

Richard Nixon Presidential Library
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3	37	6/25/1971	<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign	Memo	From Colson to Haldeman RE: Lou Harris's polling data on Ted Kennedy. Handwritten note added by unknown. 4 pgs.
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with
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June 25, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR:

H. R. HALDEMAN

FROM:

CHARLES COLSON

SUBJECT:

Lou Harris Poll

Lou Harris has done an indepth analysis of Ted Kennedy which will be the subject of several Harris columns over the next several weeks. The analysis is based on an indepth survey of 1614 eligible voters conducted between June 9 and 15.

It is Harris' considered judgment that Ted Kennedy, if nominated, will lose the election in a most divisive campaign. Harris says there is a very unusual phenomenon with respect to the Kennedy candidacy poll that doesn't occur with any other Democrat; he arouses bitter hostility or ardent support but rarely any lukewarm reactions.

Eight statements were presented to interviewees. Both answers and then indepth comments were analyzed. Therefore, part of the following is statistical and part of it is Harris' editorial analysis of the comments.

On the strong side, Kennedy comes out 68-20 positive on the question of whether he is a good senator who works hard. Harris feels that he would be hard to attack on the issues or on his record in the Senate.

A second positive point is that he is considered by a 51-34 rating "one of the few politicians willing to take courageous stands on issues that are before the country". Harris points out that this is a two edged sword. People may admire his courage in opposing the Washington police during May Day, for example, but still vote against him.

It does not mean they agree with him. The breakdown of this category goes as follows:

Catholics	60-26
Blacks	77-8
Young	52-34
College Educated	41-47 (a surprise)
Independents	47-40

In the next category, Harris asked a loaded, but highly significant, question: "One day, he should run for President, but he's not ready for it now." The public agreed 58-29. The interpretation is that he is considered a Presidential candidate but is also considered immature and not ready for the Presidency now.

And the most important question of all: "Does he have the personality and leadership qualities a President should have?" 34% say yes, 51 say no. Significantly, he is weakest on this in the West (27 yes, 62 no), among college educated (23-64) and among Independents (28-56). Among youth he is 36-48 (a real surprise). In the East 38-46; Mid-West 38-47; South 31-52; among Catholics 43-42 and among WASP's 26-59. Harris believes from analysing the comments and the raw numbers that this is where Kennedy may be fatally vulnerable. A majority of the people do not believe that he has the necessary qualities of leadership to be President. (A very strong contrast can be drawn with the President).

In response to the question as to whether he has gotten where he is because of his name, 57 agree and 35 disagree.

On the question of whether he is in the same league as his brothers, 48 agree 37 disagree.

In response to the question, "Although he denies it, he is really trying to get the nomination", 44 agree 31 disagree.

Now, the shocker: "Because of what happened at Chappaquiddick, he does not deserve the Presidency". 33 agree, 51 disagree. The breakdown is:

Catholics	21-65
Blacks	12-69
WASP's	43-31
Republicans	50-34
Independents	32-51
Union Members	29-57
Democrats	26-60

This is, of course, a loaded question deliberately designed to find out the "hard core" of people who would vote against Kennedy because of Chappaquiddick. In other words, this question tells that one out of three people and most importantly one in four Democrats believe Chappaquiddick alone disqualifies him. On men and women, the break is about the same except women over 50 seemed to be much stronger on this issue.

Harris' analysis of Kennedy's candidacy obviously should be discounted because he is trying so desperately to please us. He is convinced today that Kennedy cannot be elected, that in a two-way race right now, we would beat him (those figures have not yet been collated) and that in the heat of a campaign his candidacy would generate bitter antagonisms and divide the country, which would cause him to lose ground.

Teddy's strength is in the East and upper mid-West. He is very weak in the South and West. He is strong among Catholics and union members (71% of union members are Catholics and it should be noted). So there is considerable overlap. Harris believes that the religion issue is still latently there; that it is different than 1960, but is still very much a factor.

Harris says that Muskie is dropping somewhat and his basic support is very soft. Humphrey was coming on strong, but Harris' personal opinion is that the revelation of the Kennedy-Johnson papers will kill him and that the next poll will reflect this.

One very surprising conclusion is that Kennedy is not as strong with the young as had been expected and Harris urges that we do not give up on the youth particularly if the war ends well before the next election.

Harris tells me that the gossip among his Democratic friends is that it's now a Muskie-Kennedy race, but Jackson is getting no grass roots appeal and that the McGoverns and Bayh are out of it. He also says that McGovern is clearly a Kennedy "front" and that without any question, Kennedy's people are maneuvering him for the race. Harris feels that the liberal left will give Kennedy an edge over Muskie, particularly in view of the nature of the delegates to the convention.

At the moment, in Harris' opinion, Muskie is a more viable opponent than Kennedy, although Harris feels that if the economic issue shows any upturn at all we'll beat either one of them. He believes that if the economic upturn does not take place, we would still beat Kennedy, for the reasons that the negatives are so strong that he simply cannot command a majority.

As an aside, Harris believes that the economy has in fact turned up but that the public today is more negative on the economy than it has been in the last 18 months. He points out that historically, public confidence in the economy lags behind the actual recovery by 6 months. He said that this is precisely what happened in England. The economy had recovered and Wilson timed the election for the economic recovery. The public attitudes hadn't yet caught up with the facts. If the election had been 2 months later Harris believes Wilson would have been re-elected (he may be just justifying his and Gallup's failure to call it right).

One final point, Harris offers the advice that in a campaign against Teddy, we should project a moderate, calm Nixon against the flaming, hot, divisive Teddy. Teddy should be made to appear strident and immature, lacking in leadership qualities. This is where we must exploit his vulnerability, but not slash back at him. We must rise above him. Harris believes that the doubters will swing to us in large numbers near the end of the campaign, that the doubtful vote rarely goes in large numbers to a candidate who engenders the kind of strong negatives that Kennedy does. Against Muskie we would have a very different situation. His blandness makes it difficult to draw the kind of contrast we could draw with Kennedy.

I know you don't trust Harris; nor do I. I do think he is a better pollster than some of us give him credit for, however, and I am also firmly convinced that he wants desperately to weasel his way in with us and that he honestly, for whatever motive, wants to see us re-elected.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

President's File

(P) ✓

June 25, 1971

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