.3 _b	1.5 _b
No voice promised check	Voice received	1.9 _b	6.8 _a	1.1 _b
	No voice received	1.7 _b	6.9 _a	1.6 _b
Nothing promised check	Voice received	1.6 _b	1.1 _b	4.4 _a
	No voice received	1.1 _b	1.2 _b	4.8 _a
Voice received check	Voice received	4.5 _a	5.8 _a	5.6 _a
	No voice received	1.5 _b	1.1 _b	1.5 _b
No voice received check	Voice received	3.1 _b	2.8 _b	2.5 _b
	No voice received	5.7 _a	6.6 _a	5.8 _a

Note. Entries are means on 7-point Likert-type scales; higher values indicate more agreement with the statement pertaining to the manipulation check in question (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). For each manipulation check, means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.05$).

responses to the various statements are presented in Table 2. To check whether Promised Procedure had been perceived as intended, subjects were asked three questions. The first question asked subjects to indicate whether they agreed with the statement that they had been informed that they would be given an opportunity to voice their opinion about the number of tasks that they would have to complete. A 3×2 ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of Promised Procedure only ($F(2, 126) = 696.55, p < 0.001$). A Scheffé test for pairwise comparisons between means ($p < 0.05$) revealed that subjects who were promised voice agreed more with the statement ($M = 6.6$) than either subjects who were promised no voice ($M = 1.4$) or subjects who were promised nothing ($M = 1.3$).

Subjects were also asked whether they agreed with the statement that they had been informed that they would not be given an opportunity to voice their opinion. An ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of Promised Procedure only ($F(2, 126) = 498.29, p < 0.001$). A Scheffé test for pairwise comparisons between means showed that subjects who were promised no voice agreed more with the statement ($M = 6.8$) than subjects who were promised voice ($M = 1.8$) or who were promised nothing ($M = 1.4$).

Furthermore, subjects were asked whether they agreed with the statement that they had not been informed about whether they would or would not be allowed an opportunity to voice their opinion. An ANOVA yielded a main effect of Promised Procedure only ($F(2, 126) = 63.86, p < 0.001$), and a Scheffé test for pairwise comparisons between means revealed that subjects who were promised nothing agreed more with the statement ($M = 4.6$) than subjects who were promised voice ($M = 1.4$) or who were promised no voice ($M = 1.2$).

Table 3. Procedural fairness judgements as a function of promised procedure and received procedure—Experiment 2

Received procedure	Voice promised	Promised procedure	
		No voice promised	Nothing promised
Voice received	5.8 _a	3.5 _b	5.8 _a
No voice received	1.7 _b	6.1 _a	3.3 _b

Note. Entries are means of the procedural fairness judgements which were given on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = very unfair; 7 = very fair). For each column, means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.001$).

To check whether Received Procedure had been perceived as intended, subjects were asked whether they agreed with the statement that they had been given an opportunity to voice their opinion. An ANOVA yielded a main effect of Received Procedure only ($F(1,126) = 167.94$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that subjects who received voice agreed more with the statement ($M = 5.3$) than subjects who did not receive voice ($M = 1.4$).

Subjects were also asked whether they agreed with the statement that they had not been given an opportunity to voice their opinion. An ANOVA yielded a main effect of Received Procedure only ($F(1,126) = 85.00$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that subjects who did not receive voice agreed more with the statement ($M = 6.0$) than subjects who received voice ($M = 2.8$). It can be concluded that the independent variables were perceived as intended.

Procedural fairness judgements

Subjects were asked to indicate how fair they considered the decision process (1 = very unfair; 7 = very fair). The means of subjects' procedural fairness judgements are displayed in Table 3. To test hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, we conducted a 3×2 ANOVA, followed by tests of the *a priori* contrasts. The ANOVA yielded main effects of Promised Procedure ($F(2,126) = 8.69$, $p < 0.001$) and Received Procedure ($F(1, 126) = 37.62$, $p < 0.001$), and these main effects were qualified by the predicted interaction effect ($F(2,126) = 81.31$, $p < 0.001$): in agreement with hypothesis 1a, subjects in the condition where voice was promised judged the procedure to be more fair when they had received voice ($M = 5.8$) than when they had not received voice ($M = 1.7$; $t(126) = 10.62$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, as predicted by hypothesis 1b, in the condition where no voice was promised, subjects who receive voice judged the procedure to be less fair ($M = 3.5$) than subjects who did not receive voice ($M = 6.1$; $t(126) = -6.61$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, in accordance with hypothesis 1c, subjects in the condition where nothing was promised judged the procedure as more fair when they had received voice ($M = 5.8$) than when they had not received voice ($M = 3.3$; $t(126) = 6.61$, $p < 0.001$).

Performance

To check whether subjects' performance in the 5 minute *practice round* did not differ between conditions, an ANOVA was conducted on the number of tasks that subjects had completed (i.e. the number of figures subjects had counted) in the practice round. The ANOVA did not yield significant results ($F_{\text{Received Procedure}}(1,126) = 3.30$, n.s., other F 's < 1), so it can be concluded that subjects' performance in the practice round did not differ between conditions ($M = 29$). Furthermore, this result implies—since the goal (i.e. the number of tasks to be completed in the work round) was linearly related to the number of completed tasks in the practice round—that there were no goal differences between conditions ($M = 226$).

With regard to the subjects who received voice, it was checked whether the procedure that was promised to them affected their *opinions* about the number of tasks to be completed in the work round². As expected, a one-way ANOVA yielded no significant result ($F(2,63) = 1.35$, n.s.). Subjects who received voice did not voice different opinions about the number of tasks to be completed in the work round ($M = 151$) as a function of the procedure that had been promised to them.

The means of the number of tasks completed by the subjects (i.e. the number of figures they counted) in the 30-minute *work round* are presented in Table 4. To test hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c, an ANOVA was conducted on subjects' work performance, followed by tests of the *a priori* contrasts. The ANOVA yielded the predicted interaction effect only ($F(2,126) = 21.62$, $p < 0.001$; other F 's < 1). Furthermore, the predicted contrasts were all significant: in accordance with hypothesis 2a, subjects in the condition where voice was promised performed better when they had received voice ($M = 157$) than when they had not received voice ($M = 146$; $t(126) = 2.79$, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, and as predicted by hypothesis 2b, in the condition where no voice was promised, subjects who had received voice performed worse ($M = 141$) than subjects who had not receive voice ($M = 162$, $t(126) = -5.15$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, as stated in hypothesis 2c, subjects who were promised nothing performed better when they had received voice ($M = 157$) than when they had not received voice ($M = 144$; $t(126) = 3.01$, $p < 0.01$)³.

²In accordance with what is common practice in procedural justice research (e.g. Lind, Kanfer and Early, 1990; cf. Folger, 1977), subjects in the *no voice received* conditions were not asked to give performance goals for the work round. It should be noted here that if subjects in these conditions had been asked in one way or another to give their performance goals, they would in fact have received some voice in the decision process, which would have been contrary to the research objective of realizing the *no voice received* conditions.

³Although subjects' performance in the practice round did *not* differ between conditions, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was also performed on the data for the work round, using the practice round data as covariate. As Stevens (1990, pp. 166–168) points out, to determine whether ANCOVA is appropriate, two assumptions have to be met: first, it has to be determined whether there is a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the covariate. Results of an ANCOVA showed that this assumption was met ($F(1,125) = 76.92$, $p < 0.001$). (Furthermore, we would like to note here that all within-condition correlations between the dependent variable and the covariate were positive and ranged from 0.57 to 0.75.) Second, it has to be checked whether the homogeneity of the regression slopes is tenable. Results of an ANCOVA (where the six cells of our design served as independent variable; see Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989, pp. 335–338) showed that this assumption was *not* met ($F(5,120) = 2.52$, $p < 0.04$). Therefore, it was concluded that ANCOVA would be inappropriate, and that hence the ANCOVA results should not be presented.

Table 4. Performance as a function of promised procedure and received procedure—Experiment 2

Received procedure	Promised procedure		Nothing promised
	Voice promised	No voice promised	
Voice received	157 _a	141 _b	157 _a
No voice received	146 _b	162 _a	144 _b

Note. Entries are means of the number of tasks completed in the 30-minute work round. For each column, means with different subscripts differ significantly ($p < 0.01$).

The procedural fairness findings of Experiment 2 provide strong evidence for our predictions: subjects who were promised a no-voice procedure judged receiving a voice procedure as less fair than receiving a no-voice procedure, whereas subjects who were promised a voice procedure judged receiving the voice procedure as more fair than receiving the no-voice procedure. In agreement with prior voice research, it was also found that subjects who were promised nothing judged receiving the voice procedure as more fair than receiving the no-voice procedure. It can be concluded that even when subjects are actually involved in a situation in which they directly experience the procedure that is followed (as was the case in Experiment 2), the voice effect may be qualified by procedural expectations.

A second aim of Experiment 2 was to investigate whether our experimental manipulations would influence subjects' task performance. Findings revealed that they did: subjects who were promised no voice performed worse when they subsequently received voice as opposed to when they received no voice, and subjects who were promised voice performed better when they received voice than when they received no voice. In correspondence with the findings of Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990), it was also found that when nothing was promised to the subjects they performed better after having received the voice procedure than after having received the no-voice procedure. It can thus be concluded that our experimental manipulations, like those of Lind *et al.* (1990), not only influenced people's fairness judgements, but also affected their working behaviour. An issue that is not dealt with by Lind, Kanfer and Early (1990), and that is hence less pertinent to the present paper, is the strength of the relationship between subjects' procedural fairness judgements and their task performance. For exploratory purposes, therefore, it is noted here that subjects' procedural fairness judgements and their task performance were positively correlated ($r(132) = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). Our findings thus seem to provide some evidence that procedural fairness judgements might affect subsequent working behaviour.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Taken together, the findings of these two experiments provide substantial support for our argument that expectations may affect the process of evaluating the fairness of procedures. We have argued that research on the voice effect thus far has been

limited to situations where people have *no expectations* about which procedure they will be subjected to, and that in such situations the voice effect will affect the process of evaluating the fairness of the procedure that is received. In both our experiments we find evidence for this line of reasoning in that it was found that when subjects are not led to expect a procedure they judge the procedure to be more fair when it allows them an opportunity to voice their opinion than when it does not allow them such an opportunity. It should be emphasized here that subjects in the Nothing Promised condition of Experiment 2 were not informed in any way about voice opportunities that might occur later on in the experiment. Furthermore, the manipulation check findings of Experiment 2 clearly show that these subjects understood that nothing was promised to them about voice opportunities (see Table 2). In our opinion, therefore, it seems unlikely that these subjects, who were not informed in any way about voice opportunities, would expect an opportunity to voice their opinion. Thus, it seems unreasonable to assume that subjects who were promised nothing in fact expected an opportunity to voice their opinion, and that subsequently receiving no voice violated this expectation whereas subsequently receiving voice confirms this expectation. In our opinion, it seems far more likely that subjects who were promised nothing did not know what procedure was to be expected, and that in this situation procedural expectations did not implicitly or explicitly affect the process of forming procedural fairness judgements.

We also argued that in situations where people are expecting a particular procedure not only the voice effect but also procedural expectations may affect the process of evaluating the fairness of the procedure that is subsequently received. Moreover, on the basis of equity research (as discussed by Greenberg, 1982) and the relative deprivation literature (e.g. deCarufel & Schopler, 1979), it was argued that procedural expectations may be more important than the voice effect. In accordance with this argument our two experiments show that subjects who are led to expect a no-voice procedure judge the subsequently received procedure to be *less* fair when it is a voice procedure than when it is a no-voice procedure, whereas subjects who have been led to expect a voice procedure judge receiving a voice procedure as more fair than receiving a no-voice procedure.

Thus, we may conclude that what is considered fair depends in part on what is expected. As was mentioned in the Introduction, Leventhal (1980) has referred to the fact that disconfirmation of people's expectations leads to lower judgements of procedural fairness as the consistency over time rule. Leventhal (1980; see also Leventhal & Whiteside, 1973) notes that the consistency over time rule applies to situations where leaders set performance expectations and specify in advance the criteria for evaluating performance, and that 'once such standards are established, a sudden or marked deviation from them will be perceived as a violation of fair procedure' (p. 40). Thus, Leventhal suggests that the label consistency over time rule can be used to rephrase in a more concise way the fact that disconfirmation of people's expectations will be judged less fair than confirmation of people's expectations. In this way, following Leventhal (1980), we can rephrase our findings by arguing that we have manipulated the consistency over time rule and the voice effect independently, and that we have found evidence that in situations where both the consistency rule and the voice effect operate on the process of forming procedural fairness judgements, the consistency over time rule might predominate the voice effect.

Why are expectations about procedures so important for the process of forming procedural fairness judgements? Moreover, why would violation of the expectation of a procedure that does *not* allow for an opportunity to voice one's opinion undermine the positive influence of voice on evaluations of procedural justice? One possible explanation for our findings is that our manipulations may have induced in the individual subject the perception that he or she was treated differently than the other subjects. Thus, this explanation holds that perceptions of inconsistency between persons (Leventhal, 1980) might explain our findings. We want to emphasize, however, that in both our experiments subjects were not informed in any way about other subjects: in Experiment 2, great care was taken not to present any information about other subjects. Moreover, whereas subjects in Experiment 2 may nevertheless have had an illusion of inconsistency between persons, this explanation is less plausible in view of the findings of Experiment 1, where subjects responded to a scenario in which they only received information about an interaction between themselves and the experimenter, and where they were not informed in any way about any possible interactions between the experimenter and other subjects. Although at this moment we can only speculate about the underlying psychology of our findings, in our opinion it is not highly plausible that our subjects, especially those in Experiment 1, thought that they were treated differently than other subjects.

It should be noted here that it is necessary to situate our findings in a broader discussion of the importance of violated expectations on evaluations of fairness: as was mentioned in the Introduction, our investigation of the influence of expectations on procedural fairness judgements is an extension of ideas in the literature of distributive justice. Greenberg's (1982) review of this literature seems to suggest that, in situations where equitable payment is expected, people whose expectations are confirmed (i.e. who are equitably paid) may make more positive distributive fairness judgements than people whose expectations are disconfirmed but who receive more (i.e. who are overpaid). Furthermore, relative deprivation theory (e.g. deCarufel & Schopler, 1979; Crosby, 1976) and Furby's (1986) notion that meeting expectations is a fundamental component of justice also seem to suggest that we may want to explain the findings of the present paper in a broader perspective. In other words, not only may we ask ourselves why expectations are important for the process of forming procedural fairness judgements; we may also ask ourselves whether expectations may be important for the process of forming distributive fairness judgements as well.

Fairness heuristic theory, Allan Lind's recent psychological analysis of fairness judgements, might provide a satisfactory answer to this question. Based on Lind and Tyler's (1988) group-value model, and on Tyler and Lind's (1992) relational model, fairness heuristic theory (Lind, 1992, 1994; Lind, Kulik, Ambrose & De Vera Park, 1993) argues that when people enter a situation (e.g. when they enter a social psychology laboratory), they frequently feel uncertain about their relationship with the authority (e.g. the experimenter). Therefore, Lind argues, people ask themselves whether the authority can be trusted, whether the authority will treat them in an honest and non-biased way, and whether the authority will view them as a full-fledged member of society. Furthermore, it is argued that the most common approach to the resolution of this uncertainty is to refer to impressions of procedural or distributive fairness to decide whether or not the authority is trustworthy, will be neutral, and will accord one the appropriate standing. As a consequence, the

moment people enter a situation they start searching for information on which they can build a fairness judgement. Therefore, Lind argues, procedural and/or distributive fairness judgements are more strongly influenced by information that is available in an earlier stage of the interaction with the authority than by information that becomes available at a later moment in time.

In other words, fairness heuristic theory seems to suggest that information that is available at an early moment in time offers a strong frame for interpretation of the fairness of information that becomes available at a later stage. What might this imply about the importance of people's expectations for their fairness judgements? It may suggest that the moment that people are informed of what is to be expected, they might start viewing events that subsequently happen from the perspective of whether these events confirm or disconfirm their expectations. Thus, precisely because people are, by definition, informed earlier about what is to be expected than about what subsequently happens, people's expectations may have a stronger influence on their perceptions of the fairness of subsequent procedures and outcomes than does the amount of pay that they subsequently receive (*cf.* Greenberg, 1982), or the procedure that they actually experience (*cf.* the present paper). Or, put differently, since the frame of reference provided by the consistency over time rule may have been apparent to our subjects before the frame of reference provided by the voice effect became apparent, the consistency over time rule affected subjects' fairness judgements and their performance more strongly than the voice effect.⁴

An important implication of the present study concerns the psychology of voice. In the domain of procedural justice, the only exception to the voice effect thus far has been Folger's (1977; *cf.* Folger, Rosenfield, Grove & Corkran, 1979; Folger, Rosenfield & Robinson, 1983; see also deCarufel & Schopler, 1979) research on what has become known as the frustration effect. Folger's research shows that when voice procedures are repeatedly followed by unfavourable outcomes, people may become frustrated about their voice opportunities, and hence react more negatively to voice procedures than to no-voice procedures. Lind and Tyler (1988, pp. 179–186; *cf.* Cohen, 1985; Greenberg & Folger, 1983) have theorized about the frustration effect, and emphasize that two preconditions have to be met before the frustration effect might occur: according to Lind and Tyler, it is only in circumstances where (a) the decision-maker is strongly biased against them, and (b) the characteristics that give the procedure a procedural fairness advantage are relatively weak, that people might judge a voice procedure as less fair than a no-voice procedure. However, although the procedures used in our experiments may be relatively weak, our data suggest that this line of reasoning is incomplete. Note that our subjects who expected a no-voice procedure and received a voice opportunity indicated less positive judgements of

⁴Note that fairness heuristic theory suggests that *any* manipulations that affect subjects' fairness judgements will influence perceptions of trust, neutrality, and standing. Therefore, our manipulations—which affected subjects' fairness judgements—probably *also* influenced subjects' perceptions of trust, neutrality, and standing. Unfortunately, we did not measure these important perceptions. However, as we have seen, fairness heuristic theory not only proposes that trust, neutrality, and standing are important, but furthermore proposes that the sequence in which people receive information affects how they form fairness judgements. Thus, while our data do not provide new information of relevance to the trust, neutrality, and standing aspect of fairness heuristic theory, this does not imply that our findings are trivial: they *do* provide interesting new information to the sequence aspect of fairness heuristic theory, and hence may make a contribution to our understanding of the psychological processes involved in fairness judgements.

procedural fairness than subjects who expected and received a no-voice procedure; it seems unreasonable to expect that subjects would have interpreted receiving an opportunity to voice their opinion as evidence that the experimenter had a strong bias against them. Therefore, we may conclude that an important contribution of the present research is its demonstration that the introduction of additional procedural characteristics—such as consistency over time—into a typical experimental test of the effects of voice may reveal nuances and limitations of the voice effect that have been neglected thus far: in addition to situations where the decision-maker is strongly biased against them, violations of the consistency over time rule may lead people to evaluate a voice procedure as less fair than a no-voice procedure.

It should be noted here, however, that we do not claim that voice is *not* important, since our findings also yield evidence that receiving voice has some intrinsic value for people. For example, in both Experiment 1 ($M=4.7$) and Experiment 2 ($M=3.5$) it was found that even when a no-voice procedure is expected, being allowed an opportunity to voice one's opinion strongly affects one's procedural fairness judgements. In fact, in both experiments *post hoc* analyses—Scheffé tests for pairwise comparisons ($p<0.05$)—showed that although subjects who were consistently treated judged the procedure they received as more fair than subjects who were inconsistently treated, and although there were no differences between conditions among the subjects who were consistently treated, among the subjects who were inconsistently treated those who received voice judged the procedure as more fair than those who received no voice. In other words, despite the inconsistent treatment, receiving an opportunity to voice one's opinion was still considered more fair than not receiving such an opportunity.

Furthermore—and although it seems reasonable to conclude that in circumstances where the decision-making process has no consequences (Experiment 1) or some consequences (Experiment 2) for people, the consistency over time rule may predominate over the voice effect—we might ask ourselves whether the consistency rule will always affect procedural fairness judgements more strongly than the voice effect. It should be pointed out here that when the decision-making process has *very serious consequences* for people they might evaluate a voice procedure as more fair than a no-voice procedure, irrespective of what they had expected. In other words, in some situations (unlike those explored in this paper) the voice effect might predominate over the consistency rule. For example, consider yourself in a situation in which it is decided whether or not you will have to pay a fine of \$10 000 (*cf.* Lind *et al.*, 1993). In such a situation you might judge the procedure to be more fair when you are allowed an opportunity to voice your opinion than when you are not allowed an opportunity to voice your opinion, regardless of whether you were originally promised a voice opportunity or not. Future research should explore the influence of the importance of the decision-making process on the relationship between procedural expectations and the receipt of voice procedures or no-voice procedures.

Our findings also have implications for the field of organizational behaviour, where the issue of voice has been studied in the participation in decision-making (PDM) literature. In their famous analysis of this literature, Locke and Schweiger (1979) conclude that allowing subordinates participation can have both positive and negative consequences for organizations and their members (see also Schweiger & Leana, 1986). As a consequence, these authors seem quite dissatisfied with the research on PDM and have proposed that the mechanisms which determine the

effects of PDM should be investigated (Locke & Schweiger, 1979, p.326). By demonstrating the influence of expectations on procedural fairness judgements and work performance, the present paper suggests one mechanism that may help account for the positive and negative effects of participation.

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