

2.2.3. Trough Effects on Emotions

Most research in the field of political media effects focuses on cognitive, not on affective responses. Hence, Kinder (1998, p. 190) argues that “about the emotional requirements of citizenship, or the emotional foundations of political opinion, little is heard”. Until now, only a few studies have explored the relationship between media information, emotional responses and political attitudes. For instance Schemer (2009) reported findings that indicate that the news coverage in tabloids fuels negative emotions. Those negative emotions, in turn, affected subjects’ political attitudes. Based on data from a three-wave panel survey the author showed that political media information in the context of a referendum on the asylum law in Switzerland raised negative emotions, such as fear and anger. These emotions were found to have consequences for policy judgments, more precisely attitudes towards the modification of the asylum law, in turn. This finding is consistent with results from a study by Sotirovic (2001). The author showed that fear acts as a mediator of media use on attitudes towards punitive policies. In line with these results, Holbert (2004) found that police reality show viewing predicts fear of crime. Fear of crime, in turn, was found to lead to the endorsement of capital punishment and handgun ownership.

2.2.4. Trough Effects on Political Knowledge

A variety of studies indicate that media information increases the audience’s political knowledge (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). For instance, Benoit, McKinney, & Stephenson (2002) found that watching primary campaigns enhanced the viewers’ knowledge of the candidate’s policy positions. Studies that address the question of how media effects on political knowledge are related to changes in political attitudes are rather rare. Interesting findings in this respect are provided in a study by Moy & Pfau (2000). Using structural equation modeling, the authors not only investigated direct effects of media information on confidence in political institutions, but also indirect effects through the media’s impact on political knowledge. Findings indicate that newspaper use increased political knowledge, which in turn enhanced trust and confidence in the presidency and Congress. Talk show viewing, in contrast, had a negative indirect effect on trust and confidence in Congress via political knowledge. Overall, the authors found more positive indirect effects than negative indirect effects. On the whole, then, the findings suggest that media’s impact on political knowledge might lead to an increase of political support. Findings from a study on trust in the World Trade Organization (WTO) do not confirm this assumption (Moy, Torres, Tanaka, & McCluskey, 2005). The authors found no indirect effects of media reliance through institutional knowledge on trust in the WTO.