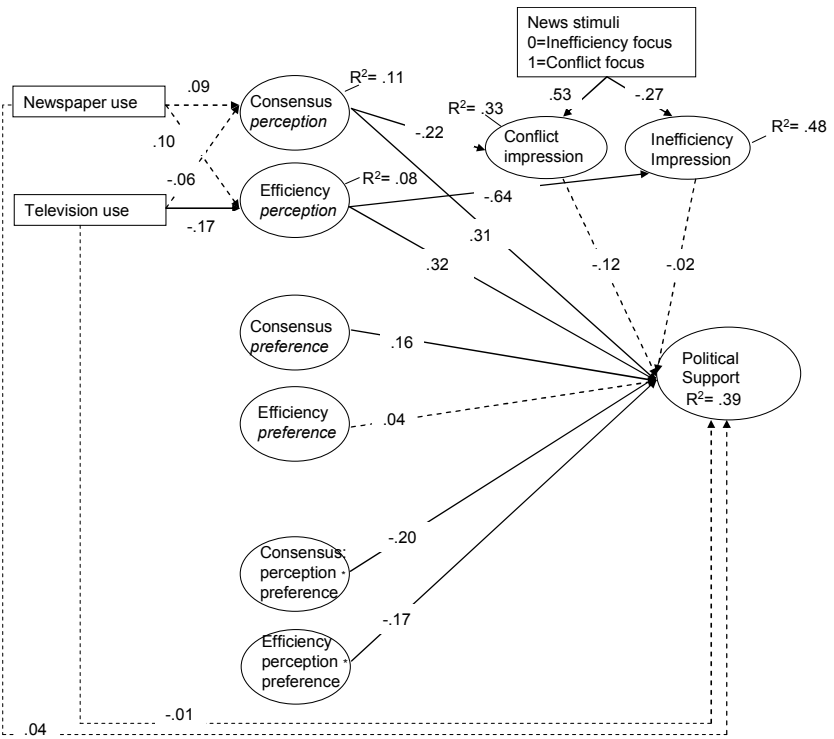
group (n = 96), and all subjects with vales > 7 were put in the high awareness group (n = 71). The first model on latent interaction effects described in Section 7.3.3 was tested in a group comparison for the low awareness and high awareness group. The group comparison model was estimated by constraining the paths, the factor loadings, and the covariances to be equal for the two groups. This constrained model resulted in a model whit satisfactory fit with CFI = .89, RMSEA =.05 (90% CI = .04, .06), Chi-Square = 1114.05, df = 886. In order to test whether the impact of the interaction terms is stronger for the participants in the high awareness group than for participants in the low awareness group, it was tested whether this fit could be improved significantly by releasing equality constraints on the paths from the latent interaction between consensus perception and consensus preference on political support and constraints from the latent interaction between efficiency perception and efficiency preference on political support. In each case, when one of the two constraints was released, there was no statistically significant reduction in Chi-Square (Chi-Square difference =.13, df = 1, p = .72 with β = -0.21, p = .06, for political aware and β = -0.08, p = .54 for unaware for the interaction between consensus perception and consensus preference; Chi-Square-difference = 1.04, df = 1, p = .31 with β = 0.01, p = .54, for political aware and β = -0.14, p = .28 for unaware for the interaction between efficiency perception and efficiency preference). This indicates that the assumption that the relationship between perceptions and preferences affects political support particularly for individuals in the high political awareness group compared to individuals in the low awareness group does not hold. Thus, H7 is not supported.

7.3.5. The Joint Impact of Media Use and Situational Exposure

Because the experimental study described in Chapter 6 is embedded in a series of surveys, there is the opportunity to investigate the joint impact of long-term effects of media use and exposure to stimulus articles on process perceptions and political support. Therefore, subjects' article impressions (inefficiency impression and conflict impression) were added to the model presented in Figure 7.5. Newspaper use and television use were specified as predictors of consensus perception, efficiency perception and political support. In line with findings in Chapter 6, consensus perception and efficiency perception were specified as predictors of article conflict impression, article inefficiency impression, and political support. Exposure to the stimulus articles (0 = exposure to inefficiency-focused articles, 1 = exposure to conflict-focused articles) was specified as a predictor of the articles' conflict impression and the articles' inefficiency impression. The article impression variables, in turn, were specified as predictors of political support. The variables television use and newspaper use were allowed to correlate (see Figure 7.6). In line with the assumptions, both article conflict impression (β = -0.24, p < .05) and article inefficiency impression (β = -0.66, p < .05) were affected by subjects' general perception of political processes. The less consensus-oriented political processes are perceived to

be, the more the respondents agreed with the statement that the articles raise the impression that political processes are conflict-oriented. The less efficient political processes are perceived to be, the more the respondents agreed with the statement that the articles raise the impression political processes are inefficient. The conflict impressions that subjects gained from the experimental news articles was moderately related to political support (β = -0.15, $p < .05$), and there was no significant effect for the inefficiency impression on political support. In line with previously reported findings, the model shows significant effects of gender (β = 0.16, $p < .05$), education (β = 0.21, $p < .05$) and age (β = -0.17, $p < .05$) on the consensus perception of political processes and a significant effect of age (β = -0.17, $p < .05$) on the efficiency perception of political processes. There is also a significant effect of gender (β = -0.13, $p < .05$) on political support. Model fit was satisfactory, with CFI = .93, RMSEA =.05 (90% CI = .04, .05), Chi-Square = 518.87, df = 277.



Note. All the solid line paths are statistically significant at .05 or above. Dashed lines indicate insignificant paths. Chi-Square (df=671, N 346) =1033.90, Comparative fit index is .90, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is .04 with a 90% confidence interval .04 - .05.

Figure 7.6. The Joint Impact of Media Use and Stimulus Articles on Support

In general, then, the findings indicate that the general perception of political processes influences the impression that people gain from the news articles. An alternative version of this model with paths from conflict impression on conflict perception and paths from inefficiency impression on efficiency perception, however, results in a model with equivalent fit (see also Section 6.3.2). This suggests that the relationship between article impressions and process preferences might be reciprocal. The inclusion of article impressions into the model did not enhance the amount of explained variance of political support (r^2 = .38 for the model without impression factors, r^2 = .39 for the model with impression factors), however. Thus, the results suggest that there is no independent effect of article impressions on political support above and beyond the impact of process perceptions.

7.4. Summary and Discussion

This section presented results from analyses of the relationship between routine media use and political support. The analyses focused on the mechanisms by which media information affects citizens' political support. In line with the assumption that media use influences political support indirectly by shaping the perception of political decision-making processes, results showed that television use has a significant effect on political support via its impact on the efficiency perception of political processes. More precisely, the findings indicate that high levels of television use are associated with the perception of political processes as inefficient. The more a person perceives political processes as inefficient, the lower are this person's levels of political support. The effect of television use on the perception of political processes as conflict-oriented was insignificant, however. As expected, there was no significant impact of newspaper use on the perception of political processes as consensus-oriented and no significant impact of newspaper use on the perception of political processes as inefficient. Hence there was also no indirect effect of newspaper use on political support. Television's impact on political attitudes may be stronger than the impact of newspapers, because television information is subject to dual information coding (audio information and visual information). In line with this assumption, other studies provide evidence for the assumption that dual-coding enhances media effects (Druckman, 2003; Van der Model & Van der Voort, 2000).

Against the background of findings from the content analysis, the lack of effects of television use on consensus perception is rather surprising. Results from the content analysis showed that television newscasts frequently contained references to political accusations and discord, particularly when presenting decision-making processes within the parliament. So why did television's strong focus on political accusations not affect the respondents' consensus perceptions? One explanation is suggested by findings reported earlier (Section 6.4.2), which show that exposure to the conflict-oriented stimulus articles may not only raise the impression that political