

**Blowing and Bursting Bubbles**  
Sharon Verner Chappell

Created from a child's breath  
Blown from a wand of any shape  
A perfect sphere  
Surface tension holds strong as it  
Spins alongside the others  
Reflecting iridescent colors in sunlight

To catch them, my daughter reaches  
through her whole body  
Fingertips almost touching their strong  
Yet fragile whole

Personal space is a bubble  
Built from invisible energy  
I burst it once  
When I was four,  
prancing around another child at preschool  
chanting his name, foreign on my tongue  
While he cried under the blanket  
we wrapped him in

Pop

A school burst it once—  
the bubble so delicately and intentionally blown  
through the coos of parent to baby,  
her name in whispers—  
pale pink, golden yellow, cerulean blue swirls—  
the many I love yous  
Heard in languages unspoken at school  
Those words kept her bubble whole  
Until one day  
in kindergarten  
It bobbed onto a pencil tip  
That wrote a new name for her.  
Her American name.

Pop

I wonder about

The blowing and bursting of bubbles

Who gets to dip into the sticky substance of life's self worth?

To hold the wand and blow?

Who gets to burst? And what follows—

a squeal of excitement, a tear of loss

Some other quiet rupture?

How can I be a mother now

based on what I wished I had known as a girl,

About the fragile sureness of belonging?

About our actual selves

Whose differences are held in stark relief

from the cookie cutter body

the news anchor accent

the kids on TV shows who fit in without even trying—

How can I attend to those who feel the sticky bursts of bubbles everyday

From the not-saying and not-hearing,

From being on the outside of assumptions and privilege.

What if I cannot work in the school to do it,

What if those four walls box the bubbles in

What if everyone in charge says there is no time or space in the curriculum

To start a new bubble blowing project.

I am too old to be young, too young to forget

And my daughter is just right when it comes to the joy of bubbles

Our bodies stretch to the open sky

She shows me what is possible

I must work with her,

we have bubbles to burst,

and so many new ones to blow.



Sharon Chappell is an assistant professor in the department of Elementary and Bilingual Education at CSU Fullerton. She specializes in diversity and curriculum issues, English language learning, bilingual education, and arts education. She also is interested in building communities of learners in online instruction. Dr. Chappell earned her Ph.D. in curriculum studies from Arizona State University. She can be contacted at [schappell@exchange.fullerton.edu](mailto:schappell@exchange.fullerton.edu)