



TEACHERS AND TEACHING
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13548502.2025.2595479>

Routledge
 Taylor & Francis Group
[Check for updates](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

'Teaching Be like . . . ': an exploration of Instagram, teacher identity, and the best-loved self

Chelsea Cole , Sydney Zentell , Ambyr Rios , Angela Kraemer-Holland ,
 Sharon D. Matthews and Maria Assunção Flores

¹Department of Teacher Education, Brigham Young University, Provo UT, USA; ²Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, Texas A&M University, College Station TX, USA; ³Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Kansas State University, Manhattan KS, USA; ⁴Research Centre on Child Studies, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal

ABSTRACT
 This grounded theory study explores how teachers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Portugal express their teacher identities and best-loved selves through Instagram. In each context, our findings suggest that Instagram can amplify or mute these teachers' best-loved selves, represented by six categories and two cross-cutting themes. The teachers' best-loved selves are shaped by a variety of contextual, personal, and pedagogical factors that manifest in multiple ways across countries. Teachers' positioning on Instagram allows them to contour the expression of their teacher identity to specific communities, providing interactions with other teachers who express their best-loved selves in similar fashions across contexts and subjectivities. As teachers negotiate their identities and best-loved selves outside of the classroom, and in concert with their layered and intersected contexts, they influence a community of creativity, collaboration, and confluence both locally and internationally. Future research might further examine the spaces between teacher-creators and their audiences across additional platforms and national contexts, attending to the evolving stories that continue to shape teacher identity and community.

ARTICLE HISTORY
 Received 14 May 2025
 Accepted 16 November 2025

KEYWORDS
 Grounded theory; Instagram; teacher identity; best-loved self

From “Teachergram” to Top-Tier: New Study Maps Teacher Identity on Instagram Across Three Countries

A new article in *Teachers & Teaching: Theory and Practice* turns a familiar social media scroll into serious scholarship—examining how teachers in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Portugal use Instagram to express teacher identity and what the authors call their “best-loved selves.”

Titled “*Teaching Be like . . . ': an exploration of Instagram, teacher identity, and the best-loved self*,” the study uses a grounded theory approach to understand how Instagram can amplify or mute how teachers present who they are as educators. The authors analyzed teacher-created Instagram videos across the three national contexts and found that teachers shape their “best-loved selves” through identifiable patterns—while also building community through shared creativity, connection, and professional meaning-making beyond the classroom.

The publication is also a story of collaboration and mentorship across institutions and borders. The author team brings together two Ph.D. graduates of TLAC (Chelsea Cole and Ambyr Rios), TLAC Clinical Professor Sharon D. Matthews, CEHD EPPC staff member Sydney Zentell, and two key external collaborators: Angela Kraemer-Holland (Kansas State University) and Maria Assunção Flores (University of Minho, Portugal)—a widely respected international scholar.

This work grew out of a competitively awarded ISATT Grant, designed to support collaboration between emerging researchers and leading international scholars, with the goal of producing top-tier research and sharing it at an ISATT conference. The team presented the work at the ISATT International Conference this past summer at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, before publishing the article in *Teachers & Teaching: Theory and Practice*—ISATT’s official journal. The project also reflects strong professional service and editorial leadership connected to the field’s flagship networks.

Chelsea Cole previously served as a graduate research assistant for the *Journal of Teacher Education* (JTE); Ambyr Rios currently serves as a JTE Assistant Editor; and Maria Assunção Flores recently completed her term as a JTE Associate Editor (and is also a former ISATT Chair). The publication builds directly on and extends scholarly work on the “best-loved self,” strengthening a research line that connects teacher identity, narrative inquiry, and contemporary professional life.