

# A General Theory of Leadership

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Luis R. Visot is an American educational administrator and former U.S. Army commander who served as a Major General and Chief of Staff of the United States Army Reserve in his last assignment in the U.S. Army. During a three-interview series, Visot reflects on his life, his most significant leadership roles, and the meanings he attaches to each. The interviews and subsequent analysis reveal how Visot's values, especially those imbued by his parents early in life, directly influence his leadership style and

personal priorities. The application of thematic analysis demonstrates the linkage between values, beliefs, behaviors, and reflections, thus

**Two military veterans interview a U.S. Army General about how the values instilled in him early in life influenced his leadership style and professional success.**

providing evidence for the values-expressive behavior theory. Researchers will find the application of a theoretical construct to each leadership trait to be a novel approach to thematic analysis. Dr. Visot's anecdotes and

reflections offer valuable insights for practitioners seeking to develop effective and authentic leadership skills.

**Keywords:** Values, thematic narrative research, value-expressive behavior theory, qualitative research, coding, leadership, lived experience, interview, reflection.

This article describes the development of a narrative profile of Luis R. Visot, retired U.S. Army Major General and current Assistant Dean and Chief of Staff at the University of South Florida College of Education. The thematic narrative research method was employed during three interviews based on Sedman's lived experience interview techniques. The first interview focused on the facts of Visot's life. The second interview addressed Visot's current roles. The third interview probed Visot's reflections on his life, values, and attitudes. The third interview is the foundation of this article and provides evidence that Visot's values, acquired early in life, directly influence his leadership style and priorities.

This article is organized to provide a biographical sketch of Visot, followed by a summary of the project that led to the interviews. We describe the methodology we used to develop our findings and a detailed description of our analysis of the interview source materials. We conclude with our contributions and limitations.

### **Dr. Luis R. Visot**

**Early Life:** Luis Raúl Visot was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico. His father, a physician and strict disciplinarian, instilled in him and his brother values that influenced him throughout his personal and professional life. Visot's mother was a teacher and devout Catholic who inspired him with her caring and compassion for others. When Visot was in the third grade, the family moved to Houston, Texas, so that his father could complete a second medical specialization. Visot became fluent in English by the time the family returned to Puerto Rico during his middle school years. Visot's mother died during his junior year of high school, an event that would change the course of his life. His father soon remarried and Visot chose to attend Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin after graduation. Visot served in the U.S. Army ROTC program while earning a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant upon graduation in May 1978. Visot received an educational delay to attend the University of Georgia (UGA) in Athens, where he earned a Master's in Education in 1980 (Kassis, 2022; Visot, 2023).

**Military Career:** While in ROTC, Visot completed the Infantry Airborne Basic Course. After graduating from UGA, he completed the Quartermaster Officer Basic Course. As Visot progressed through the ranks, he earned an additional master's degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College (U.S. Army Reserve). By 2002, he held the rank of colonel, commanded a brigade, and was helping start the joint ROTC program at USF. Visot's rise through the ranks did not stop at Colonel. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 2006 and then promoted in 2009 again after his 2007 deployment

to Iraq (Visot, 2023). Major General Visot's final assignment was as Chief of Staff for the United States Army Reserve. He retired in 2015 (Kassis, 2022).

Major General Visot earned numerous military awards and decorations. Visot held general officer rank in the US Army Reserve 377th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC), the 4th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC), and the 1st Theater Sustainment Command (TSC), among several other various commands (U.S. Army Reserve).

**Civilian career:** Visot held executive roles in a parallel civilian academic career. He joined the USF staff in 1981 as a Resident Instructor (residence hall director and leadership course instructor) (University of South Florida, 2022). He assumed roles of increasing responsibility in operations and student affairs. In 1993, Visot was named Associate Director, University Center, Student Affairs and one year later he assumed the position of Director, Phyllis P. Marshall Center, Student Affairs. In 2002 Visot was named Director of Development for Student & Campus Life, Office of Development, University Advancement where he connected with and educated the student body on advancement opportunities. He then served as Executive Director of USF's Joint Military Leadership Center to address leadership education and development, national defense strategies, and global education and understanding. During this time Visot oversaw the construction of a state-of-the-art facility and managed a \$10 million grant awarded to the center (University of South Florida, 2022; Visot, 2023).

Visot retired from USF in 2015 to pursue his doctorate at The George Washington University. He returned to USF in 2022 to serve as Assistant Dean and Chief of Staff at the College of Education (Kouki, 2024).

In addition to Dr. Visot's many leadership roles in his civilian and military careers, he is affiliated with community activities and organizations including the United States Army War College Foundation, the Nonprofit Leadership Center of Tampa Bay, the Boys and Girls Club of Tampa Bay, the United Way Suncoast, and Feeding Tampa Bay (University of South Florida, 2022). Dr. Visot is a genuine citizen soldier who contributes to society inside and outside his professional roles.

### **Project Background**

The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program at the University of South Florida provides graduates with the skills for conducting rigorous research with the objective of applying findings to real-world decision-making in industry. The program requires mastery of a broad range of qualitative and quantitative research techniques, including interviewing for social science research. As part of

their training in qualitative methods, six researchers conducted three separate interviews with Dr. Visot on January 13, 2023. The interviews took place in a classroom setting with other DBA candidates observing. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The approach followed the three-interview series described by Seidman. The first pair of interviewers asked Visot to describe his life history and probed for details and examples. Following a fifteen-minute break, the second pair of interviewers asked Visot to provide the details of lived experience in his current roles. Following a second break, the final two interviewers asked Visot to reflect on the meaning of the lived experiences explored in the prior conversations (Seidman, 2013). Each interview lasted 45 minutes, was cordial, and consisted of a mix of prepared questions and inquiries based on Visot's answers.

Following Seidman, questions for the third interview, which are intended to encourage the participant to reflect on the meaning of his lived experiences, may be prepared in advance or based on the conversations of the two preceding interviews (Seidman, 2013). We structured our questions (Appendix A) to elicit reflections from Visot mostly based on his comments in interviews one and two. Our questions focused on others believing in him; his taking on leadership roles; his humility, especially as it related to his eschewing titles; and his parents' impact on his life. Three questions that elicited notable responses were:

*"More than once you said 'people believed in me.' Can you tell us more about what that meant? And what you felt?"*

*"What does it mean to you to live a life of putting other people first, whether it was active duty or reserve duty, or here at USF?"*

*"In both the interviews, you said, I want people to call me Luis, not Dr. Visot or General. Why do you think you feel that way? And what do you think brought you to feel that way?"*

The answers to these questions and others provided the source data for our research and immediately indicated the depth and complexity of Dr. Visot's deeply held values, motivators, and leadership style.

## Research Method

### Qualitative Research

Because the purpose of the interviews was to explore reflections on lived experiences, we adopted a narrative research approach. Eriksson et. al. explain that narrative research aids in exploring the research topic from the participant's vantage. Interviewers use unstructured or semi-structured conversations with open-ended questions that can be pre-determined or based on the flow of the answers. The resulting

narrative is "individualized, contextualized, and relevant to the participant." Additionally, the data may reveal unanticipated insights (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

### Theoretical Foundations

Saldaña describes multiple ways of using theory in qualitative research. He cites Creswell as placing ethnographies and phenomenology at the theory-testing end of the spectrum (Saldaña, 2016). Phenomenology asserts that the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings. Given that the explicit intent of our interview was to probe Dr. Visot's lived experiences, we sought to test theory with our observations. Visot frequently reflected on the values instilled in him by his parents. Additionally, his dual military and civilian careers provided an opportunity to examine the influence of values on his leadership style in disparate environments. These conditions led us to explore theories that might explain the influence of values on action and life outcomes. We conducted a brief literature review of potentially relevant theories by searching keywords and phrases related to the "theory of values and behavior." We identified four frequently appearing theories which are summarized below.

- **Theory of Basic Human Values:** This theory proposes that individuals hold universal values that guide their behavior. The theory identifies ten fundamental values: self-direction, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, and power. The theory asserts that values are relatively stable over time and across different contexts and that they can directly influence behavior (Schwartz, 2012).
- **Social Learning Theory:** This theory proposes that behavior is learned through observing and imitating others. Values are transmitted through socialization processes and can influence an individual's behavior by shaping their beliefs and attitudes (DeLamater & Ward, 2013).
- **Value-expressive Behavior Theory:** This theory proposes that people engage in behaviors that express or reflect their deeply held values. According to this theory, values can influence behavior both directly and indirectly (DeLamater & Ward, 2013).
- **Theory of Planned Behavior:** This theory says that the intent to perform a particular behavior is determined by three factors: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. An individual's values influence attitudes and subjective norms. Therefore, values can indirectly influence behavior through their impact on attitudes and subjective norms (Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006).

Initial review of the interview transcript suggested value-expressive behavior theory as having the greatest potential relevance to Visot's narrative and his reflections on leadership. Value-expressive behavior theory proposes that people engage in behaviors that express or reflect their deeply held values. According to this theory, values can influence behavior both directly and indirectly. Rokeach asserts that values express basic human needs. People want consistency between their beliefs (values) and actions, and that the need for consistency motivates their social behavior (Rokeach, 1973). Feather asserts values are not merely abstract concepts of wants or desires but are also motivating. In other words, value-consistent behavior is rewarding and people want to act according to their values (Feather, 1995). Schwartz further postulated that values are reinforced more by the affective component than the cognitive component. That is, the influence of values on behavior is subconscious (Maio & Olson, 1998). Finally, Lydon et. al. assert that values seem to be related to the commitment people can sustain during adversity (Lydon & Zanna, 1990). In other words, values serve as an anchor for beliefs and action. Conversely, Williams postulated that values are cognitive structures that, along with emotion, provide an input to inform behavior (Williams, 1979). We conclude from the literature that value-expressive behavior theory implies that values shape behavior by influencing the conscious evaluation of actions and the unconscious desire to express and reinforce personal values through action. Given Visot's repeated appreciation for the values instilled in him, his steadfastness to those values during life's trials, and his clearly articulated leadership actions, we set out to test the theory with empirical evidence from Visot's reflections.

## Analysis

This section describes the approaches to data preparation, preparation, and sensemaking that led to our findings and conclusions.

### Data Reliability

The three interviews were video-recorded and transcribed using an AI-enabled tool. The interviewers independently reviewed the transcripts and corrected errors by reviewing the recordings. We established a single authoritative transcript of interview three for subsequent coding and citation. We uploaded the final transcript, an interview published by USF as part of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary oral history project

in 2004, and Visot's Wikipedia page into Quirkos, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program.

### Data Reduction

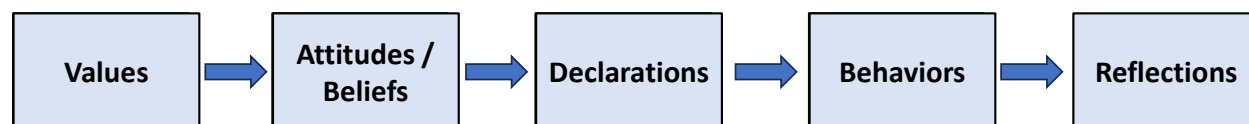
The nature of the interview suggested several possible coding schemes as described by Saldaña, including descriptive, in vivo, process, and values coding. Saldaña states that "values coding is appropriate to explore cultural values and belief systems, identity, and interpersonal participant experiences." (Saldaña, 2016). Because Visot frequently reflected on the values imbued by his parents when discussing his leadership style, a values coding construct was initially adopted. Perhaps unique among the coding schemes, values coding categorizes each code as being Values-based, Attitude-reflecting, or Belief-espousing. This led to our adoption of the prefixes "V:", "A:", and "B:" for the respective code names to aid in analysis (Saldaña, 2016).

To increase objectivity, we first coded the data independently and converged on a common set of codes. We subsequently used the shared project feature of Quirkos to refine a single set of coded data for analysis. Upon finalizing the values coding, the statistics functionality of Quirkos produced a word cloud (Appendix B) and summary data to inform possible values, attitudes, and beliefs present in Visot's reflections.

### Analysis

The coding of the third interview data suggested an opportunity to understand how values underpin the leadership style of a successful Army general and university administrator, test established theory on personal values, and develop findings that may help others in their leadership development. We surmised connections existed between Visot's values and the leadership characteristics he adopted. This led to an analysis approach that first examined Visot's espoused values, "the principles, moral codes, and situational norms people live by." (Saldaña, 2016). Next, we sought to uncover how those values influenced his attitudes and beliefs. The final step was using the data to demonstrate how Visot's actions and reflections substantiated our assumptions about his priorities. The analysis approach can be summarized by the construct shown in Figure 1 below.

Dissection of the Visot interview transcripts and other sources resulted in coding the data as either exemplifying a value, attitude, or belief. Following



**Figure 1: Value, Attitude, Behavior, Reflection Construct**



the initial coding, we collaborated to merge or subdivide categories to make the codes as representative as possible. Values, attitudes, and beliefs were ranked by the number of citations in each and by how often the same or similar concepts occurred (Appendix C).

The search for themes in Visot's reflections began in earnest. Saldaña describes "theming the data" as the basis for *meta-synthesis* and a useful approach for "exploring the participant's beliefs, constructs, identity, and experiences" (Saldaña, 2016). We explored how the value, attitude, and belief codes might be related, either by topic or because they derived from the same part of the discussion. The grouping of related comments began to converge on consistent or unifying themes.

The analysis indicated that the overarching theme of Visot's life and his reflections on his life was leadership, a term that appeared eighteen times in the coded data. The analysis of interview transcripts, biographies, and other sources suggests that Visot views leadership as a multifaceted activity. The thematic analysis suggested that Visot espoused three leadership characteristics: belief, service, and love.

The authors applied Saldaña's technique for developing a theoretical construct to each of three leadership characteristics to facilitate sense-making. To demonstrate the characteristics' primacy to Visot's leadership model and his actions, we defined three declarative statements with the format "Leadership is..." (Saldaña, 2016). Each statement was substantiated with evidence from values, attitudes, and beliefs codes, which are listed below each construct in the following sections. Examples from Visot's present or prior leadership roles provide evidence of each leadership characteristic.

## Believing in others

As a student at Marquette University, Dr. Visot was out of his element, having lived in the U.S. for only 4 years as a child and then leaving Puerto Rico for Milwaukee immediately following high school graduation. Visot was the first sibling to attend college and was in uncharted waters. Despite his unwavering work ethic and desire to be the best student he could, Visot found himself struggling to succeed academically and feeling adrift. Father Francis Landwermeyer, an academic advisor at Marquette, recognized Visot's hard work and potential. He spoke with Visot regularly and advised that he had seen many students persevere when attempting to navigate the college experience. Landwermeyer assured Visot that he had what it took to succeed, provided guidance when necessary, and encouraged him to keep working toward his goals. Following graduation from Marquette, Visot was accepted to graduate school at the University of Georgia, the next chapter in a life of continuous learning and academic excel-

lence.

Almost forty years later, the retired MG Visot and current Assistant Dean and Chief of Staff at the USF College of Education met with an aspiring graduate student who had not been accepted into a doctoral program. Dr. Visot listened carefully to the student's situation, realized that the student was capable of doctoral work, and reflected on the countless young men and women who failed to achieve their ambitions on the first try. Visot patiently spoke with the student about his preparations and explained some of the factors affecting the doctoral selection process. Visot advised the student on the next steps he should consider when reapplying, assured him of his confidence in the student's abilities, and told him that his door was always open for further conversations.

### Theoretical Construct 1: Leadership is believing in others.

- V: Respect others
- A: I am believed in
- B: People remember what you do for them
- B: Being part of a team is most important

In each of the three interviews, Visot indicated that respect was important. Tellingly, he revealed that respect for others as humans was more important than respect for titles or position. The interviews suggest that Visot learned the value of respecting others early in life from his family and his friends.

"I celebrate the humanity and I'm focused primarily on the people rather than focusing on anything else."

"You know that you show an act of kindness. You know, you show that you generally have compassion and caring at that particular point. But we got to look at ourselves, you know, in terms of who here is in the true community and be able to reach out and touch people and be able to make a difference."

Visot's respect for others led him to reflect on examples of others valuing him as a person and believing in his potential. Significantly, Visot seemed to demonstrate strong self-awareness that others believed in him, even if at the time he did not understand why they would do so. Visot reflects on others' believing in him with gratitude, an emotion that pervades his speaking.

"I gave you the example of when I got elected, you know, to student council president in high school, you know, at that point in time a group of individuals believed in me."

"It happened when at Marquette University you know, there was Father Landwermyer, I remember him he believed in me knowing that I was not doing really well enough to be there and continuing to encourage me, and support me, and assist me."

"It's like I believe in Luis, I'm gonna give him the opportunity to come into our graduate program."

"The same thing with my dean... he didn't have to invest in me, you know, but he believed in me enough to think that hey, I think that Luis can come in here and make a difference."

"I'm fully cognizant and aware. I make sure that every time that I have an opportunity to be able to be grateful."

Visot described his efforts to believe in, and support, others. As he reflected on his efforts to help others, he made explicit connections to his own personal experiences.

"You know, when you're able to do something for somebody else that they acknowledged and recognized. They'll do it for ten people and guess what? They'll say 'we'll do it for another ten.'"

"I'll give you an example... One of our teammates, you know, in the College of Education, came to me and ... told me about it a situation in which, you know, they had not been accepted into a doctoral program at the College of Education. And I said, you know, it's okay. You know, don't worry about that. What you need to think about is, but rather, how can you then align with somebody who believes in you in order for you to be able to achieve your objective... That's it? Yeah....Once you do that, you'll see you'll be successful the next time around...and if it doesn't happen, that's okay. You know, I'm there to catch your back again."

The importance of teamwork emerged as a second belief prevalent in Visot's reflections. Teamwork can be related to people believing in Visot to give him a chance. In essence, the people who believed in him and gave him opportunities may have been his first teammates, and even his "unrecognized hero teammates." The first evidence of his belief in team-

work can be observed early in Visot's life when he was elected to student body president with the help of classmates. This may not be easily understood or seen at the time it happened. It may not have been recognized as "teamwork." Thematic analysis suggested that the experience shaped Visot's later use of teams to realize the potential of individual members. Visot seemed to confirm this when contrasting the individual awards and unit awards he earned in his military career.

"We get awards on our left-hand side of our uniform... allotted for individual recognition. On the right-hand side, it's for teamwork. We only get maybe one, two, if you're lucky, you may get four or five ribbons on that side... I think we have it backwards. I think we need to acknowledge that is... because of what you have accomplished with the team that allows you the opportunity to get this other side."

We conclude that respecting others is one of Visot's core values. He espoused that value through his attitudes and beliefs as evidenced by his conversations with interviewers. Visot's leadership roles, notably as Assistant Director of Residence Halls Operations and Assistant Dean and Chief of Staff at the USF College of Education, are congruent with his values. Notably, Visot's reflections during the USF interviews elicited a realization that believing in others is a conscious effort intended to help the recipient improve and succeed.

"Absolutely. I think now that you as you bring it up and put it in that perspective, because I'm more intentionally conscientious of it, I do it even more."

## **Serving Others**

As a child, Visot benefitted from powerful examples of service from both of his parents. Visot's father, a physician, cared for his patients and continuously sought to improve his professional knowledge. Visot's mother was a teacher who ardently invested in the lives of young people. At home, Visot's parents modeled service in different ways. His father believed strongly in providing for his family and being a dependable father and husband. His mother nurtured her two sons while instilling a sense of compassion for others. When illness befell Visot's mother, his father cared for her during her decline and assumed more of the household responsibilities. As he matured, Visot steadily transformed from one who received others' provision to a young man assuming the responsibility of serving others.

As an emerging leader in the USF administration

department, Visot served as director for one of USF's residence halls. Despite his seniority, advanced degree, and U.S. Army commission, Visot engaged with the students on a personal level, supporting their needs and participating in their fun. Visot recalled joining in some of the students' antics like sliding down the hallways and also ensuring the buildings were well maintained so students could focus on their studies. During his USF tenure, Visot was activated as a U.S. Army Reserve Officer to serve during Operation Desert Storm. In this capacity, Visot shifted to a different mode of leadership with a formal chain of command, but as a logistics officer he still maintained his focus on supporting others by ensuring troops had the provisions necessary for victory.

#### Theoretical Construct 2: Leadership is serving.

- V: Be humble
- A: I am a servant leader
- B: Leadership is taking care of others
- B: It's not about titles

Visot exudes a genuine humility that seems to derive both from the values imbued by his parents and the confidence of a person fully comfortable with himself. Notably, throughout the interviews, he refers to himself as "Luis" instead of Dr. Visot, Major General Visot, or Assistant Dean at the University of South Florida.

"...what brought me to that point is I go back, you know, back because I guess the influence of my mom and dad and realize and recognizing that the day that I move on to the next world. I'm not taking two stars which means nothing."

"I think of what my you know, my mom and my dad, you know, helped me understand you know, the importance you know, of recognizing that I am Luis."

Visot honors his parents while acknowledging that the "two-star" title will not carry with him into the next world. This self-awareness is a manifestation of his present-day understanding of humility. Visot continues to reflect on his status as an equal in the ranks of humanity and his obligation to consider others.

"The President of the United States, the most junior member of our military, all of us as well, we all put our pants on the same way. So yes, there's levels of responsibility and accountability, but you know, at the end of the day, men and women who serve our nation, we all put our uniform the same way."

"Truly being humble and truly

having a sense of compassion...in order for us to achieve what we've been asked to do."

While the evidence suggests that humility is a core value of Visot, in one case he acknowledged that it requires deliberate effort to resist hubris.

"Humility is very important. Humility. It's not an easy thing to do. I have to work at it."

Visot's humility directly informs his attitude of being a servant-leader. Greenleaf characterizes servant leadership, in part, as "The care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test... is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while

being served, become healthier, wiser, more accessible, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Visot's interviews clearly demonstrate an attitude of servant leadership.

"I hope that I'm remembered more as a servant leader, who's compassionate and cares, who's humble in the manner in which they carry themselves. And that was truly present. You know, when I was with somebody, I was there."

Visot's prior and current roles again demonstrate alignment with his values. While the servant leadership model is less apparent in the military's formal, hierarchical structure, Visot's actions in uniform clearly demonstrate its presence. Specifically, he strongly supported the mantra "mission first, people always" in response to the comment by the interviewer on taking care of his students and getting the mission done, "which kind of shows to me both mission first and people." Dr. Visot said of himself, "Yeah, you know, I do think that." Visot's prior role as resident instructor at USF was especially consistent with his values as demonstrated by his willingness to engage with students on their level in Residence Hall activities. Again, Visot's reflections during the USF interview affirmed his values and leadership priorities. Visot concluded the meetings with an offer to the participating students to help and serve them.

"I hope if I can be of any help to any of you, even during the time that you're here or afterwards, I'd be more than honored to be your servant."

## Honoring Others

As a teenager, Visot seemed to chafe under his father's strict parenting. This situation partly convinced Visot to attend Marquette, far from his native Puerto Rico. After persevering through college and the U.S. Army ROTC, Visot earned his bachelor's degree and



U.S. Army commission in 1978. At his graduation, Visot observed tears in the eyes of his father who had instilled in him the values of discipline, fortitude, and responsibility. Visot and his father grew closer over time, and today Visot visits regularly with his father in person and by phone. Visot counts each interaction with his father as a privilege and an opportunity to express his appreciation. In his professional roles, Visot emphasizes the importance of being present with others and forming lasting relationships based on mutual respect. At a ceremony in his honor, Visot met a former subordinate who thanked him for all he had done to help him. Visot graciously acknowledged the words and congratulated the old friend on his success. Although he may not remember every encounter, he knows that those interactions are important to others.

Theoretical Construct 3: Leadership is love.

- V: Honor parents
- A: I am here to impact others' lives
- B: We are part of a community

Visot demonstrated in each of the three interviews that honoring parents is one of his core values. Notably, Visot's mother made a huge and lasting impact on his worldview. The influence of Visot's father, who is still alive, evolved during his life. While acknowledging that his father was strict, multiple times Visot revealed evidence of the compassion that came from his father. Visot's description of, and his reflections on, his own life indicate that the influence of each parent was sometimes different, usually complementary, and always profound.

"My mom and my dad helped me understand the importance of recognizing that I am Luis."

"I think that you know, my mom was with us, you know and again just 15 years of my life, but it was just incredible as I reflect back a lot, you know, the time that we spent, you know, how much she's still with me, and I thank her."

"My sense of, you know, compassion and caring, you know, my mom..."

"When I graduated from Marquette University, you know, during that graduation during that commissioning ceremony, you know, to see my dad show some emotional welling up his eyes, you know, and showing tremendous amount of pride."

"At the end of the day, I mean, I've seen my dad cry. It doesn't happen very often, you know, but, you know, he had to share that. So,

there's a little bit of a heart there."

"So, every day that I, I know that I have an opportunity to talk to him, I cherish."

"Oh, my God. You know, my mom and dad were right."

Visot's honor for his parents translates into his attitude of positively impacting the lives of others. His views, as evidenced by his words, seem to go beyond merely helping others to include compassion and possibly nurturing. He also clearly sees himself as a part of humanity with an obligation to everyone.

"I acknowledge and recognize the impact that you can have on other people."

"Maybe years down the road. They'll say 'well, remember that day...'"

"Thank you so much for sharing that with me. I didn't realize that we had done something that made a difference in your life."

"No man is an island. No woman is an island."

"We got to look at ourselves, in terms of here is the true community and be able to reach out and touch people and be able to make a difference."

Visot's prior and current roles again demonstrate congruence with his values. In this case, Visot does not directly demonstrate honoring parents in his leadership. Rather, he demonstrates his honor for parents by reflecting the love, values, and worldview he learned from them to those he led. Interestingly, it was in Visot's military roles that he seems to best exemplify his honor of parents. Specifically, Visot contrasts the "hard skills" and the "soft skills" of military leadership. He recognizes the need for hard skills in accomplishing the mission. Perhaps more significantly, he focuses on the "soft skills" as necessary for taking care of people and developing them as individuals. During Visot's reflections in the USF interviews, he succinctly stated his leadership priority.

"Leadership is love."

Table 1 summarizes the interpretation of the three most closely examined values espoused by Dr. Visot. This data relates the interview coding schema to the construct developed in Figure 1. The table is consistent with the Value-Expressive Behavior theory, which argues that individuals develop attitude functions to aid in achieving those values and that behaviors reflect those attitudes to achieve a sense of personal validation. The construct uses artifacts from the interviewee's reflections to validate the conclusions about his value-expressive behavior.



**Table 1: Visot Value, Attitude, Behavior, Reflection Summary**

Value	Attitude/Belief	Behavior	Reflection
Respect others	I am believed in	Advocate for student success	“Believing in others is a conscious effort intended to help the recipient succeed”
Be humble	I am a servant leader	Engage with students on their level	“If I can be of any help to any of you... I’d be honored to be your servant.”
Honor parents	I am here to impact others’ lives	Focus on “soft skills” to take care of people and develop them as individuals	“Leadership is love.”

## Contribution

This analysis illuminated Luis Visot’s leadership touchstones through thematic narrative research. The coding of transcripts from a standardized three-interview series, along with other interviews and biographical data, identified the core values that informed Visot’s attitudes, behaviors, and career choices. In most cases, Visot corroborated the conclusions verbally when reflecting on the meaning of his work.

An initial review of the interview transcript suggested value-expressive behavior theory as one possible theoretical foundation for the observed connection between Visot’s values and his leadership practices. Value-expressive behavior theory has many variations and detractors. The research of seminal authors including Rokeach, Schwartz, Feather, Maio, and others generally supports the view that values influence behavior both subconsciously and cognitively. Additionally, the theory states that values are long-lasting and persist under adversity. This view is consistent with the values demonstrated by Visot early in life and the consistent evolution of his leadership style throughout his life and multiple, disparate professional roles.

Dr. Visot’s reflections offer useful insights for those developing their leadership style and navigating careers. Specifically, alignment between personal values, leadership behaviors, and professional roles seems to increase personal satisfaction and job performance. The research of Schwartz and Rokeach supports the idea that value congruence leads to greater personal satisfaction and likely improved work performance. Visot implies that roles aligned with personal values feel less like work and more like a calling or vocation. In a published interview (Kouki, 2024) he stated, “I never had a ‘job,’ I was never ‘employed,’ I never ‘worked’ for a living; I just had many opportunities to make a difference”. Visot stayed true to his values through challenges in both his military and civilian careers. Lydon et. al. assert

that values seem to be related to the commitment people can sustain during adversity (Lydon & Zanna, 1990). In Visot’s case, he persevered through his early days at Marquette, multiple military recalls to deploy to war zones, and the decision to retire from USF to pursue his doctorate. A final suggestion for practitioners is: practice deliberate living. While values are deeply held, one should not assume that the alignment of values and actions are automatic. Visot describes a methodical approach to value congruence when making decisions. “First question I ask myself is, what is in the best interest of the institution? Second question: does this align with my values? If there’s not an alignment, then obviously I have the responsibility to step back or step away totally (Kouki, 2024).”

This article introduces a simple framework that connects values, attitudes, behavior, and reflection. It demonstrates congruence between value-expressive behavior theory, thematic narrative research, and phenomenological research in general, and the value coding schema specifically. The article presents opportunities for future researchers to corroborate its findings and to explore whether certain values more strongly influence behavior. Additionally, researchers may explore alternate coding schemes that may be used in conjunction with, or instead of, value coding when testing value-expressive behavior.

## Limitations

The interviews and other biographical resources produced a large quantity of data suitable for coding. While the results and contributions are robust, we acknowledge several limitations. The first and most obvious was our inexperience as interviewers. We allowed our professional military connections to influence our emotions. We found ourselves providing positive reinforcement of Dr. Visot’s answers that may have influenced additional responses that he provided. Dr. Visot was an excellent choice for unseasoned interviewers.

Seidman (2013) notes that interviewing is a skill that requires study and practice to achieve proficiency. A second limitation was time constraints. Ideally, the three-interview series would take place over several days to allow both interviewers and the participant to reflect and prepare for the next engagement. A fifteen-minute intermission was particularly challenging in the third interview, which asked the participant to reflect on lived experiences described in the previous discussions. There was insufficient time to prepare questions designed to probe the most interesting topics. The time constraints likely led to missed opportunities for probing Visot's reflections. Fortunately, Visot is a candid and gregarious speaker, so he provided ample source material. The authors corresponded with Dr. Visot after the interview to verify details and gain context, which partially compensated for the lack of preparation time. Finally, we were assigned to interview a participant chosen for us, which limited our ability to align the interview with their intended area of research. In this case, the military connection and our professional interest in leadership increased our familiarity with the subject matter and reduced adverse impacts on the interview effectiveness.

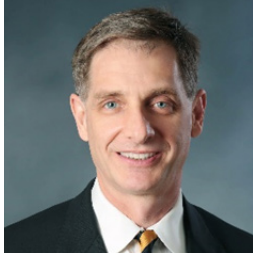
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## Review

This article was accepted under the **constructive peer review** option. For further details, see the descriptions at: <http://mumabusinesreview.org/peer-review-options/>

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## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

Q1: So the question I would like to ask is, “What does it mean to you to live a life of putting other people first, whether it was active duty or reserve duty, or here at USF?”

Q2: More than once you said “people believed in me.” Can you tell us more about what that meant? And what you felt? And maybe after you talk about that, can you talk a little bit about how that influences what you do now in your job?

Q3: So, let me ask you, when people believed in you and you got the opportunity (to believe in others), did it resonate with you then what was going on?

Q4: Do you think that believing in people and the impact that has influences the way you engage with others now?

Q5: Do you think now when you believe in someone and give them a chance that you know what you’re doing?

Q6: But the people that your past? Do you think they knew?

Q7: You’ve lived a life of leadership and referencing some of your earlier interviews to include president of the Student Council. And so, from a very early stage in your life, kind of right out the gate. Was that something that you actively sought those types of positions, or did you find yourself working your way into it? Not deliberately, but just because you felt it was the right thing to do? So, I am amazed at your humility and your humbleness, tremendously amazed at it. And I have always thought that that is one of the genuine leadership skills to have compassion for your soldiers. That’s what I can relate to. So how did how did it all come about? Was it something where you said, I want to be a leader? Or did you just kind of work your way into it? The natural progression of life?

Q8: You defined leadership or you said something about being a soft leader and a hard leader,

Q8 continued: So can you tell us what those differences are to you in how it’s impacted others that different leadership style, how did it impact others in the military versus and the difference in the style and how it impacts people hear us?

Q9: More than once, in both the interviews, you said, “I want people to call me Luis, not Dr. Visot or General.” Why do you think you feel that way? And what do you think brought you to feel that way?

Q10: You said that the idea or the mentality or the feeling that you’re Luis came from your mom and dad, but was there an evolution? Were you always that way? Or did you always feel like I’m Luis and everything else is titles or is that something you came to?

Q11: So, you said, maybe briefly there when you made general, it may be important to you. You said it was short lived. Do you attribute that to the influence of your mom and dad?

Q12: Are there other things along life that you attribute it to, that kind of reinforced that it’s not the title? Is there anything else in your life?

Q13: You said something that really impacted me. And that was the respect, the credit you gave your dad and your mom....There was a time that you wanted to be far away from your dad? What brought... did you get back to your dad? And what brought you back?

Q14: I’m very happy to hear that it happened early in life. The reconciliation with your father because that gave you the opportunity to have a beautiful life with your father because they’re only here for a short time.

Q15: So, it’s a little bit redundant, but I’m going to try to focus a little. What did your experience in the military mean to you? And context to where you’re going with USF?





## Appendix C: Values Coding

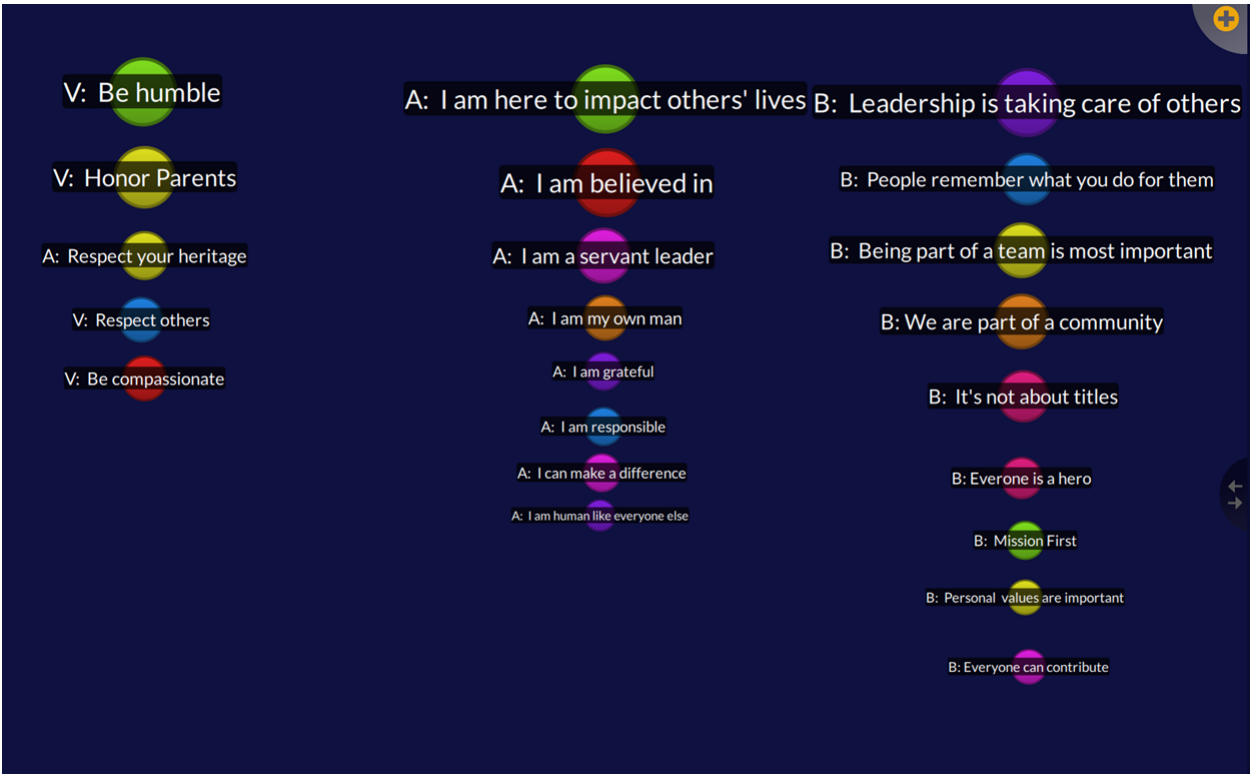


Figure C1: Values Coding from Interview Transcript