

# Matthew Holden Jr.: Between Theory and Practice

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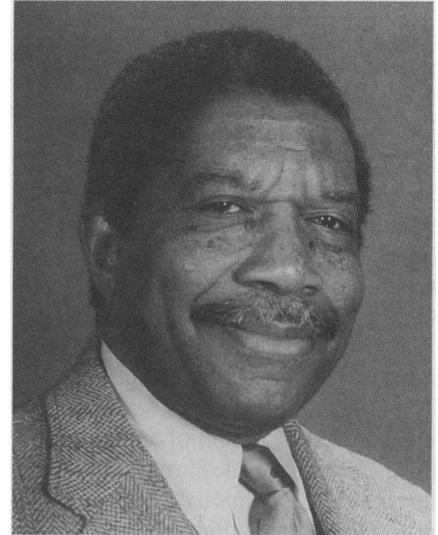
Matthew Holden is a man who stands astride what, in the late twentieth century, are often thought to be contradictions. He has been, at different times in his life, both a serious, theoretically informed scholar and public official. Insistent upon the centrality to politics of the exercise of power and the maintenance of order, he is at the same time a serious, believing Christian. A modern, behaviorally driven political scientist, he is also a student of history, both of politics and the discipline itself. Finally, while he has done cutting-edge work on race in the American political order, he is also insistent upon placing this problem within the universal questions of politics. It is the unique characteristic of the man who we honor this year as the president of the American Political Science Association that, in his skillful and rigorous hands, these seeming contradictions do not seem like contradictions at all.

Between 1963 (the year of his first major publication, "Litigation and the Political Order") and 1997 (the year of his most recent publication, "Toward a Political Science of American History") Matthew Holden Jr. has worked both inside and outside of the discipline. Holden is the Henry L. and Grace M. Doherty Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia and the president-elect of the American Political Science Association. The scope of his research and teaching is impressive, spanning the fields of urban politics, metropolitics, decision-making theory (especially as it relates to the regulatory process), the politics of race and ethnicity, and general pub-

lic administration theory. In addition to his scholarship and teaching, Holden has held a number of positions in the discipline that not only reflect his commitment to the profession, but also reflect the high esteem in which he is held by his colleagues. Outside of the academy, Holden has worked as a consultant and as a public servant. From these experiences, Holden has typically gathered raw material that he has then refined and explicated in the form of penetrating scholarship. Careful consideration of his work as a scholar and teacher, his service to the discipline, and his contributions as a public official provide us with some understanding of why he is characterized in this profile as both a theorist and a practicing political scientist.

Professor Holden was born in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, an all-black town founded in 1887 by ex-slaves. One of the founders of this town was one Isaiah T. Montgomery, an archetypal practitioner of "clientage" politics that Holden subjected to insightful treatment in his classic, *The Politics of the Black "Nation"* (1973, chap. 2). With the push of a lack of economic opportunity in Mississippi and the pull of an economy stimulated by World War II, the Holden family migrated to Chicago in 1944. It was in Chicago that Holden's interest in political life was stimulated. Relatives frequently discussed political issues, and young Matthew had the opportunity to meet and "talk politics" with the legendary African-American Ward Committeeman William Dawson.

After a brief stint at the University of Chicago, in 1950 Holden entered Roosevelt University in Chi-



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cago and earned his baccalaureate degree in political science (with a minor in history) in 1952. While he once aspired to go to law school, he chose instead to pursue a career as a university professor for, as he has told one of his biographers, college teaching "was an occupation with the least racial impedimenta" (Willie 1986, 67–68). In the fall of 1952 he entered Northwestern University to pursue an M.A. degree in political science. In both the summers of 1954 and 1955, with the help of one of his mentors at Northwestern, Charles S. Hyneman, Holden worked as a research associate with the Ohio Legislative Service Commission. He completed the M.A. in 1956, and was drafted into the U.S. Army that same year. During this two-year military tour, he saw duty in Korea.

Following his military experience, Holden decided to resume his pursuit of a career as a university-based political scientist. With limited funds and no immediate prospects for departmental or university scholarships, Holden returned to Ohio, after having successfully passed a

state-level civil service examination and worked first as a research assistant on government organization with the Cleveland Metropolitan Services Commission (from 1957–58), and then as a staff consultant with the Cuyahoga Charter Commission. Between these two jobs, he returned to Northwestern University to enter the Ph.D. program in political science studying, principally, under Charles Hyneman and Norton Long. These experiences in Cleveland proved to be important, for they contributed to the selection of his dissertation topic. His doctoral dissertation, “Decision-Making on a Metropolitan Government Proposition: The Case of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, 1958–59,” was completed in 1961. Long was Holden’s dissertation director and “intellectual Godfather.” The completion of the dissertation marked the beginning of an extremely productive academic career that had its roots in Holden’s experiences as a practicing public administrator.

His experiences in Cleveland as a researcher and public official, along with his exposure to urban politics as a young teenager, undoubtedly contributed to his selection of urban politics and metropolitics as early topical areas in a long stream of scholarship. His first major publication, “Litigation and the Political Order” (1963), conceptually focused on metropolitan conflict that involved a number of units of local government in the northwestern portion of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, the Regional Planning Commission, the state of Ohio, and an entity called the Freeway Board. It is in this publication that we see Holden’s early scholarly interest in decision-making theory, bargaining, and conflict between competing interests (be they units of government or some other organized or semi-organized interest).

Continuing with his now well-developed interest in metropolitics, just one year later, Holden mined his dissertation and published an article entitled “The Governance of the Metropolis as a Problem in Diplomacy” (1964). While substantively rooted in his dissertation, this publication was an extension of a paper that Professor Holden delivered at

the 1962 meeting of the American Political Science Association. In it, he argued that “metropolitics and international politics are analogous in that each occurs not within *political communities* but within *diplomatic systems*” (1964, 627; emphasis in original). In this piece Holden extensively relied on the work of international relations theorists Ernst Haas, Morton Kaplan, and Karl Deutsch. This effort clearly demonstrates that this scholar has not permitted the somewhat artificial boundaries of the various fields of the discipline to stop him from cross-application of those concepts he found useful. While the focus of much of his work has been on the United States, this publication further reveals a marked characteristic seen throughout much of his work; an insistence upon viewing the United States in a comparative perspective. It is also in this publication that we see further evidence of his interest in conflict and the mechanisms used by humankind to resolve differences and establish consensus.

Two years later, Holden made his mark as rising scholar in the area of public administration with a publication in *The American Political Science Review*, “‘Imperialism’ in Bureaucracy” (1966d). The opening sentence of this frequently cited piece of scholarship is significant for what it reveals about Holden’s later work:

If an important part of the political scientist’s mission is to anticipate and explain “the critical problems that generate and explain turbulence” in that part of the world which attracts his attention, then, in the study of administration, bureaucratic “imperialism” must be of compelling interest. . . . Bureaucratic imperialism seems pre-eminently a matter of *inter-agency conflict* in which two or more agencies try to assert permanent control over the same jurisdiction, or in which one agency actually seeks to take over another agency as well as the jurisdiction of that agency. (1964; emphasis added)

Not only does this article provide further evidence of Holden’s intellectual interest in conflict (and its resolution), but also it is here that we see early evidence of his interest

in the concept of “turbulence” and the centrality of administration in politics. As we shall see, he returns to examine both of these ideas in much greater detail in his 1996 book, *Continuity and Disruption: Essays in Public Administration*.

A companion concept that implicitly acknowledges the existence of conflict and therefore, by definition, attempts to bring the contestants to some mutually agreeable outcome, is *bargaining*. This proves to be a pivotal concept in his next major publication. In the summers of 1965 and 1966 Matthew Holden served as a consultant to Resources for the Future. It was in this capacity that, long before many political and social scientists, he began to develop both interest and expertise in environmental policy making. As seen from his earlier writings, it was then typical for him to bring such experiences back to the “writing table” inside of the academy for further thought and explication. Such was the case with the 1966 publication of a monograph entitled *Pollution Control as a Bargaining Process: An Essay on Regulatory Decision-Making* (1966c). Here, Holden advances a view of “politics” that can be seen as one that reveals his continuing intellectual interest in conflict. In this monograph, he tells us that he writes as a behavioral political scientist “who assumes *politics to be a process of conflict* leading to the distribution of advantages and disadvantages.” He goes on to say, “If one further assumes . . . [the decision-making] process to be a permanent part of human life, it becomes of some importance to understand its consequences for policies, rather than to assume that policies can be devised somehow and brought to realization in a political vacuum” (2; emphasis added) It is with this publication that Holden expands his expertise in the related areas of regulatory policy making and what Charles O. Jones once called public policy process analysis.

Even in his earliest work, as we have seen, Matthew Holden’s political science was characterized by a strongly Hobbesian insistence upon the centrality of certain fundamental aspects of all political life. Order, far

from occurring spontaneously, must be consciously constructed through mechanisms of authority. Debates at the high level of principle are less important in understanding politics than conflicts of interest and the contest for power. Holden's political science, it is fair to say, is one that attempts to strip away the theatrical aspects of politics, which of course differ across time and space, to reveal what one might call its universal features. A political science so situated opens itself up to all sorts of comparisons that would otherwise seem eccentric—a world where ancient Rome can come to speak to modern Chicago, and vice versa. Furthermore, it leads an inquisitive scholar to look again, not just at the history of politics, but at the history of thinking about politics. These observations, perhaps, lead one to better understand Holden's lifetime interest in the history of the discipline, and his suspicion that thinking from previous eras of politics is never really superseded by contemporary trends in political science.

The 1960s were clearly a prolific period for Holden. Perhaps Holden was so productive in the 1960s because in 1963 he married Dorothy Howard Hendricks, who appears as a frequent source of inspiration in some of his endnotes. In addition to the material discussed above, Holden published at least one article in a referred publication, a review essay, or a book chapter in each year for the remainder of the 1960s: "Ethnic Accommodation in a Historical Case" (1966a); "Decision-Making on a Metropolitan Government Proposition" (1966b); "The Modernization of Urban Law and Order" (1966e); "Public Policy Implications (A Discussion)" (1967a); "Party Politics and 'Ethnic Politics'" (1967b); "On the Misunderstanding of Important Phenomena" (1968); and "The Quality of Urban Order" (1969). With the exception of *Polity*, by the end of the 1960s Holden had published in all of the regional political science journals and *APSR*.

By the end of the 1960s, his published work indicated a continuing interest in metropolitics, urban politics, public order in urban America,

and in what he characterizes in a later publication as the nation's deepening racial schism.

In his role as "involved observer" in a youth-oriented organization in Harlem, New York, the sociologist Kenneth Clark offered the following observation in his book *Dark Ghetto*: "The summer of 1964 brought violent protests to the ghettos of America's cities, not in mobilization of effective power, but as an outpouring of unplanned revolt" (1965, 15). This outbreak of unrest was followed by similar socio-political unrest in Watts in the summer of 1965. Two years later, the two most destructive outbursts of socio-political unrest occurred in July 1967 when, within two weeks of each other, Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan, exploded (see Smothers 1997; Meredith 1997). These events are significant, for they serve as the stimuli and backdrop for the next wave of scholarship that Holden produced in the 1970s. Much of Holden's work in the 1970s, while not exclusively limited to public order and the critical need to address America's racial schism, is nonetheless reflective of his passionate concern with urban unrest, especially its racial dimensions. Consider the titles of the articles and book chapters that he published in the 1970s: "Politics, Public Order and Pluralism" (1970); "Achieving Order and Stability: The Future of Black-White Relations" (1971a); "Black Politics and the New Urban Politics" (1971b), "The Politics of Urbanization" (1972a); and "The Crisis of the Republic: Reflections on Race and Politics" (1972b).

Many scholars and students of African-American politics, take the position that Holden made his most profound contribution to this field (and perhaps to the discipline) in 1973 with the publication of his provocative dyad, *The Politics of the Black "Nation"* and *The White Man's Burden*. In the postscripts of both books, Holden tells us that, "Most of the essays were written . . . between the summer crises of 1967 and the latter part of 1969, although the basic theme was formulated in 1964." The central theme that links these

books is that America was a state that contained two "sociocultural nations" (one black, the other white) within the same polity. The history of America clearly demonstrated that these two "nations" developed from a calculated imbalance of power, which had come to a boiling point in the late 1960s. As such, America, at the close of the 1960s was mired in a racial crisis. The first of these two books, *The Politics of the Black "Nation,"* focuses on the cultural and external forces that shape black politics, various forms of black political action, and policy recommendations that Holden felt were necessary over the course of the next five years to reconcile what he calls the "republican crisis" *qua* racial crisis. As indicated earlier in this profile, Holden chose Isaiah Montgomery, one of the founders of his hometown, Mound Bayou, Mississippi, as an archetypal practitioner of what he calls "clientage politics," a form of black politics in which one set of claimants for black leadership have accepted the role of client to a source (racially, white) external to the black community.

The second volume, *The White Man's Burden*, offers some in-depth discussion on the meaning of institutional racism, the relationship between the two major national political parties and their approaches to racial issues, and Holden's policy recommendations on various strategies (particularly economic integration) for the realization of social peace. The sort of insightful analysis provided by Holden in these two volumes arguably rivals the penetrating scholarship offered some seventy years earlier by W.E.B. DuBois in his classic, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

By the time that much of Holden's work on public order and the politics of race and ethnicity appeared in print, he had moved to the University of Wisconsin (in 1969) as a full professor. That same year, his colleagues in the profession acknowledged his contributions as a scholar by inviting him to sit on the Board of Directors of the Social Science Research Council, a position that he held until 1972. In 1972 he served

on the council of the Midwest Political Science Association until 1975. However, from 1975 to 1981, Holden was on leave from Wisconsin for public service. From 1975 to 1977, he served as a commissioner in the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. In October 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed him to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Between these two appointments Holden also served as a vice president for the American Political Science Association.

As we have indicated throughout this profile, rarely has Matthew Holden Jr. left the academy and not taken the time to systematically assess his experiences outside of that setting. His public service experiences in Wisconsin and Washington, DC, are no exception. Holden's publication record in the 1980s not only reflects his experiences in the regulatory arena, his experiences as a practicing political scientist *qua* public administrator, and his continued refinement of ideas that he had explored in the 1960s and 1970s, but it also demonstrates his intellectual range as seen in his increased interest in the American presidency. The titles of the monographs, book chapters, and articles he published during this time serve as evidence for this point: "The Energy Problem in the American Democracy" (1980); "The Utility Problem and the Energy Problem" (1981); "The Regulatory Process and the Politics of Energy" (1982); "Critique of the Systemic Implications of the Concept of a Six-year Presidential Term" (1983); "The Centrality of Administration to Politics" (1984) (a paper that served as the basis for a later book); "The President, Congress, and Racial Stratification," given as The Ernest T. Patterson Memorial Lecture at the University of Colorado in 1985; "Propositions on the Structure of Bargaining and Command" (1987); "Racial Stratification as Accident and as Policy" (1989); and "Congress on the Defensive: An Hypothesis from the Iran-Contra Problem" (1989).

Following his four-year appointment on the Federal Regulatory Commission, Holden left Wisconsin and accepted an appointment as the

Henry L. and Grace M. Doherty Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia. This was to be his fourth academic appointment since completing his Ph.D. in 1961. The 1980s saw Holden expand his professional activities both inside and outside of the discipline. He served as chair of the Ralph Bunche Award Committee of the American Political Science Association (1983), APSA annual program chair (1986), and on the selection committee for the distinguished scholar program of the Joint Center for Political Studies (1986–1991).

To this list of accomplishments, in the 1990s Holden added the responsibilities of active member of the National Academy of Public Administration and has been similarly active in the American Society of Public Administration, and has served as editor of *The National Political Science Review* (1991–94), president of the Policy Studies Organization (1993–94), and an editorial board member of the *Policy Studies Journal* (1994–97).

No one who has studied with or been a colleague of Matthew Holden can fail to have observed the characteristic that most distinguishes him from his peers: his wide, indeed classical, breadth of knowledge. His reading in regulatory, urban, and energy policy is matched by a truly impressive familiarity with the old bedrock of what used to characterize a "learned man": Shakespeare, the Bible, and Roman history. His knowledge of the Bible is easily explained, for he is a serious, church-going Episcopalian (whether high or low church we will leave for others to determine). But what is harder to explain, at least at first blush, is the way Holden looks to the Bible not just for direction in leading a moral life, but also as a source of political behavior. One of us remembers fondly a course he cotaught on "The Politics of the Old and New Testament," and in particular a lecture on the politics leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. One person in the class suggested, only half-jokingly, that the lecture should have been entitled, "Pontius Pilate—Public Administrator."

But what this breadth of knowledge and willingness to seek evidence from classical as well as modern sources demonstrates is the particular cast of mind of Matthew Holden. Politics, whether conducted by William Dawson or Pontius Pilate, by Caesar or by Richard III, exhibits sufficient regularity that we need not be misled by the temptation to take all our examples from what seems like "contemporary" or "modern" history. This extraordinary range of historical referents is what makes Matthew Holden's work on race, in particular, so rich: the politics of African Americans, in his hands, is made to speak to political problems millennia old and world wide.

As we round out this profile of the next president of the American Political Science Association, it seems fitting that we quote from the introductory chapter of Professor Holden's most recent book *Continuity and Disruption: Essays in Public Administration*: "[The] subject of the following chapters—the fundamental problem—is derived from a comment made by Albert B. Martin. Martin said that *one of the central problems of the administrator is to reduce turbulence in the operating environment of administration*" (1996, 1; emphasis added). Holden had examined this concept of turbulence thirty years earlier in his article "'Imperialism' in Bureaucracy" (1966). He now had the advantage of many more opportunities via his scholarship and experiences outside of the academy to approach this discussion in a far more informed fashion. By this stage of his career, Matthew Holden Jr. has firmly established himself as a preeminent scholar.

Not all of Professor Holden's work has been reviewed in this profile; there's only so much space for such a task. This profile indicates, however, that, though the road from Mound Bayou to Charlottesville has been a circuitous one, for Matthew Holden it has been an extremely productive and intellectually exciting one. This road has been one that afforded Holden the opportunity to combine theory with practice. Our discipline is richer because of his scholarly contributions.

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## Note

We would like to thank Robert C. Smith (San Francisco State University) and Donn

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are responsible for any misinterpretations or errors contained herein.

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