Today began my official research on the interesting Mackey family. Surprisingly, I did not end up with the Mackey family member that I thought I was originally on the quest to investigate and with this discovery I learned something new. What I found out gave me insight into a cultural norm that I was not familiar with, especially regarding this era. What I discovered was that Mrs. Belmont Mackey, the woman whom I intended to research, was not in fact the name of the woman that I was planning to research: this is the name of her husband. During this time the woman took on the husband’s name and was referred to by this name: Mrs. Belmont Davis was how she was addressed in her obituary in the manuscripts (Collections, 33). Therefore, the subject of my research has been changed to Mr. Belmont Mackey for the remainder of the project. This was the only hindrance I experienced in my research and in the process I learned something new and got to learn about an interesting man. To guide this research I came up with two research questions to guide me. These are: What influences may have led Belmont to choose the work that he later does and how might Belmont’s lifestyle be an influence of possible cultural norms that took place then? In the remainder of my research I will discuss these questions in regards to the information that I find and from the inferences that I may make based on this information.

First, looking for the answers that would satisfy my question as to why Mr. Mackey approached the occupation that he did, I looked for trends in the occupation between Belmont’s parents and himself. From the beginning we know that the Mackey family dealt with oppression, occupationally, due to their limits from slavery. What does this mean for future generations of Mackeys? Because the Mackey family members in slavery did not get to attain occupations that would possibly help their economic situation, allowing them to acquire land and money that would bring them from poverty by wealth attainment, they had to find other means to do this. Looking at Mackey’s occupation as a tailor, a low-key occupation, I decided to look into what his father’s occupation was, one of the first Mackey’s to not be first-handly affected by slavery (Collections, 21-23). Without wealth to start from as most people of this time, white individuals,
they had to start from the bottom where they had to find or create their own economic opportunities through personal businesses. This is demonstrated by the father’s business of owning a barber shop and then Belmont, the son, owning a tailoring shop (Collections, 21-23). It is interesting that both father and son had personal service professions, which meant that they were probably placed at the bottom of the social structure (Parrillo, 57). Social structure is how society is structured based on the relationships that members of society have with one another (Parrillo, 57). Belmont may have been held in high esteem due to building a business on his own or doing well in his profession, however, there could have been people that did not respect this work. Also, because Belmont did similar work to his father this may show the culture of poverty theory where there is not much intergenerational change between parent and child, not changing their economic situation (Parrillo, 62). For instance, the son is taking on a similar aspiration that does not easily accumulate wealth over time, therefore, maybe aspirations have to be set a little lower just to have a career. I find it interesting that Ada, one of Belmont’s sisters, obtained an education to become a teacher but I wonder why Belmont did not attain an education as well (Collections, 22). First, either Belmont had the opportunity and was not interested in higher acquired work, and therefore, had a low-key job as his father because he had similar aspirations. Or, secondly, Ada might have received some scholarship for her training that allowed her to attain her career. Also, both Belmont and his father have been labeled “prominent” members of society, I believe that Belmont’s prominence is an effect of his character and possibly his social connections. I am not sure that it is an effect of economic means because Belmont seemed to have a couple of setbacks. First, he lived with his father for a time after having been married (Collection, 23). Secondly, Belmont was mentioned in the Climax-Madisonian for owing taxes (Madisonian, 2). In fact, according to this newspaper, Belmont is one of many African-Americans listed for owed taxes, which under the newspaper’s subtitle “Colored” the list was considerably longer in comparison to the list of white individuals (Madisonian, 2). After having read these couple of pieces of information in regards to Belmont, it seems that he and his family would be at a low social stratification (Parrillo, 58). This economic oppression, whether caused by a culture of poverty or a lack of opportunity, led to this financial insecurity it seems that Belmont dealt with. This also demonstrates the conflict theory which focuses on one’s economic situation or oppression in regards to society.
Secondly and lastly, I looked for evidence that would answer my question of how might Belmont’s lifestyle be an influence of possible cultural norms that took place during his time? One social norm violation that Belle and Belmont caused was when they married unexpectantly, without much a wedding announcement (*Lexington Weekly*, 4). The fact that the newspaper mentions this cultural violation shows just how frowned upon an unexpected marriage could have been. Sadly, I discovered that Belmont’s wife, Belle, died relatively early. This left Belmont as the sole provider and sole guardian of his children. I am not entirely sure of the reasons but possibly Belmont had a lot of responsibility with work and being available to the young children that he and his sister, Ada, thought it best for her to move in to possibly help with the children (Collection, 34). First, with this situation this is not uncommon as this seemed to be a social norm for this time (Parrillo, 91). For instance, men were not seen as being “maternal” enough and it was assumed that only a woman could fill this role, therefore, possibly bringing in Ada. Not only does this help Belmont’s situation with raising 7 children on his own but it also allows their household to uphold the “expectation” of society of that time. It would be unacceptable for children to just be raised by their father, therefore, we could reason that there was societal pressure. Also, this situation represents the functionalist theory which is the belief that everyone has a role in society even if that means inequality (Parrillo, 23). For instance, the role of women here is exemplified: Ada has moved in and is probably helping to raise the children and to take societal pressure off of Belmont. In this situation, the functionalist theory says that a man’s role is to provide, not necessarily to raise the children.
Works Cited


