





Beatley Library: Belien Tadesse and Abdelmalek Hidara

Our exit polling precinct was the Beatley Library, located on 5005 Duke Street, Alexandria VA 22304. *Table 1* below provides a map showing the location of the Beatley library from the GWU Alexandria Education Center.

Table 1			
Location of Beatley Library from the GWU Alexandria Education Center			
A: 1925 Ballenger Ave, Alexandria, VA 22314-6820			
	1	Start out going EAST on BALLENGER AVE toward JOHN CARLYLE AVE.	0.0 mi
	2	Turn LEFT onto JOHN CARLYLE ST. Pass through 1 roundabout.	0.2 mi
	3	Turn LEFT onto DUKE ST/VA-236 W. Continue to follow VA-236 W.	3.1 mi
	4	End at 5005 Duke St Alexandria, VA 22304-2903	
B: 5005 Duke St, Alexandria, VA 22304-2903			
Total Time: 8 minutes Total Distance: 3.31 miles			



General Information

We arrived at the Beatley Library polling station at 9:30 am on November 4, 2008. Upon our arrival we quickly scanned the layout of the polling station, and the various activities taking place in the immediate vicinity of the polling station. The polling station had a spacious parking lot, which was almost full and the line at the entrance of the polling station was moderate. There were a group of people representing the Democratic Party and they were tracking the number of people coming into the precinct. A group of elderly and disabled people were seated close to the entrance of the precinct. The weather was cloudy and cool, and we had a few minutes of a light

sprinkle of rain. After our brief scan, we approached polling officials, introduced ourselves and discussed our objectives for conducting the exit poll. The polling officials gave us permission to conduct our exit poll and informed us that polling at the Beatley Library had started at 6:00 am, with the first people arriving to line up at 4:00 am. By 10:00 am, a total of 893 people had voted. Polling officials also helped us select the most appropriate location to set up. Voters were entering the polling station through the main entrance of the library and exiting from a side door. We setup our GWU banner and exit poll box a few feet from this side door (see picture below).

Belien (on the left) and Abdelmalek (on the right) ready to start exit polling



We started exit polling at 10:00 am. Belien conducted the interviews from 10:00-10:25 am, while Abdelmalek conducted the interviews from 10:30-10:55 am. At the conclusion of our exit polling, we went back to the polling officials to inform them that we had finished and to thank them for their support. Polling officials informed us that between 10:00-11:00 am a total of 263 people had voted. Official polling results show that a total of 2213 people had voted at the Beatley Library from 6:00 am to 7:00 pm. *Table 2* below provides a summary of the number of people that voted at different times of the day.

Time	Number of people voting
6:00 – 10:00 am	893
10:00 – 11:00 am	263
6:00 am – 7:00 pm	2213
<i>Source:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>For the 6:00–11:00 am data, Polling Officials at precinct</i> ▪ <i>For the 6:00 am-7:00 pm data, official results from the City of Alexandria Virginia webpage http://alexandriava.gov/elections/info/default.aspx?id=16628&terms=general%20election%20results</i> 	

Although wait times from 6:00 am to around 9:00 am ranged from 2-3 hours, by 10:00 am wait times had significantly gone down to 15-20 minutes. During our exit polling we were approached by two people who complained about waiting for three hours before they were eventually able to vote. One elderly and disabled person, from the group of elderly and disabled people sitting at the entrance of the polling station, approached us and complained about waiting for over 40 minutes. Once he informed the polling officials, an official eventually came out to help them vote outside the voting station. One person approached us and informed us that the voting machine did not work. We directed her to lawyers that were observing the voting process. A total of three people who had completed our questionnaire approached us and informed us that they appreciated the questions in the questionnaire. They commented on how neutral the questions were and that they were asked not only who they voted for but also why. A total of 10 voters who were not within our sampling interval came up to us and volunteered to complete our questionnaire. Overall, we had a positive experience during the one and a half hours we were at the Beatley Library conducting our exit poll.

Non-Response Summary

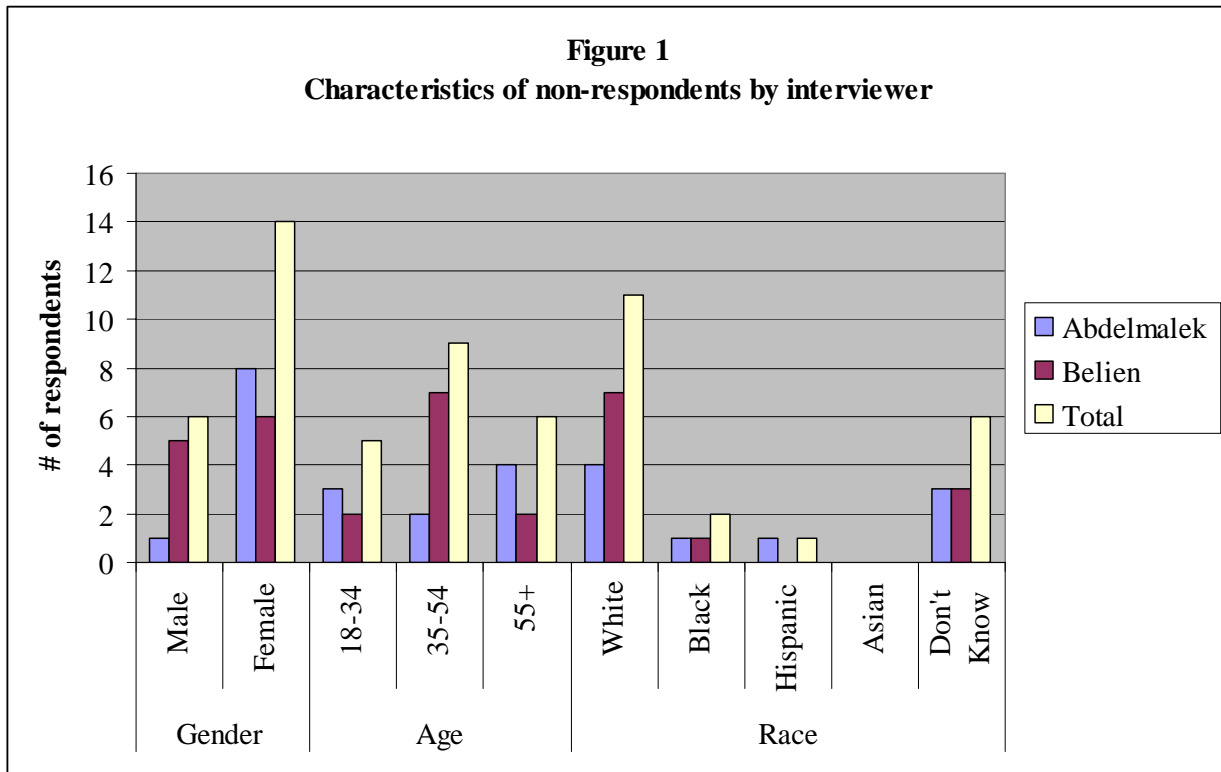
Our sampling interval was 1 in 3 and between the two of us we contacted a total of 65 respondents, with a total of 20 (31%) refusing to complete our questionnaire. Our overall response rate was therefore 69.2%. Belien made contact with a total of 32 respondents, of these 11 refused to complete the survey. Her total response rate was therefore 65.6%. Abdelmalek made contact with a total of 33 respondents, of these 9 refused to complete the survey. His total response rate was therefore 72.7%. *Table 3* below presents a summary of our response rates.

Table 3 Summary of response rates					
Interviewer	# of people who completed the survey	# of people who volunteered & completed	# of people who refused	Total # of people contacted	Response rates
Belien	17 (53%)	4 (13%)	11 (34%)	32	65.6%
Abdelmalek	18 (55%)	6 (18%)	9 (27%)	33	72.7%
Total	35 (54%)	10 (15%)	20 (31%)	65	69.2%

Our t-test below (*Table 4*) shows that at 95% confidence level, there is no statistical difference between the two samples (Belien and Abdelmalek) for the response rate.

Table 4 Response rates by interviewer		
	Belien	Abdelmalek
Average	65.6%	72.7%
Standard Deviation	48.3%	45.2%
Standard Error	8.5%	7.9%
t-test	54%	

Figure 1 below shows the characteristics of non-respondents broken down by interviewer. The total number of non-respondents made up 31% of our sample. Of this, the majority were female (70%), those within the age range of 35 and 54 (45%) and white (55%).



Results

The majority of Obama supporters (83%) were very enthusiastic about their candidate, while 18% of Obama supporters indicated they were somewhat excited about their candidate. Of the 4 respondents that voted for McCain, 75% were very enthusiastic about their candidate, while only 25% were somewhat enthusiastic. The one respondent that voted for another candidate indicated that she was somewhat enthusiastic about her candidate. See *Table 5* below.

	Obama			McCain			Other		
	VE	SE	NE	VE	SE	NE	VE	SE	NE
Belien	15	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Abdelmalek	18	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
% of respondents	83%	18%	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%	100%	0%
<i>Key</i>									
<i>VE: Very Excited</i>			<i>SE: Somewhat Excited</i>			<i>NE: Not at all Excited</i>			

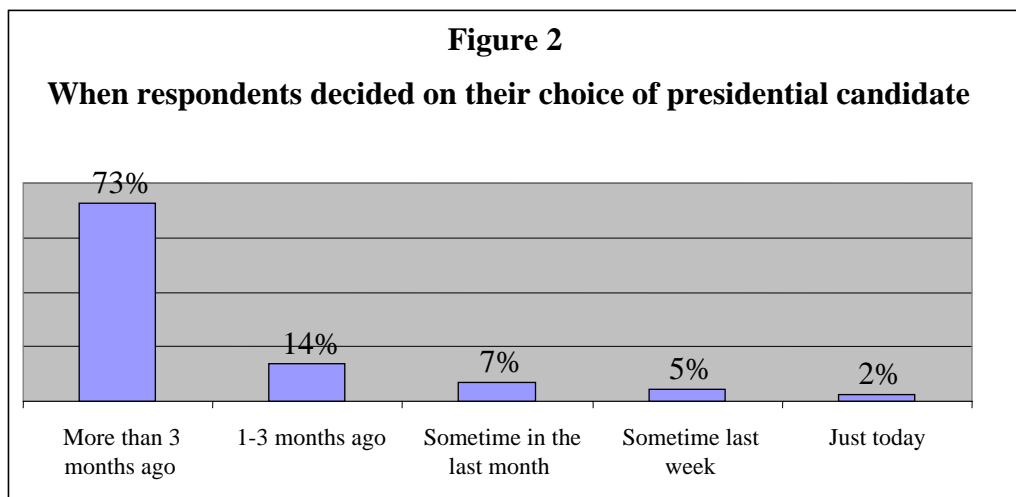
Of the 32 respondents identifying themselves as democrats, only 2 did not vote for the democratic presidential candidate. While all 8 respondents who identified themselves as independent or undeclared, voted for the democratic presidential candidate. The 2 respondents identifying themselves as republicans voted for the republican presidential candidate, while the 1 candidate that identified himself as “other” voted for the republican presidential candidate. See *Table 6* below.

Party Affiliation	Obama	McCain	Other
Democrats	32	1	1
Republicans	0	2	0
Independent/Undeclared	8	0	0
Other	0	1	0

The t-test below (*Table 7*) shows that at 95% confidence level, there is no statistical difference between the two samples (Belien and Abdelmalek) for the percentage of respondents that voted for Obama .

	Belien	Abdelmalek
Average	90.5%	87.5%
Standard Deviation	30.1%	33.8%
Standard Error	6.6%	6.9%
t-test	76%	

The majority of respondents (73%) made their decision on their choice of presidential candidate more than 3 months before the general election. A few (14%) decided 1-3 months ago, while only 2% made their decision on Election Day. See *Figure 2* below.



Twenty five percent (25%) of those who voted for McCain indicated that their candidates pick of Palin as the Vice Presidential (VP) candidate made them more likely to vote for McCain. Fifty percent (50%) of these respondents indicated that Obama’s pick of Biden made them less likely to vote for Obama. On the other hand, 58% of respondents who voted for Obama indicated that the choice of Biden made them more likely to vote for Obama. While, 63% indicated that McCain’s selection of Palin made them less likely to vote for McCain. See *Table 8* below.

	Palin				Biden			
	ML	LL	NE	NR	ML	LL	NE	NR
Voted for McCain	25%	-	75%	-	-	50%	25%	25%
Voted for Obama	-	63%	33%	5%	58%	3%	38%	3%
Voted for another candidate	-	100%	-	-	-	-	100%	-

Key
ML: More likely LL: Less likely NE: No effect NR: No response

The issue top most in the minds of 73% of the respondents was the economy and taxes. This was followed by health care at 64%, foreign policy at 53% and Energy policy at 47%. See *Figure 3* below.

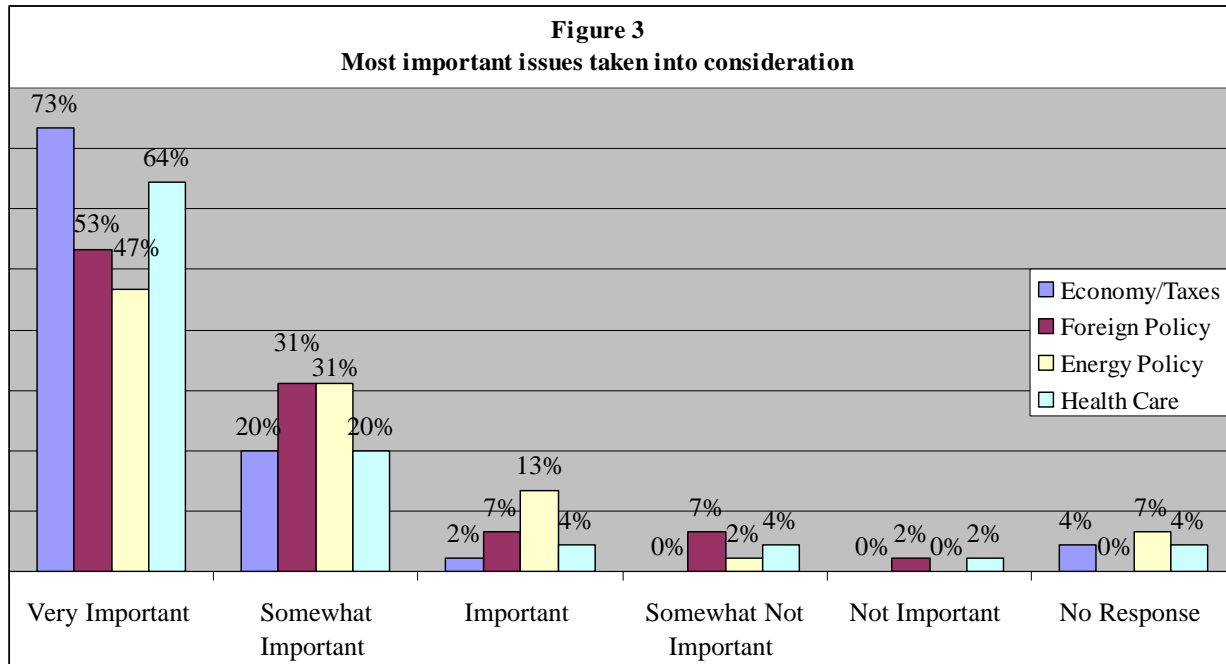


Table 9 below provides general demographic information by the respondents' choice of presidential candidate.

Table 9			
General demographic information by choice of presidential candidate			
	Obama	McCain	Other
Level of Education			
High School/GED or Less	6		
Some College or Associates Degree	8		
Bachelor's Degree	16		1
Masters Degree or Higher	9	4	
No Response	1		
Gender			
Female	20	3	1
Male	19	1	
No Response	1		
Race			
American Indian	1		
Asian	3		
Black	18		
Hispanic/Latino	4	2	
Other	3		
White	11	2	1
Age Range			
18-34	23	1	1
35-54	12	3	
55+	4		
No Response	1		
Income Range			
<\$35,000	12		
\$35,000-\$49,999	7	1	
\$50,000-\$74,999	8	1	1
\$75,000-\$99,999	6		
\$100,000-\$149,999	5	2	
\$150,000	1		
No Response	1		

Reflections on Survey Management

There are a few key lessons that we have learned from this exit polling experience. The first major learning is an understanding of the many aspects of implementing surveys. From defining the purpose of the survey up to the point you are analyzing the data and writing the final report. A systems level understanding of the survey process and how the different parts fit together is essential. For example, ensuring the questionnaire design follows questionnaire design principles and is tested using both cognitive and field testing will ensure that the data generated will meet the objectives of the survey.

A detail oriented approach is also crucial for managing surveys. Every aspect of the survey process has to be planned and articulated explicitly. All aspects of the survey are important in their own right. For example, a survey manager should pay attention to the sampling methodology as well as the introduction statement when approaching respondents.

As a survey manager it is also important to recognize personal biases and make a conscious effort to address them. For example, while we were conducting the exit polling exercise, we noticed our personal bias when approaching our nth person. What kind of people are we comfortable approaching? If the nth person is walking away, what level of effort are you willing to put in to approach the person based on your personal biases?

Overall, this exit polling experience provided us an opportunity to “learn by doing”. While studying the principles of exit polling and survey management in the class setting, we were implementing the principles in this exit polling exercise.