experiences and activity; this variable range from 0 (no experience) to 4 (much experience).

6.2.5. Data Analysis

The SEM analyses used EQS version 6.1 software (Bentler, 2006). Missing values were treated using the maximum likelihood-method (ML-imputation algorithm), also known as full information maximum likelihood (cf. Bentler, 2006, p. 285ff.; Wothke, 2000). The data were tested for univariate and multivariate normal distribution and strong outliers were excluded from data analysis. Extreme violations (moderate ones are given in parentheses) on the assumption of the univariate distribution are associated with skew values of at least 3 (2) and kurtosis of at least 20 (7) (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). These values were not reached. Strong outlier as regards multivariate normality distribution (cf. Yuan, Lambert, & Fouladi, 2004) were excluded from data analysis. Because the analysis is based on imputed data, I generally applied the distribution-free Satorra-Bentler estimation as an alternative to Maximum-Likelihood estimation. Robust methods might correct for deviations from the missing-at-random assumption. To evaluate the model fit, the following criteria were evaluated: the Chi-Square value divided by the number of degrees of freedom (< 3), the comparative fit index (CFI $> .90$), the Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA $< .06$) with its 90% confidence interval (CI, lower bound $<$ .05, upper bound $< .10$) (Kline, 2005, p. 133ff.).

6.3. Results

One objective of this study is to examine the effects that media presentations of political processes have on citizens' perceptions of political processes and their levels of political support. In this section, the short-term impact of experimental stimulus articles on respondents' perceptions of political processes and their political support is investigated. Section 6.3.1 presents the results from the treatment and manipulation checks. Then, Section 6.3.2 describes the findings on the articles' impact on the perception of political processes. One assumption of this study is that exposure to the stimulus articles may affect political support by increasing the temporary accessibility of the process preferences-perceptions discrepancies. This assumption is tested in Section 6.3.3.

6.3.1. Treatment and Manipulation Checks

The questions for the treatment and manipulation checks were included in each of the five surveys that included the stimulus articles (conflict group: n = 189, ineffi-