THE FLAG ON THE COVER, PART ONE : ONCE A SLAVEDRIVER?

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Abstract
This paper is the first in the series ("The flag on the cover") about the relationship between empire colonialism and managerialist thought. In particular, it is about the relationship of slavery to management. It shows how many of the ideas later associated with Taylorism and with Classical Management theory were applied for production for profit on organisations worked by slaves, particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the first half of the 19th century in the USA. More, these ideas were applied by the first substantial cadre of people known as “managers”. The use of ideas associated with management to describe slave organisations is not novel in histories and analyses of slavery. But there is virtually no mention of the role of slave organisations in the history of management. This article shows how slavery contributed to the development of management, and it concludes, demonstrates management’s roots in racism. It also exemplifies the case for a postcolonialist deconstruction of management, in which the role of empire and colonialism in its creation is revealed.

INTRODUCTION

“Throughout the era of slavery the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was considered a thing to be used, not a person to be respected. He was merely a depersonalised cog in a vast plantation machine”

Martin Luther King (1956), in King (1986:5)

The presence and absence of slavery in management

Martin Luther King’s use of mechanistic imagery to describe slavery is not original. As early as 1726 a New England slave owner stated of his plantation: “I must take care to keep all my people to their Duty, to see all the Springs in motion and make everyone draw his equal share to carry the Machine forward” (in Blackburn 1997:341). Throughout slavery mechanistic metaphor was employed to describe slave organisations. The use of imagery associated by management and organisation studies with Taylor and classical management theory is no coincidence, however. This paper demonstrates that it was on slave organisations that what were to become known as the principles of classical management and of Taylorian scientific management, not to mention conscious attempts to manage attitudes, emerged and were first applied to production for profit.

Moreover, this “managing” was carried out by the first significant cadre of managers in history. These managers were sustained in their role by cruel physical coercion and domination, and by racist notions of superiority; and
people who were slaves did not accept their oppression, but resisted. Partly in response to the day to day forms of this resistance, these managers and their advisers developed a range of principles and practices which we would today recognise as managerial. This paper therefore goes beyond the metaphoric image of manager as slavedriver (Van Deburg 1976, Denhardt 1987) to outline a direct historical continuity between slavedriving and managing.

While “revealing” this may be of value in its own right, the argument that slave organisations were managerialist is not particularly new or original – not in the historiography of slavery, that is. As we will see the language, terminology and ideas of management have been widely used to describe the day to day operation of slave organisations. But there is no equivalent consideration of slavery in the management literature. While management has been used to explain the development of slavery, there has been no attempt, until now, to use slavery to explain the development of management. The explanation offered here not only identifies management as a discourse with its roots in slavery, but also in racism. This in turn underlines a more general point, addressed in the conclusion, about the missing postcolonial account of the development of management.

A search of the literature on the history of management confirms that slavery has been, to all intents and purposes, ignored. This is true of potted histories of management found in many texts (eg from Robbins (1994) to Braverman 1975), and also of those which are actually about management history, for example, Wren (1972) Pollard (1968), and most famously Chandler (1977). It is also the case with Phillips’ popular (eg 1993, 1997) and Jacques’ (1996) more critical works which cover the requisite historical era. Throughout, considerations of actual (not metaphorical) slavery are either non-existent, or at best slight. Where slavery is mentioned it is almost invariably to locate slave organisations in a pre-industrial, “ancient” or “feudal” era, and/or to deny their modern significance (eg Chandler 1977, Jacques 1993).

The scale and scope of slavery

That management has ignored slavery is surprising given its extensive scale and scope. Slavery has existed in North America for more of its post-Columbus history than it hasn’t. Over six million captives were taken from Africa to the Americas in the eighteenth century (Blackburn, 1997). In 1860, before the outbreak of the US Civil War there were 384,884 slaveholders in the USA. Most of these slaveholdings were small, but 2,292 were of over 100 slaves (Scarborough 1963). According to Taylor (1999:xxvi), by 1860 “capital investment in slaves in the [US] south – who now numbered close to four million, or close to one third of the population – exceeded the value of all other capital worth including land”. US slaveholders could literally claim that “our people are our greatest asset”.

By the time slavery was abolished in the US in 1865, “modern” management had been established, according the orthodoxy (Chandler 1977) on the US railroads in the 1850s, and F W Taylor was 9 years old. Taylor’s parents were emancipationists, and during his childhood attended meetings addressed by
escaped slaves, although Taylor himself was later cynical about the cause. (Kanigel, 1997). Slavery may have been as Stampp first said in 1956, “a peculiar institution”, but at the time of the US Civil War it was actually spreading, to territory newly colonised by the US in the South West (see Loewen 1996).

Considering the development of New World slavery (ie in the Americas as a whole and not just the USA) until 1800 Blackburn argues that it, inter-alia advanced the pace of capitalist industrialisation in Britain, and conversely that industrial capitalism boosted slavery (1997:572): “[t]he advances of capitalism and industrialism nourished, in fateful combination, the demand for exotic produce and the capacity to meet this large-scale demand through the deployment of slave labour. The slave systems of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century New World had far outstripped those of the earlier mercantilist epoch.”

Others make the same point, only more strongly, with respect to slavery in the US, particularly in the pre-civil war period. That the Southern US slave based economy produced less than that of the North is often taken as proving it was “backward”, and that slavery was some kind of aberration. But Fogel (1989) shows that if the North and South were considered separately, and ranked among countries of the world “the South would stand as the fourth most prosperous country in the world in 1860. The South was more prosperous than France, Germany, Denmark or any of the countries of Europe” (1989:87).

The South was also continuing to industrialize, albeit more slowly than the North on the basis of slave labour; hence while most slave organisations were plantations not all of them were (see Newton and Lewis 1978, Lewis 1979). By the 1850s, industry (as opposed to agriculture) employed approximately 5% of the whole slave population, 200,000 people. This excluded those who worked on industrial processes on plantations, eg on cotton gins or sugar mills (Starobin 1970). “Throughout the eighteenth century, the great plantations of the sugar colonies...were the largest private enterprises of the age, and their owners were among the richest of all men. The same can be said of the cotton plantations in the United States on the eve of the Civil War” (Fogel, 1989:24)

Management claims to be about “the process of getting activities completed efficiently with and through other people” (ie management) through “a systematic arrangement of people to accomplish some specific purpose” (ie organization) (Robbins 1994:3). Yet clearly it has exhibited a determined lack of curiosity about how this was done in set of long established, and economically important organisations, with and through people who were enslaved

**Slavery and the development of industrial discipline**

There are, as Smith (1998) notes in his useful summary, differences about the extent to which slaveholders in the 19th century US were actually an entrepreneurial capitalist class (a position often associated with Fogel and
Engermann (1974), Fogel (1989), and Oakes (1982)) or “a pre-capitalist seigneurial class” (Reidy 1992:31) most famously associated with Genovese (eg 1973, 1975). More recent histories (eg Reidy 1992) take an ambivalent or convergent position. But wherever one looks, a case for examining the contribution of slave organisations to the development found managerialism can be found. Indeed, as we will see Aufhauser tries to draw a direct parallel between the philosophy of George Fitzhugh, which “pre-capitalist” Genovese (1973) presents as the ideal type slaveholder’s worldview, and that of FW Taylor.

According to Blackburn (1997:588):

“The contribution of New World slavery to the evolution of industrial discipline and principles of capitalist rationalisation to the evolution of industrialisation has been neglected....[In] so far as plantation slavery was concerned, the point would be that it embodied some of the principles of productive rational organisation, and that secondly, it did so in such a partial or even contradictory manner that it provoked critical reflection, resistance, and innovation....”

Genovese too sees a drive to instill industrial discipline, albeit one in tension with a desire on the part of slaveowners to sustain a pre-capitalist way of life. For him (1975:286):

“[T]he slaveholders presided over a plantation system that constituted a halfway house between peasant and factory cultures...even the small holders pushed their laborers to modern work discipline. The planters problem came to this: How could they instill factorylike discipline into a working population engaged in a rural system, that for all its tendencies towards modern discipline remained bound to the rhythms of nature and to traditional ideas of work, time and leisure ?”

Those who take the “slavery as capitalism” position see these tensions as having been resolved (and often produce detailed empirical and archival data to support this argument) in favour of modernity. Importantly though, whereas Blackburn, acknowledges Weberian and Foucauldian views of the contribution of the military and the church to the formation of modern organisation(s) (a view repeated in managerial literature), this implication if this position is that slave organisations were different from these other total organisations precisely because they were engaged in profitable production, as an integral part of a capitalist economy. 1

The role of resistance in the development of managerialism

For Blackburn, slavery, and the reaction to it contributed to the development of industrial discipline. Blackburn identifies this “reflection, resistance and innovation” with “the secular thought of the enlightenment which was

1 But in a note in Discipline and Punish Foucault states “I shall choose examples from military, medical, educational and industrial institutions. Other examples might have been taken from colonization, slavery and child rearing” Foucault (1991:314)
important for anti slavery because it explored alternative ways of motivating labourers. It established the argument that modern conditions did not require tied labour” (1997:587) He continues “Not by chance were prominent abolitionists in the forefront of prison reform, factory legislation, and the promotion of public education”. In each area progress was to be potentially doubled edged, entwining empowerment with discipline.”

However, it was not just abolitionist views alone of human motivation, and of organisation more generally which were informed by enlightenment thought; indeed there is clear evidence that it was used to explore ways of maintaining the productive oppression of people who were slaves. Hence, according to the Southern Cultivator of 1846, quoted in Oakes (1982:153)

“No more beautiful picture of human society can be drawn than a well organized plantation, thus governed by the humane principles of reason”

This article does agree with Blackburn that resistance was important. However it sees its most significant forms in relation to the development of managerialism at the intra-organisational level. Thus the resistance which mattered managerially, and which slave managers tried to develop practices to address day to day was not that of famous abolitionists, but that of people who were slaves. The nature of slave resistance is also the focus of intense debates among historians of slavery. Elkins (1959), drawing parallels with concentration camps argued that an “infantilized” slave consciousness was imposed by various oppressive means, such as the forbidding of literacy or any act of individual initiative. This was countered with presentations of various forms of slave resistance and self organisation which suggest that people who were slaves had a clear and sophisticated consciousness of their oppression (eg Webber 1978).

Another controversy developed from the work of Fogel and Engerman (1974), whose case for slavery as rationalist capitalism went so far as to argue, inter alia that people who were slaves bought into a protestant work ethic, that slaves were rarely treated cruelly (for what rational capitalist would intentionally damage his (sic) own property ?). Apologists for the slavery and the Confederate regime found much of comfort in this notwithstanding Fogel and Engerman’s unequivocal opposition to slavery as an institution”. However this representation of the everyday life of slavery was challenged by one which, drawing on an equivalent level of empirical and archival data, detailed both its harshness and cruelty, and the extent of slave resistance (see for example David et al 1976). Fogel’s subsequent work (1989) backed away from his and Engerman’s initial position and appeared to recognise, implicitly at least, the validity of the opposing case; for example, he acknowledges Stampp’s (1976) earlier view that there was almost an “anti-work” ethic, a moral code amongst slaves which made resistance a duty. Ironically, this more nuanced depiction of how this resistance was overcome to achieve

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2 Even today, an Amazon.com reader review claims Fogel and Engerman show “slavery bore little resemblance to the fictional, swamp fever nonsense that is peddled by the NAACP, the liberal media, Steven Speilburg, Oprah Winfrey, and left wing academics” (of whom I am one).
commercial success arguably produces amore intuitively convincing case for slave organisations as modern (Again, see Smith 1998).

Perhaps the most common analysis of slave resistance is that the immense physical and institutional power which slaveholders had, and were prepared to exercise, over people who were slaves meant that resistance was unlikely to take the form of insurrection or absconding because the consequences were so dire. More common were forms of resistance familiar from any account of contemporary organisations – for example, overt or concealed insubordination, sabotage and theft (see for example Genovese(1975). At the same time there was an understandable desire on the part of people who were slaves to improve their circumstances, or at least mitigate the harshness within the slave system, tempering this resistance. Moreover, slaveholders actually needed slaves to work productively and more, as we shall see, take some responsibility for actually running slave organisations, and were reliant on certain skills which slave artisans had been able to develop. Slaveholders also needed in some circumstances to be able to hire their “human property” out to work productively. This meant that people who were slaves did have some power, and were able to negotiate (within limits) their conditions, and that many (if not all) slave owners and managers were conscious of the damage to their own self interest that severe punishment could cause (see Dew 1978 for a case study).

Even here it has recently been argued by Franklin and Schweninger (1999) that the willingness of slaves to risk escape has been understated. Taking the variety of accounts as a whole, though, it can be said that within slave organisations there were shifting patterns of forms and practices of control and resistance. These patterns varied over time (for example Reidy (1992) details how Georgian cotton plantations became more industrialised from the 1830), according to geography (escape was more frequent in states closer to the North), to industrial/agricultural sector (sugar plantations were the first to modernise). Not least they varied according to the propensities of slave owners and managers along a scale of behaviours from almost psychopathic cruelty to paternalism. But it is within this hereogeneity, it there is a general pattern of managerialism emerging thorough this shifting, but developing relationships between control and resistance.

**Discipline, resistance and management – a case study**

An example of the interplay between resistance and control can be seen in Frederick Law Olmsted’s widely cited accounts of his travels in slave states, published in 1861. In one episode, later partially quoted by Fogel (1989), he depicts plantation field work in Texas in “production line” terms:

“[Slaves] are constantly and steadily driven up to their work, and the stupid, plodding machine like manner in which they labour is painful to witness. This was especially the case with the hoe gangs. One of them numbered nearly two hundred hands….moving across the field in parallel lines, with a considerable degree of precision. I repeatedly rode through the lines at a canter, with other horsemen, often coming upon them suddenly, without producing the smallest
change or interruption in the dogged action of the labourers, or causing one of them....to lift an eye” (1996:452).

What Fogel misses however, is Olmsted’s following description of how this level of industrial discipline is sustained by the threat, often acted upon, of severe flogging. Nonetheless, the picture here is one of resistance overcome through industrial discipline.

But earlier on Olmsted introduces an earlier section of his writing with the claim that “…slaves…very frequently cannot be made to do their masters will…[n]ot that they often directly refuse to obey an order, but when they are directed to do anything for which they have a disinclination, they undertake it in such a way that the desired result is sure not to be accomplished”. The section is in Olmsted is entitled “Sogering”, (1996:100), and it is clear that there is a direct parallel with what Taylor was in to describe as “soldiering” (1967:11) in the Principles of Scientific Management in 1911. Olmsted makes no further reference to the term, but goes on to draw parallels between slaves and soldiers and sailors, who find themselves “in a condition in many particulars resembling that of slaves” (1996:101), albeit a condition entered into (according to Olmsted) by voluntary contract, who obey the letter of an instruction but defeat the purpose.

According to Olmsted, whereas military officers were able counter this by appealing to a sense of duty, to patriotism, to esprit de corps and a sense of duty, and to self interest by offering promotion or bounty, none of these worked for slaves. This did not however, as we will see prevent slave managers from trying to use all of these incentives (bar patriotism) all of which it should be noted, are also associated with classical management theory (eg in Morgan 1997). Slave managers also used other organisational principles subsequently associated with classical management theory, and with Taylorian scientific management. Franklin and Schweninger imply that because slave resistance, particularly running away, carried on in the face of these and other efforts to impose managerialism that therefore they did not work in terms of solving the problem of resistance. While this is undoubtedly the case, it is also true, as Reidy (1992) argues, that the attempt to impose managerialism derived from attempts to overcome resistance, just as soldiering was represented by Taylor as something to be overcome by scientific management. For Fogel (1989), the evidence of productivity of slave plantations in itself suggests that resistance, while ever present, was not at a level to threaten profitability. We will go on to consider the attempts to subject this resistance to managerial control. But before we do so, we will address the case for using the terms manager, management, managing and managerial in this context.

MANAGERS ON SLAVE ORGANISATIONS

A case against slavery management

In “Scale and Scope: the Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism” (1990) Chandler argues that in the 1850s “the railways became the pioneers in modern management. Because of the complexities of their operations they formed
overnight the nation’s first managerial enterprises. In the larger railroads...managers without equity in the organisation made operating decisions” (1990:54). The railroads also saw a distinction between line and staff management emerge. Wren (1972) similarly identifies the railways as “pioneers in American management”, and this view is also echoed by Jacques (1996). However, in introducing this analysis Chandler makes an interesting caveat: “…the number of salaried managers in 1850, except for plantation overseers, was still tiny” (1977:53; emphasis added).

Chandler does not in Scale and Scope provide a reason for choosing to ignore this less than tiny group. For this we have to turn to “The Visible Hand” (1977). Here Chandler discusses “the plantation - an ancient form of large scale production”. We have alread seen enough to take issue with “ancient” as a label for a form of production that was expanding in the 1850s, the period in which railway managerialism developed. Chandler does accept that as the first salaried manager in the US, “the plantation overseer was an important person in American economic history. The size of this group (in 1850 overseers numbered 18,859) indicates that many planters did feel that they needed full time assistance to carry out their managerial tasks” (1977:64).

Despite this Chandler locates the overseer in managerial pre-history, for three reasons. First, he claims “the majority of southern planters directly managed the property they owned” (property which, we should remind ourselves, included people), and cites Fogel and Engelman’s argument that many owners of large plantations did not employ a resident salaried overseer, although later the numbers cited by Scarborough, coupled with the reliance on “black” (i.e. slave) drivers are taken as suggesting that managerial help was required. (He ignores their larger, and more famous claim that slave organisations were modern, however). Second he argues that the “plantation workforce was small by current standards. Indeed it was smaller than in contemporary New England cotton mills...[in] 1850 only 1,479 plantations had more than 100 slaves” (1977:64). Third he argues that there was a lack of managerial sophistication on the plantations. According to Chandler, the division of labour was limited, and close supervision of the workforce was a seasonal requirement (“only at those critical periods of planting and harvesting....did the work of the planter the overseer and the drivers become more than routine” (1977:65). Accounting was simple, and in any case book keeping was more likely to be undertaken by the plantation owner. The slave managers main task was, according to Chandler, to “handle” slaves, and this in itself was apparently did not contribute to the development of management.

Much what follows, immediately and in later sections explicitly rebuts Chandler. However, we should be clear that this paper is not an argument with him alone. Far greater issue is taken with those who claim to represent the history of management without mentioning slavery at all.

The number of managers

Taking each of Chandler’s points in turn, we should note that, first, according to Chandler’s source (Scarborough, 1966:11) the number of overseer managers roughly doubled from the 18,859 in 1850 cited by Chandler, to
37,883 in 1860. For Scarborough this increase is explained by plantations merging (bigger plantations, fewer owners, more managers) and the expansion of slavery into the “new” parts of the western US (displacing, we should note, the indigenous population already living there). Notwithstanding the claim of Fogel and Engerman, there was clearly a substantial salaried managerial cadre involved in the management of slave organisations. More, Fogel and Engerman make their point about the scarcity of salaried managers to sustain a controversial argument about the reliance on a high (“ubiquitous” (1974:211) level of non-salaried, ie slave, managers. But even their severest critics argue that a realistic proportion of slaves in managerial roles is 3.3% of the male slave population over 15 (David et al 1976:88), still a substantial overall number (recollecting that there were 4 million slaves in 1860).

There is, we should note, also debate about the extent to which managers who were slaves colluded with slave owners and slaveholders and were equally brutal in their behaviour, and/or sought to mitigate their own personal circumstances and those of their fellow slaves. Summarising, Van Deburg (1979) concludes that slave managers did all these things with different people at different times and places, but that more often than not they aligned themselves with “labor” rather than “management”. He is also clear that the managerial role that they had was largely as first line supervisors, although it is clear from other sources that some owners were prepared to leave their plantations under the absolute management of people who were slaves. (see Starobin 1974:13)

In relation to Chandler’s second point, the relevance of the comparison with current (ie 1970s) standards of size of enterprise is questionable; and when we acknowledge Fogel’s rankings of North and South among nations in the world we might anticipate that in no other place in the world except England would there be found find numbers working in large organisations to compare with those the North. More, while the large plantation workforce may be have been small in comparison, it was nonetheless substantial. Again, according to Chandler’s source, Scarborough, the number of plantations with more than 100 people who were slaves had increased to 2,279 by 1860. Of these 1,980 “employed” 100-200 people; 224 between 200 -300, 74 between 300 - 500, 13 between 500 - 1000; and 1 over 1,000.

Third, while agricultural production was seasonal, only Genovese comes close to Chandler’s view of workloads peaking and troughing according to season. Stampp (1956) describes the intensity of slave labour thorough the year on a cotton plantation. Fogel (1989), on the basis of archival data shows that planters, seeking to ensure maximum labour utilization avoided slack periods through growing secondary crops, scheduling maintenance, construction and indoor work. Campbell (1989:120), analysing slavery in Texas, suggests seasonality meant that slaves worked for their owners for between 10 hours a day in January and 12 hours a day in July. Smith (1997) notes how the increased use of clock and watches on plantations in the 1800s saw slave labourers subject to mechanical time discipline, and more accurate measures and management of their productivity.
They really were managers

Moreover, overseers really were managers. Scarborough, an economic historian consistently describes overseers as managers, and describes what they do as “managing” or “management”. Other historians do the same – for example, Franklin and and Schweninger (1999) have a chapter entitled “managing human property”, and make it clear that this is not a retrospective application of current terminology, but a use of the language of the times: “advice [to overseers] came from the pages of periodicals such as De Bows Review, Southern Cultivator, Farmer’s Register and Farmer and Planter, in articles “On the Management of Slaves”, “The Management of Negroes”, “Judicious Management of the Plantation Force”, “Moral Management of Negroes” and “Management of Slaves.”” (1999:241). The following three uses of variations on management are all telling in their own way:

“It would be better to give double wages and procure a capable man than to take one at half pay and get a half overseer and get your business half managed”

(Southern Cultivator, 1861 in Scarborough 1966:125)

[Visiting a slave worked coal mine] ... I requested those were professing christians to rise. Thirty rose ...I was gratified to learn from the managers that many of them are orderly and consistent in their deportment, and that generally there is marked difference between the conduct of those who profess and those who do not profess religion.”

(Niles Weekly Register, 1843, in Lewis 1979:157)

“Robert, a carpenter by trade, who has managed rice and sawmills”

Advertisement of a slave for sale, Charleston Mercury, December 26, 1853, cited by Wesley 1927, in Newton and Lewis 24

Thus we have Taylorian logic of a fairs day work for a fair days pay in the first quote. In the second there is a relating of protestantism to a work ethic, and the suggestion that religion made people who were slaves more amenable. In the third there is confirmation last that slaves themselves could be managers, but that this still did not preclude them from being bought and sold (indeed it was a marketing feature).

Franklin and Schweninger’s references to sources of “management” tells us what the next section of this paper will confirm, namely, that there was a managerial reflexivity and even a managerialist consciousness associated with slavery. Not only did a substantial cadre of managers exist, but serious consideration was given to what it meant to be a manager, and how the manager should and should not operate. Oakes (1982) cautions us to note that the circulation of slave management journals was low; and that evidence of slaveholders application of theory is mixed. He also argues that there was a gap between the journals’ case for rational management and the human dimensions of organisation which were traditionally handled by a blend of
paternalism and punishment. Reidy (1982) subsequently shows however, that application of this theory was one of the drivers of the growth and restructuring of Georgian plantations, and that slaveholders were quite capable of using science, punishment and paternalism together. Either way, we have established that there was a substantial group of managers in slave organisations, who where thought of the time as managers. When we come to consider the managerial practices which this cadre was exhorted to follow and the principles which sustained them, we counter Chandler’s third claim, and are able to demonstrate a considerable degree of modern managerial sophistication existed.

MANAGEMENT IN SLAVE ORGANISATIONS

This demonstration is based on the evidence that there is that nearly every aspect of the principles of Taylorian scientific management and classical management theory can be found to have been applied in slave organisations, or to have been proposed in the slave management literature. The consideration of both Taylor and classical management is important, because although both are associated with mechanistic views of organisation, classical management (as we have noted in relation to Olmsted above) overtly addresses the management of attitude as well as behaviour. But, not surprisingly, given the attitudinal issues which might be anticipated with a captive coerced workforce, attempts to manage attitude did actually go beyond those associated with classical management, as the final part of this section shows.

Taylorism before Taylor

Brion-Davis (1998), reviewing Blackburn, suggests that Ellis’s (1997) biography of Thomas Jefferson, third US President, portrays him as “an efficiency expert, a kind of proto-Frederick Winslow Taylor”. Jefferson established a slave run nail factory on his estate at Monticello in 1794. “Every morning except Sunday [Jefferson] walked over to the nailery, to weigh out the nail rod for each worker, then returned at dusk to weigh the nails each had made and calculate how much had been wasted by the most and least efficient workers” (Ellis 1997:167). He continues to describe the “blazing forges and sweating black boys arranged along an assembly line of hammers and anvils…”

Despite acknowledging this proto-Taylorism, Brion-Davis takes Blackburn’s argument with respect to abolitionists and industrial discipline further, making a specific link between it and Taylorism:

“English and American Quakers who were in the vanguard of the abolition movement also led the way in devising and imposing newer forms of labour discipline. There is a profound historical irony in the fact that “Speedy Fred Taylor”, our century’s exponent of efficiency and the first to dispossess workers of all control of the workplace was born of Quaker parents in Germantown, Pennsylvania, the site in 1688 of the world’s first great petition against human bondage” (51).
The danger in this statement is that it underplays just how “Taylorist” “proto-Taylorist” slave organisations were. The irony is that long before Taylor, workers who were slaves had been “dispossessed of control over the workplace”, and subject to “newer forms of labour discipline”. Hence even in the late seventeenth century in the British Caribbean “The plantation was a total environment in which lives of the captive workforce could be bent unremittingly to maximise output” (Blackburn 1997:260). In the more recent era Oakes (1982) borrows from Stampp to summarise plantation organisation in a chapter entitled “factories in the fields”; and Reidy, (1992:38) talking of the growth of larger scale Georgian plantations in the 1830s, which involved the acquisition of both smaller plantations and slaves used to working on them talks of a “campaign to reshape the relations of production” in which “[s]cientific management” – of seeds, soils, animals, implements and techniques as well as labourers provided the framework”, although he does not describe what it involves. But it is already clear that proto-Taylorianism which Jefferson brought to the nailery was not innovative, but a transfer of the approach which was being developed in the plantation fields to manufacture

Aufhauser (1975), as we have noted, goes so far as to draw direct parallels between an ideal type slavers worldview and Taylor’s principles. However his presentation of these principles is at best quirky (summarised as (a) “simple routine” (b) “task work design” (c) “job enrichment” and (d) “physical coercion”(1975:815). His view that the slaver worldview and Taylorism have physical coercion in common for example is based on the argument that “the lash poses the same kind of threat as firing does to the free worker”. This is a long way from Taylor. Without writing him off completely, the evidence now available (which unlike Aufhauser is taken from more than one source) means a much stronger case can be made.

Thus a key distinguishing feature of Taylor, the application of scientific method to the labour process, evident in Jefferson’s measuring of individual output and scrap, was long established in slave organisations. As early as the mid 18th century, Blackburn (1997:463) talks of “attempts to introduce a form of work study calibrating what could be extracted from each slave” and goes on to cite a planter’s diary:

“as to all work I lay down this rule. My overseers then their foremen close for one day in every job; and deducting of that 1/5 of that days work, he ought every other day keep up to that. Therefore by dividing every gang into good, middling and indifferent hands, one person out of each is to watched for 1 day’s work; and all of the same division must be kept to his proportion”

Pre-civil war, Fogel (1989:28) notes what was a proto-Hawthornist experiment: “It was product per worker, not the number of hours [worked] that planters sought to maximise... One planter, for example experimented with the number and frequency of rest breaks...and reached the conclusion that, in addition to breakfast and lunch breaks, a five minute rest in every hour increased productivity”. Another set of plantation rules state (Scarborough,1966:69): “[the overseer] must attend particularly to all experiments instituted by the Employer, conduct them faithfully & report regularly and correctly. Some overseers defeat important experiments by
carelessness or wilfulness.” Wesley (1978) notes widely reported 1850s experiments at the Saluda cotton mill in the 1850s, which found that found that slave rather than free labour resulted in a thirty percent cost saving.

**Classical management in slave organisations**

There was also a systematic approach to the division of labour, which is associated both with Taylor and classical management more generally. Fogel argues that sugar production saw developments in industrial discipline, “partly because sugar production lent itself to a minute division of labor, partly because of the invention of the gang systems, which provided a powerful instrument for the supervision and control of labour, and partly because of the extraordinary degree of force that planters were allowed to bring to bear on enslaved black labor”; and it is here in the text that he alludes to the Olmsted quotation cited above. Although a small proportion of plantations were engaged in sugar production in the US. The gang system spread to other crops (with the notable exception of rice), and for some (Fogel 1989, Reidy 1992) it is the source economic success. Reidy, discussing cotton adds: “in short, the gang system of labour, backed by the lash, proved an excellent mechanism for the subordinating large numbers of slaves to the will of a small number of masters” (1992:37).

The gang system itself required a complex division of labour. First, there was that between those slaves who worked in gangs, and those who did not, eg artisans, or managers. On sugar and cotton plantations gangs were usually of 10 to 20 people (but sometimes far larger) within which again there was an internal division of labour “which not only assigned every member... to a precise task but simultaneously made his or her performance dependent on the actions of the others”. Thus on one plantation, in which the planting gang was divided into three classes (in a Taylorian selection of the best person for the job), according to a contemporary account (Fogel 1989:27):

“1st the best hands, embracing those of good judgement and quick motion. 2nd those of the weakest and most inefficient class. 3rd the second class of hoe hands. Thus classified, the first class with run ahead and open a small hole about seven to ten inches apart, into which the second class drop from four to five cotton seed, and the third class follow and cover with a rake”.

Elsewhere, work was divided between gangs, in a way designed to produce inter-gang dependencies and tensions; for example (again, Fogel 1989:27):

“hoe gangs chopped out the feeds that surrounded the cotton plants as well as excessive sprouts. The plow gangs followed behind, stirring the soil near the rows of cotton plants and tossing it back around the plants. Thus the hoe and plow gangs each put the other under an assembly line type of pressure. The hoeing had to be completed in time to permit the plow hands to carry out their tasks. At the same time the progress of the hoeing, which entailed lighter labour than the plowing, set a pace for the plow gang. The drivers or overseers moved back and forth between the two gangs, exhorting and prodding each to keep up with the pace of the other. Where and when interdependence was harder to achieve for example, in cotton picking, people were divided into
competing gangs and daily and weekly bonuses were offered to the gang that picked the most.

The use of gangs also developed what Blackburn (1997:355) identifies as an "esprit de corps" in which effort and commitment for one’s peers was manipulated for slave owners ends; although the term Chandler uses (1977:65) to describe gang labour – “teamwork” – is of more current, if unwitting, resonance.

As Aufhauser argues, that management of slave plantations, and other organisations was “routine”, as Chandler has it, was by design. For example, overseers were told “[t]wo leading principles are endeavored to be acted upon... 1st to reduce everything to system 2nd introduce daily accountabiliy in every department”. (Southern Agriculturist, 1833, in Starobin 1970:91); and “…arrangement and regularity form the great secret of doing things well, you must therefore as far as possible have everthing done to fixed rule.” (n.d. in Scarborough, 1996:74). This emphasis on regularity and routine, the division of labour, and rules was widespread (see also Stampp, 1956). Indeed, Oakes (1982:154) goes so far as to argue that “before punishment and persuasion, rules were the primary means of maintaining order on the ideal plantation”. He also goes on to show how these rules extended to living conditions, anticipating Quaker social reform.

But these were not the only practices later associated with classical management found in the management of slave organisations. There was a debate over unity of command and centralisation of authority revolving around the extent to which the owners should involve themselves in the day to day management of plantations: “To make the overseer responsible for the management of the plantation he must have control of it otherwise he cannot be responsible, because no man, is nor should be responsible for the acts of another”(Southern Cultivator 1854 in Scarborough 1966:118). Overseers were told in 1840 “[h]e will be expected to give his opinions on all matters....the reasons for them, but if they are not adopted by the Employer, he must obey the instructions given, implicitly, thoroughly, and with a sincere desire to produce the best result” (Scarborough 1966:69).

Both Scarborough and Oakes talk of a chain of command. For Oakes (1982:154), “all were subservient to those immediately above them, and at each level of bureaucracy, duties and responsibilities were explicitly defined. On large highly organised plantations there might be separate rules for watchmen, truck-minders, nurses, cooks as well as drivers, overseers and field hands. The chain of command went upwards from drivers to overseers to masters. Always there was obedience”. There was also ongoing consideration of the optimum span of control. Hence “for any thing but corn and cotton 10 -20 workers are as many as any common white man can attend to” (Hammond, 1847 in Scarborough 1966:9). Scarborough continues, however, “a ratio of fifty slaves to one overseer was considered the most efficient unit in the plantation South”.

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3 Which Blackburn notes, sometimes counterproductively from the slavers point of view, erupted in insurrection
It is even possible to distinguish, just, between line and staff. A visitor to a Louisiana sugar estate of 6 plantations noted that it employed six overseers and a general agent, plus, we might assume managers who were slaves; and “staff” employees covering a traditional managerial trinity - financial resources (a book-keeper) literal “human resources” (two physicians and a preacher) and plant (a head carpenter, a tinner and a ditcher). The visitor added “Every thing moves on systematically, and with the discipline of a regular trained army” (Stampp 1956: 43)

Not only were the basic organisational principles of classical management present, but also those aimed at coupling behaviour with some, at least, psychological acceptance of the managerial regime. For example, the “discipline: obedience, application, energy, behavior and outward marks of respect in accordance with agreed rules and customs; subordination of individual interest to general interest through firmness, example, fair agreements and constant supervision; equity, based on kindness and justice, to encourage personnel in their duties…..” (Morgan 1997:19) can clearly be identified.

For Oakes, the overarching purpose of all plantation management – rules, division of labour, chain of command - was to achieve this obedience. Slaveowners were constantly exhorted to treat their property with “justice”. Hence, another set of rules for overseers states “If you punish only according to justice & reason, with uniformity, you can never be too severe & will be the more respected for it,even by those who suffer”. Scarborough (1966:74), who continues “the two principles of slave management universally emphasised…were a firm discipline, tempered with kindness, and a uniform, impartially administered system of justice. It can never be forgotten, though, that even where kind treatment was urged, it was in the context of bondage and control, and that cruelty was itself systematised (Reidy, 1992:37): “In placing jurisdiction over field operations in the hands of overseers, planters encouraged the use of the lash, the prime mover of slaves working in gangs. Cracking whips constantly punctuated field labour, but slaves suffered more serious whippings – often in the form of “settlements” at the end of the day – for falling short of quotas, losing or damaging tools and injuring animals. Defiance of plantation rules, such as keeping cabins clean met the same kind and degree of punishment”.

With respect to constant supervision, George Washington, exhorted his overseer thus in a letter which was widely cited in plantation management manuals (Scarborough 1966:73)

“I do in explicit terms, enjoin it upon you to remain constantly at home...and to be constantly with your people when there. There is no other sure way of getting work well done, and quietly by negroes; for when an overseers back is turned most of them will slight their work, or be idle altogether; in which case correction cannot retrieve either, but often produces evils which are worse
than the disease. Nor is there any other mode than this to prevent thieving and other disorders.”

Washington’s ambivalence about the limitations of punishment was manifest more generally in slavers’ use reward as well as, and instead of threat. There was, for example, the overwork system, in which high productivity was rewarded financially, or with food or clothing. This, as Lewis (1979:119) puts it “attempted to make the industrial slave a disciplined and productive worker, by merging his physical and economic interests with the employer. In turn this system would reduce the need for physical coercion, which might to more harm than good to....production goals. At the same time Starobin (1970) warns against seeing overwork as quasi-wage labour, and thus a step towards emancipation. Overwork was primarily about maintaining control, and cash and other incentives were long and widely used by slave owners who were to never emancipate their slaves. One such was Jefferson: a visitor to his nailery in the late 1790’s commented how “[h]e animates [slaves] by rewards and distinctions” (Lewis, 1979:118).

Managing attitude change

But managers went beyond the prescriptions later associated with classical management to achieve compliance and control of people who were slaves. A range of processes were employed to inculcate amenable and manageable attitudes. For Stampp (1972: 144) the many of the rules we have cited were part of systematic attempt to achieve “ideal slaves, the models had in mind as they trained and governed their workers”.

The first step was to establish strict discipline, establishing the knowledge that the slave was subordinate “the slave should know that his master is to govern absolutely, and he is to be obey implicitly... he is never for a moment to exercise either his will or his judgment in opposition to a positive order” (Southern Cultivator 1846, in Stampp, 1972:145). The second step was to implant in the slaves “a consciousness of personal inferiority”; “they had to feel that that their African ancestry tainted them”. The third step was to “awe [slaves] with a sense of the master’s power. Stampp cites a slave mistress letter of 1835 stating that it was essential “to make them stand in fear”. The fourth was to persuade people who were slaves to take an interest in the master’s enterprise, precisely to subordinate individual to collective aims. According to a planter in 1837 “The master should make it his business to show his slaves, that the advancement of his individual interest is at the same time an advancement of theirs. Once they feel this it will require but little compulsion to make them act as it becomes them”. The final step was to impress slaves with their helplessness, to create a “habit of perfect dependence on their masters” (1972: 145-147).

Webber agrees that slave owners tried to make slaves “internalize the values and norms of the perfect slaves” (1978:245), and states that plantation organisation and slave training was with this ideal, described thus, in mind:

“The model slave would be: conscious of his own innate inferiority as a member of “the Negroid race”; overflowing with awe, respect, and childlike
affection for the planter and his family; cheerfully mindful of the formalities of plantation etiquette and of the rules and regulations regarding slave behavior; firmly convinced of the morality of slavery and of the happy formation of his own slavehood, and that of his fellow slaves in a plantation setting that represented “for his kind” “the best of all possible worlds.”

Fogel (1989) adds that to “pave the way for indoctrination”, masters cut off all access to written materials, and some restricted opportunities become literate. According to Reidy (1992) and to Oakes (1982), the use of slaves in managerial roles, particularly as the Civil War loomed, came to be heavily criticised for developing encouraging a self awareness of slaves capacities. Other approaches to limiting slave consciousness including a banning of African languages, songs and dances, limiting contact with people off the plantation, and the prohibition of secret or unsupervised meetings.

Alongside these “secular” (Webber:1982) attempts to mold consciousness were those based on Christianity. Fogel (1989), Stampp and Webber are among those who confirm what has already been implied here about the uses of religion. According to Reidy (1992:45), the largest Georgian planters in the 1830s, “perceiving the need to foil abolitionist criticism of their own Christianity and to provide an ideological glue to the plantation order…made a concerted effort to proselytize slaves”. Stampp (1972:159) cites a pamphlet for Slaveowners from 1845 illustrating “the practical working and wholesome effects of religious instruction when properly and judiciously imparted to our negro peasantry”, arguing for “[p]recepts that inculcated good will, forbearance, and forgiveness; that enjoin meekness under evils; that demand truth and faithfulness under all circumstances; a teaching that sets before men a righteous judgement, and happiness or misery in the life to come, according to our course of faith and practice in the life that is now must...change the general character of the person thus taught”.

But whereas some, like Elkins sees these attempts as largely successful others, like Oakes and Webber disagree. Both suggest that, for example, people who were slaves became adept at behaving in the child like manner that the stereotype demanded while masking their true feelings and attitudes; and that the ongoing manifestations of resistance support this case. Webber and Campbell show how slaves continually challenged, amongst themselves, masters’ secular and religious ethics, and were able to place their own construction on the religious messages they were sent, and Campbell provides compelling evidence, that irrespective of the “kindness” of their treatment, and of how they actually behaved “most slaves lived daily with the desire for freedom as part of their emotional make up” (1989:188).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The temptation in considering these attempts to manage attitudes is to draw parallels with more recent management thought on the subject, and on the management of culture. A similar temptation has in fact existed throughout the writing of this article, namely to use the terms and concepts associated with management and organisation studies, orthodox and critical, to analyse and describe slave organisations. Of course this has been what the linking of slave
organisation and Taylorism, classical management, and implicitly the management of attitude change, has done, partially at least. But the overall aim has been to explore what an understanding of slavery and slave organisations tells us about management, and about management and organisation studies, not the other way round. This temptation, but also this aim carries through into this conclusion.

Thus we might start examining what the case for slave organisations as the birthplace of management tells us about the labour process. There are parallels, for example between the analyses of the labour process described here and those suggested by Braverman (1974); but what is missing here, and what challenges Braverman is the absence of wage labour, for Braverman (and for those who challenge the “slavery as capitalism thesis) a defining component of the capitalist labour process. Taking the labour process theme further, it is also tempting to explore the implications of this article for the constructions of construction of subjectivity (see most recently Parker, 1999). In passing on this theme we might note the historically circuitous route through which Foucauldian analyses of total organisations such as asylums and prisons have come to be applied to modern organisations (eg by Townley 1994), instead of the more direct line hinted at by the footnote in discipline and punish. It is also tempting to take on the claims that the need for cross cultural management is “new”, and that “management theory” is culture bound (eg in Adler. This article suggests that the control of people from a different cultural background was the whole point of management theory in the first place.

Management’s racist roots

But were any of these themes to be taken up, there would still be a risk of suborning the history of slavery to management and organisation studies, by drawing it in to debates within bits of the field. But, with our initial aim in mind there are two hitherto unacknowledged and perhaps bigger lessons. The first shows the dangers of using a managerialist framework (ie Taylorism and classical management) to construct our understanding of the past. It also relates to a principle of Taylorism that we have not directly addressed, the separation of conception from execution. The cruelty of slavery has been made clear in this article. But the racism which every non-management historian cited in this article agrees sustained it, and which also facilitated the development of managerialism has only been alluded to. This is because there is no overt parallel in Taylorism or in classical management. But when we look, it is there most, apparently in the first principle of Taylorism, which we have not addressed so far, summarised thus by Morgan (1997:23) “shift all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker. Managers should do all the think relating to the planning and design of work, leaving workers with the task of implementation”.

Oakes says, “[t]he ideal plantation was a model of efficiency. Its premise was black inferiority...”. The construction of the childlike ideal slave with an innate inferiority exemplified in the earlier quote from Webber provided the slave manager with a perceived justification for demanding obedience, for the prescription of rules, and the giving of orders. This construction was supported
by racist pseudo-science, and institutionalized in law, in which black people were defined as intellectually inferior. “We believe the negro to belong to an inferior race…we teach them that they are slaves…that to the white face belongs control, and to the black obedience”, wrote one planter in 1857 (Oakes, 1982:154). In short it was this assumption of inferiority which gave slave managers their assumed legitimacy, and right to do all the thinking on the organisation of work (and of life around it). In short, it gave them what we would now call the right to manage. Without this right there would have been none of the development of managerialism that we discuss here. If we accept that there is some continuity as well as some similarity between slave managerialism, and Taylorism and classical management then management is at root racist.

Jacques (1996:81) points out Taylor’s “childlike”, “infantilized” representation of the pig-iron shifter Schmidt in “The Principles of Scientific Management”. Schmidt, whose real name, Kanigel tells us, was Henry Noll, and who was literate, a volunteer fireman, able to buy a plot of land and build a house which stood until 1960 outside working hours, is famously represented by Taylor in a dialogue thus (Taylor 1967:45):

“Schmidt, are you high priced man ?”

“Vell, I don’t know vat you mean”

“Oh yes you do. What I want to know is whether you are a high priced man or not”

“Vell I don’t know vat you mean”

“Oh come now answer my questions. What I want to find out is whether you are a high priced man or one of these cheap fellows here. What I want to find out is whether you want to earn $1.85 a day or whether you are satisfied with $1.15, just the same as all those cheap fellows are getting”

“Did I vant $1.85 a day ? Vas dot a high priced man ? Vell yes I vas a high priced man…”

And so on. Jacques rightly notes that this infantilized representation can be tracked back to the early days of US slavery. What we might add now is the parallel between the representation of Schmidt and the idealised, childlike slave, and the purpose this idealisation serves in creating a managerialist subject. Comparisons with slave/master dialogues suggest Taylor actually writes in an infantilizing slavers’ genre. A slaver’s account of plantation life describes a black foreman’s behaviour under threat of flood thus:

“Marster! Marster!” he called up to the big house; “For Gawd’s sake Marster, come ! De levee done broke and de water’s runnin’ ’cross de turn row in de upper fiel’ jes’ dis side de gin ! Oh Gawd A’mighty ! Oh Gawd A’mighty!” .

The slaveowner urges the slave to “be a man” and commands the slaves to put things to rights. They “gathered around him in their helplessness, trusting
implicitly in his judgement, receiving his rapid comprehensive orders”. The slave foreman tells his owner that it won’t happen again, concluding “...hit aint er gwine ter ketch me wid by breeches down no mo’” (in Van Deburg, 1979:49).

**Extending a post-colonialist analysis of management**

Jacques suggests that what is going on in this bit of Taylor is a constitution of management’s Other; further on, and considering a later particular post-colonial epoch, he argues for a post-colonialist analysis of international management. This article, revealing a less heroic start to management than the frontier extending (see Prasad P (1997)) railroads, suggests that we should, building on the work of Holvino (1996) and Prasad A (1997), locate the development of management *per se* in a post-colonialist understanding, and suggest that its construction of Other was, to say the least already well rehearsed. Postcolonialism is as paradoxical and difficult an idea to understand as that other “post”, postmodernism; and like post-modernism it can be, and often is can be about epistemology more than epoch (sometimes as postcolonialism as much as post-colonialism).

Seth et al (1998) provide one of the clearest explanations of postcolonialism (but see also Prasad A, 1997). They state that the postcolonialism has directed its... critical antagonism towards the universalising knowledge claims of ‘western civilization’; its “protestations against ‘major’ knowledges and on behalf of ‘minor’/deterritorialised knowledges” (1998:8). Unlike Holvino (1996), this article does not address these deterritorialised knowledges in management. But its deconstruction of the managerialist ‘major’ knowledge is postcolonialist, in that it describes that knowledge’s debt to empire and colonialism, though which (Seth et al, 1998:7):

“The countries of the West ruled the peoples of the non-Western world. Their political dominance had been secured and was underwritten by coercive means...It was further underwritten by narratives of improvement, of civilising mission and the white man’s burden, which were secured in systems of knowledge which made sense of these narratives, and were in turn shaped by them.”

The six million transported from Africa to the Americas, and their four million slave immediate descendents in the pre-civil war US were some of these peoples; and at its birth managerialism was one of these systems of knowledge. Seth et al continue:“...just as the colonies...” (and we might add colonised people who were slaves) “...were subjected to governance, exploitation and other processes of transformation, the colonisers too were transformed”. This transformation was not purely economic; “…the administration and exploitation of the colonies...” (...and in this case, the transported colonised...) “... shaped the west’s sense of self...” (not least, we add, through the construction of racialised Others), “…and created new forms and regimes of knowledge. A huge array of data was collected, to enable rule and exploitation....and whole new disciplines were born, such as anthropology”.

21
The case here, then, is that management is another such discipline. Management is one of the “new ways of perceiving, organising, representing and acting upon the world which we designate as ‘modern’ [which] owed as much to the colonial encounter as they did to the industrial revolution, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment”. The question is, particularly given the entrepreneurialism of management and organisation studies on one hand, and that postcolonialism in the academy is now “respectable, popular, publishable and pedagogically secure” (Seth et al 1998:9) on the other, why has this never been acknowledged before?
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