and perceptions could be seen as an indicator for the assumption that people do recognize preferences and perceptions as different cognitive constructs. Nevertheless, the present study will test the discriminant validity of process preferences and process perceptions in order to provide empirical evidence for the assumption that citizens do distinguish between the perception of political processes and related preferences.

3.4. This Study's Empirical Program to Test the Model

The preferences-perceptions model of media effects takes central account of the relationship between media information, perceptions of political processes, preferences as regards political processes, and political support. Thereby, the model explicates the mechanisms by which media information about political processes is assumed to affect citizens' levels of political support. The model proposes that media induced changes in the perception of political processes account for variances in political support. Hence, citizens' perceptions of how political decisions are made and how political processes look like are presumed to act as mediator of mass media's effects on political support. In addition, the model specifies the conditions under which the media's impact on political support is particularly likely. The model assumes that the media's impact on political support varies as a function of individual process preferences. Hence, process preferences are supposed to act as moderator of the media's impact on political support. The model aims to contribute to media effects research by differentiating the general statement that negative or critical media information enhances the political malaise. Instead, the model assumes that effects of media information on political support are stronger if media information contradicts individuals' preferences.

In order to test the assumptions, the present study encompasses the following empirical program (see Figure 3.2): First, *media information of political decision-making processes* in Switzerland is analyzed in order to derive characteristic patterns of media presentation of decision-making procedures (Chapter 4). Previous research indicates that decision-making processes are visible in the media (Morris & Clawson, 2005). The dominant focus on conflicts in parliamentary coverage that was found in several studies (Lichter & Amundson, 1994; Morris & Clawson, 2005, 2007), led Lichter & Amundson (1994, p. 139) to conclude that the media coverage of the parliament is "adversarial". However, the media might not generally present political processes as adversarial; rather, a nation's political communication might be shaped by its political culture. As most studies investigate news coverage of parliament in the U.S., further research is needed in order to gain insights into the manner in which political processes are presented in other nations. The purposes of the content analysis are to derive characteristic patterns of media presentations of political processes in Switzerland, to inform the development of stimulus articles for the experimental study, and to provide background information for the findings as regards the relationship between media use, process perceptions, and political support.

Second, *standardized scales to measure process preferences and process perceptions* (Chapter 5) was developed in pilot studies, because little attention has been paid to the conceptualization and measurement of political process preferences and according process perceptions as yet:

> "Scholars have paid less attention to measure public opinion of current processes and, especially, to identify people's preferred procedures. Indeed, survey instruments rarely include questions about what government processes respondents would like to see." (John R. Hibbing & Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, 2001a, p. 147).

This is also found to be the case with respect to the measurement of process perceptions. According to Weatherford (1992, p. 149) the measurement of process attitudes is "scattered and unsystematic". Not only in the U.S. context but also in other national contexts, the measurement of citizens' perceptions of political decision-making processes and/or the measurement of according perceptions is neglected in empirical research. Within the "Beliefs in Government" research program of the European Science Foundation, for example, political preferences were measured in terms of attitudes towards government responsibility for policy issues only (for instance Ardigó, 1995). The items used to measure process preferences and perceptions relate to characteristic patterns of media's presentations of political processes that were found in the content analysis.

Regarding the impact of mass media on process perceptions and political support, the model assumes both short-term and long-term effects. Hence, third, the *short-term effects of media information* on process perceptions and political support are investigated in an experimental study (Chapter 6). This study conceptualizes exposure to specific news articles as situational impact factor. Besides the effects of exposure to selected media articles that contain negative depictions of political decision-making processes, this study looks at the impact of routine media use. Routine media use patterns are considered to be relatively stable and distinctive ways of interacting with the media (McLeod & McDonald, 1985). In the present study, these stable patterns of media use are conceptualized as a surrogate measure for media content. Thus, fourth, the *long-term impact of media information* on process perceptions and political support is investigated based on data from a survey with citizens from the German-speaking part of Switzerland (Chapter 7). Here, the relationship between routine media use and political attitudes is in focus. Thereby, the mechanisms by which the use of political media information affects citizens' political support are explored along with the conditions under which media information about political processes affects political support.
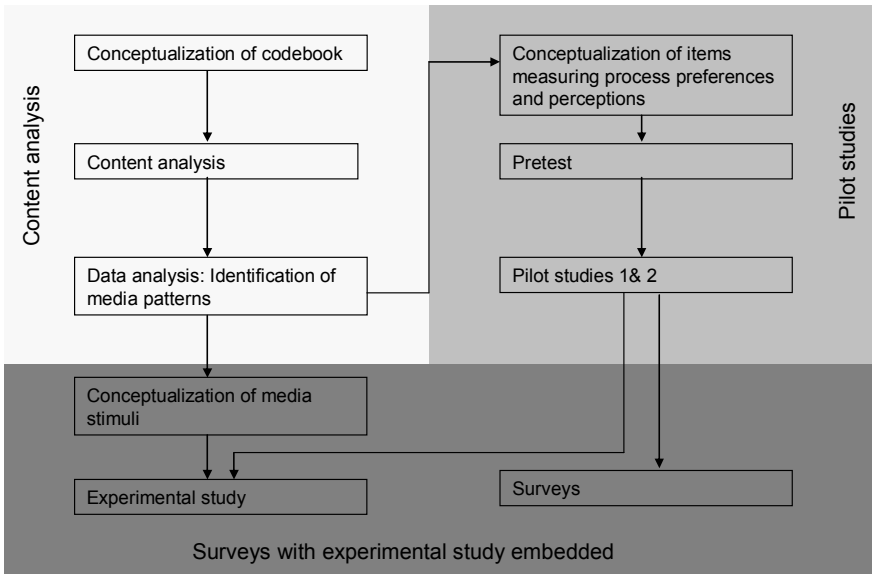
Figure 3.2. Empirical Parts of the Study