

# 3 Children and the urban environment

## Agency in Pompeii

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### Introduction

Work on Pompeii has sought to map key aspects of public space with a view to understanding the local variation across the excavated city. As most will know, two-thirds of the 66 hectares of the site has been excavated. The neighbourhoods have been approached with a focus on: where activities occurred – for example – the worship of the gods at street shrines, the collection of water from public fountains, and the presence or absence of bakeries, bars and other commercial outlets. Within this view of the city at a local level, much of the focus has been upon an adult–adult interaction with little discussion of how children might have utilised the public spaces of the city, or at what age might their access to public space and its urban amenities have been enabled. Work to date, by Katherine Huntley on the drawing of stick-figures by children and by Renata Garraffoni and Ray Laurence on the writing of ABCDs, has demonstrated that we can identify children learning and playing in public space.<sup>1</sup> The key aspect of determining the presence of the child has been undertaken in these studies with reference to developmental psychology/anthropology and with reference to the height off the ground of children at different ages. This is a key concept for the investigation of the child in the Roman city that may provide the means to accessing the differential between the adult’s city and the child’s city. This chapter reviews where we might measure the access of children by age/height to key features of the Roman city and to define how that access changed according to their age/height.<sup>2</sup>

To begin with, we need to be well-aware that human height and human growth vary, both today and between today and the past of Pompeii prior to 79 CE. Thus, average height today is that of the very tallest Pompeian; whereas the lowest percentiles of modern European growth charts are at the average for the first century CE. Most parents, today, have an understanding of the reach of their children as they grow up, and often consciously or sub-consciously relate height to competency or agency of a child. For example, sharp knives tend to be moved to a position only reached by adults, where they are perceived as out-of-reach of a young child (climbing or moving furniture to increase reach needs to be recognised as a possibility). This is not to suggest that parents in Pompeii may have followed the same procedure, however, what I wish to suggest is that

within the material culture of Pompeii – we have access to the haptic or sensory experience of the past, and an age-related variable to that experience was the height of the child. Most obviously, a child’s gaze was from a quite different position to that of adults, but we should add also the experience of touch at a lower level than that of adults. The modern world has become aware of the role of touch in the learning of children.<sup>3</sup> Houses, today, bear evidence of the touch of children through handprints and marks on walls at the height of their hands.<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps, also, worth contemplating the role of heat and cold in relation to the child’s body in Antiquity. A matter that was fully conceptualised for Antiquity in medical thought as physically different.<sup>5</sup> It has to be admitted that the modern world measures height and weight (occasionally head size as well) to conceptualise a normative pattern of human growth.

The ancients had normative patterns of development in the medical literature and a numerical system of normalisation of childhood in relation to both development and to numerical danger points to health, such as the age of seven.<sup>6</sup> Age rather than gender was the dominant structure for the medicalisation of children prior to puberty.<sup>7</sup> In this period of childhood, the materiality of the city played a role in the creation of gender distinctions alongside the creation of citizens or the reproduction of cultural norms over generations.<sup>8</sup> A key factor for the reproduction of gender was clothing that at its most formal would have adjusted or restricted the movement of a child.<sup>9</sup>

Today, we associate rapid movement with the actions of children, whereas the Romans consciously saw a person in a hurry as a slave.<sup>10</sup> Thus, part of socialisation or becoming more adult was a slowing of bodily movement in public space – an obvious exception to this being exercise in the *palaestra* or at the baths, when clothes were not worn. Perhaps, the most formal wear was associated with religious ritual, in which children were not bystanders and these could have been occasions at which gender was learnt.<sup>11</sup> The view of these events associated with temples and the Forum may have been obscured, or potentially children could have been lifted up by parents to gain a better view or a panorama across the heads of a crowd of adults.<sup>12</sup> The child, due to height or position, would only have been able to see what was occurring, but these views set out the limits or norms of participation, according to gender and/or status, which were learnt for an adult future.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, we need to recognise this aspect of memory from childhood – alongside other recognised aspects of ‘the society of memory’ found in Roman cities, such as ancestors and the creation of ancestors through tomb construction or even the new visual imagery associated with emperor Augustus or early Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

### **Redefining neighbourhoods in Pompeii with reference to children**

Earlier work on neighbourhoods in Pompeii tended to focus on the definition of Pompeii’s neighbourhoods in terms of the formal organisation of the *vici* known from inscriptions and electoral notices.<sup>15</sup> This inevitably caused the focus of discussion to be upon the adult male citizen voter and provided the starting point



Figure 3.1 The house of the Cei, Pompeii, seen from the *fauces* showing *puteal* in the *atrium* (centre foreground) (photo: Ray Laurence)

for the discussion of public space in Pompeii in the 1990s, just as the *salutatio* and the *paterfamilias* were the starting points for the discussion of private space. As a consequence, Pompeian spatial studies can be seen to have a gender and age bias to the adult male.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the child is generally excluded from the literature – a perusal of the indices of books on Pompeii point to an exclusion of children from the ‘proper study’ of Pompeii.<sup>17</sup>

However, houses can be approached from the perspective of the child and the role of children may inform some of the spatial practices associated with these structures. The *puteal* found in the *atria* of a number of houses provide a telling example of the development of spatial practice (Figure 3.1). These show clear signs of wear from rope-pulled buckets or similar devices for gaining access to water from the cistern.<sup>18</sup> The *puteal* prevents the possibility of a child or adult falling into the cistern or domestic animals falling in or polluting the supply of water, but also is at a height that would have facilitated use by both adults and children. The heights recorded tend to range from 0.4 to 0.6 metres.<sup>19</sup> The simplicity of the design needs to be observed though and not simply taken for granted. The compromise between accessibility and safety is intriguing and illustrates an interesting designed resolution of the problem. The barrier that is created is not particularly tall but needs to be tall enough to be noticed and to prevent the possibility of tripping over it, or a toddler falling into it. Hence, we have evidence for the fact that the Pompeians considered a concept of child safety that informed the design of domestic interior spaces.

Even where the evidence points to children clearly having agency, it is often denied. For example, Pompeii’s most famous child Numerius Popidius

Celsinus, who it is stated clearly in the inscription over the gateway leading into the precinct of the temple of Isis restored the temple with his own money and was co-opted onto the *ordo* of *decuriones* (town council) at the age of six is explained with reference to his father attempting to launch him into politics.<sup>20</sup> The name in the inscription like all names of the freeborn in epigraphy includes a reference to the name of Numerius' father. The question of how the young boy of six walked through the streets of Pompeii on his way to meetings of the *decuriones* is never discussed, for most scholars the explanation is much easier if it is recognised that the father was doing this for his son. It should be pointed out that this is not the only child from Pompeii, who was a decurion. The recent excavation of a tomb adjacent to a villa of the Lucretii Valentes included two *stelai* commemorating an eight-year-old and a 13-year-old, who were adlected to the decurions.<sup>21</sup> Importantly, alongside these *stelai* was another; a two-year-old who was not a decurion. This might suggest that this family produced children who walked amongst the decurions from the age of eight. These boys, buried on a rural estate, would have been seen in the city and we should note here that they were already in a position to have power over others from an early age.<sup>22</sup>

To place children into the neighbourhoods of Pompeii, we need to begin with an understanding of the nature of Pompeian spatial structures, once outside the front door of a house.<sup>23</sup> Within the vicinity of the doorway or just a few crossroads away, a local neighbourhood shrine could be found and at roughly the same distance, but not necessarily in the same location, a public water fountain could be found. The streets themselves varied in terms of width with those leading from the gates of the city, generally, having a far greater width than those that did not. These were streets that had the most shops along their sides. There were other streets that would have been conspicuous for an absence of wheeled traffic. It is possible for an adult to walk from one end of Pompeii to the other in less than 20 minutes. This observation is important and allows us to suggest that all parts of the city were easily accessible to all the healthy and able-bodied people. Once you could walk unaided, you could traverse the city – but children would also have needed a sense of direction and knowledge of how to return to their home. The exploration of space by children tended to occur in what is today termed: middle childhood – the ages running from seven to early teenage years. Such forms of exploration have become curtailed in the twenty-first century by fears associated with modern traffic and a fear of strangers. Both of these can be effectively removed from the study of Pompeii, it was a city of fewer than 20,000 inhabitants with slow moving traffic, and though there were strangers in the city – there is no evidence of the fear of strangers that modern parents project onto the urban environment in the large metropolis that anticipates the child as victim and ensures that children have limited scope for urban journeys undertaken alone or with other children.<sup>24</sup> Our concerns in this chapter are with the range a child might travel from home.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, the aim of this research is to engage with observations in urban discourse that there are spatially distinct stages to knowing the city:

- a. preparatory stage: of preliminary adjustment of self (e.g. immigrant getting to know a place);
- b. play: involving development of socio-spatial networks through place based social interaction;
- c. the game: a stage by which a person has developed a consistency of thoughts and behaviour that is maintained in spite of an extended spatial context.<sup>26</sup>

Over the period of seven to 14 years in a Pompeian childhood, we would expect the range in space and understanding of the city to increase.<sup>27</sup> This would suggest that the city has a personal geography that is age-specific and may expand through experience (organised by the body and the mind) that also may through a time–space life path interiorise and internalise social relations.<sup>28</sup> It is important to recognise that the relationship of experience of space, always via the body, has to embrace the concept that a child’s body is in a state of change over time.<sup>29</sup> This may be all too obvious but seems to be an omission when discussing the engagement of children and space. Their gaze or ability to gaze at elements of the city changes as they become taller. Their mobility is also an area of change due to the development of co-ordination. Thus, to incorporate the child into urban studies of Pompeii, we need to incorporate a conception of continuing redefinition of the body and gaze.

### **Redefining the child in the neighbourhood: the child’s body and material practice**

Children have, forever, been shorter in height than adults – it is the visual distinction of the child–adult division. The view of the city seen by a child thus is quite different from that of an adult. Spaces designed today for the exclusive use of adults are quite different to those designed for the dominance of children – for example, a school. The feature of size, for example, that of chairs in schools today reflects the usage of the chair by an adult or a child. Such an obvious example underlines the relationship between the material and the usage of the material according to the age of the individual. This need not be a feature exclusive to the world of the schoolroom, but should be extended to the wider urban environment. As children become older their height increases, thus a child at one age might have a quite different experience of an object or part of the urban environment than a child who is four years older. This differentiation by height, that should also be a proxy for sight and reach of the hands as well, will form the basis of the analysis set out in the core section of this chapter. It is possible to define the average growth pattern of children in Pompeii by taking the adult height outcomes based on skeletal evidence, and model the expected growth pattern that would produce average Pompeian adults at 1.64m for males and 1.54m for females. In terms of the modern twenty-first century growth charts, these heights are low and place average Pompeians in what would be the first five centiles.<sup>30</sup> The seven years between a Roman six-year-old and a young-adult changing into his *toga virilis* could be summarised as a difference between a 106 cm tall child and a 145 cm tall youth with just another 11 cm to grow to a full adult height of 166 cm.

*Table 3.1* Average height of Pompeian child aged 6 to 14

Age 6	106 cm tall
Age 7	111 cm tall
Age 8	117 cm tall
Age 9	121 cm tall
Age 10	126 cm tall
Age 11	130 cm tall
Age 12	134 cm tall
Age 13	139 cm tall
Age 14	145 cm tall

This basic raw data that relates average height to chronological age allows us to begin to comprehend how a child at a certain age saw the city from eyes a few centimetres below the average adult height of 166 cm (for males) or 154 cm (for females). Thus, if looking at the sacrifice scene in the temple of the Genius of Augustus (Figure 3.2) with a height of 130 cm (the average height for 11-year-olds), few children under the age of 10 could see down onto the surface of the altar or view objects placed on the altar.<sup>31</sup> However, their hands would have been considerably



*Figure 3.2* Altar of the temple of the Genius of Augustus, Pompeii (photo: Ray Laurence)

closer to the marble of the altar than the hands of an adult. This would provide them with the tactile experience of touching the incised surfaces that included the famous sacrificial scene and featured both adults and a child attendant.

The same would have been true of inscribed statue bases in the Forum itself, where hands and eyes were closer to the letter forms of the inscriptions and further away from the statues of men and horses that towered over both children and adults.<sup>32</sup> The statue base of Lucius Decidianus Rufus was 1.36 m in height (*CIL* X 788); whereas others such as those of Gaius Cuspius Pansa reached a height of only 1.08 m (*CIL* X 790).<sup>33</sup> The child from the age of six was at a height of which, the lettering of the inscription on these statue bases would have been lower than the level of their eyes. This might have been the position in which children learnt to read inscribed letters, something that remained with them in adulthood, even if they could not read a document or cursive script.<sup>34</sup> As a child's age increased, the distance between the letters and their eyes also increased culminating in the adult view from a position at the height of the feet or lower legs of the statue. Thus, as though the statue was standing on a *rostra*, whilst these statues would have been overlooked by those set up on the triumphal arches of the Forum in Pompeii.<sup>35</sup> The view of the child is one of looking up at the faces of adults and looking further up to the statues that were placed in the Forum, whilst in proximity to the letters of the inscription – a combination that informs them as a viewer.<sup>36</sup> They could also look at a different world at their own height of other children, the lower parts of the bodies of adults, and a material world that featured figural scenes on altars and the letters of inscriptions that were seen by adults from above were in close proximity to their hand and may have been objects that were learnt through touch as well as sight.<sup>37</sup> The child's world of touch was not that of adults whose hands did not reach down to the height of inscriptions when standing. Thus, the possibilities of touch could be seen to have been a feature of this form of material culture in the Forum and an aspect of learning to read the carved letters of inscriptions. A key feature of the child, seen in visual representations is the fact that they are touching or holding either the clothes of adult males or hands of adult females.<sup>38</sup>

Every doorway to every house in Pompeii was not far from a local altar (of the *Lares*), a public waterfountain, bars and shops, whilst within the house itself – an altar of the *Lares* frequently protected its inhabitants from danger (Figure 3.3). The question is how far can we see that these prominent features of Pompeii's urban environment have been part of a child's world as much as part of an adult world? Also, did age make a difference to how the urban environment was utilised? The scaling of the growth of children set out above allows us to examine the most prominent material features of neighbourhoods and begin to see whether they could have been utilised by children, who are shorter than adults. This would seem to be a fundamental first step to understanding agency and childhood in Antiquity.<sup>39</sup>

The adult version of Pompeii often connects the use of bars with drinking, gambling and prostitution.<sup>40</sup> The reasoning comes from our literary and legal sources written by the elite with a modern bias that the use of a bar is an adult thing – symbolised in many countries by the height of the counter on which drinks are served. If we look at Pompeian bars, as Paula Lock has done, from a point



*Figure 3.3* Crossroad, with shrine and water fountain in close proximity, Pompeii (photo: Ray Laurence)

of view of design, we discover that the height of bars in all cases is below 1.12 m and on average these bars are found to be at a much lower height of 0.79 m.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the height of the bar would suggest that these ubiquitous structures found across Pompeii were not spaces that were designed to exclude children. It would seem likely with a large population of children in Pompeii, that these bars were part of their urban experience and we need to create the means to understand the bar as a place not just for adults, but also for children and potentially these were places at which children learnt or understood the social conventions of alcohol.<sup>42</sup> Close to many bars were water-fountains located in the street. These have a very similar height to that of the bars with a median of about 0.8 m and with the tallest at over one metre. This would cause the public water-supply to be accessible to children over the age of six and the fountains were constructed to prevent potential pollution from animals and also to ensure that careless children did not get wet for no reason. There is visual evidence from Pompeii of sleepy water carriers, who can be identified as young boys. Thus, children were not designed out of these public spaces of the city and the bars and water-fountains catered for their needs with access gained by those over the age of six. This implies that children had access to clean water and were able to collect water themselves, just as they could go to a bar and obtain food and drink.

Not far from any bar in Pompeii, you can normally find an altar set up close to a crossroad or street intersection. These vary in height from a low 0.43 to 1.3 m with only one over 1.15 m and a median height of 0.89 m.<sup>43</sup> Thus, in the majority of cases children had access to the surface of the altar in terms of touch, but need not have access to the surface of the top of the altar in terms of sight (bearing in mind



that eyes are placed below the top of the head in terms of height). The surface of the front of the altar, in Pompeii, at least, was not decorated – but examples from Rome show both epigraphy and imagery that would provide a tactile world to be explored. The height of an altar or a thing might be said to have been designed to prevent the touching that is often associated with the child. An interesting feature of the altars from Rome is that they developed a sculptural form that was most readily accessed by children (i.e. persons of a lower height) than by adults, who would need to bend or kneel down to examine the detail.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of this imagery should not be underestimated in the creation of identity. Early haptic experiences of these sculptural images, reinforced with a concept that the *Lares Augusti* protected people may have inserted an understanding of, what we today associate with the imagery of Augustan Rome into the minds of all who grew up near such a local altar.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it is not just the ability to see the objects placed on an altar that was experienced by children, but also the smell, the touch and the ability to hear sounds associated with ritual. In combination, this experience of the local shrines of the city inserted a body of knowledge into the heads of children from a young age. The inclusion of the image of the Genius of Augustus on some of these altars would have effectively placed that image in close proximity to those most impressionable, and – at least in Rome – could also gain a tactile experience of touching the sculpted stone – effectively touching the emperor's image and, perhaps, also in the mind gaining an experience of the emperor. The learning of images, for children, did not distinguish new from old, and new imagery may have had a greater didactic value for children. Hence, when viewing the imagery associated with the reign of Augustus – we may suggest that a child aged seven might experience the new altars set up in the *vici* to the *Lares Augusti* and that experience would stay with them (or be continually reinforced through usage) by age 12 at the first sight of the completed Forum of Augustus in 2 BCE. The combination of stories from the Aeneid (with lines found in Pompeii as graffiti) with Augustan imagery provided children with a powerful socio-cultural matrix for the formation of a Roman identity in Pompeii

Interestingly, the crossroad shrines (located in the streets of Pompeii) are somewhat lower in height than the household *Lararia* with all but three well-over one metre in height, and ranging even to two metres in height.<sup>46</sup> The median height of household altars, at 1.33 m, causes children under the age of 12 to have had a limited view of the objects placed on/in the shrine. The images of the deities in these household shrines cast a gaze down on children, whereas they were looked at from a greater height by adults. Certainly, the objects were positioned out of the reach of younger children and provided a site in which to place the images of gods. It should be noted here that the *atrium* was a space associated with things of considerable height accentuated by columns, but also including doorways that were on average some three metres in height that were often closed.<sup>47</sup> We may speculate over the use of doors to keep children in rooms and to curtail their ability to wander both around the house and out of the house. The height of the *Lararia* reflects both the control of access of younger children – i.e. its prevention, providing an opportunity to develop a conception of the sacred that they would

have to grow up to gain access to, whilst the use of the figurines located in the *Lararia* was restricted and reserved for older children and adults. The lower altars are almost miniatures, often found in more private rooms, away from the access of the public.<sup>48</sup> The wooden *Lararium* found at Herculaneum had two parts to it – an upper shrine with deities (Hercules and Venus), and a lower cupboard with vessels for rituals, the upper part stood at 0.94 metres off the ground.<sup>49</sup> This would suggest all had access to the vessels but not to the deities. Thus, there is no reason to suppose that children could not have been involved in the use of ritual vessels, but what they were prevented from doing, due to height, was to utilise the deities or to have been in a position to touch the deities. We might also contemplate that these shrines were to be viewed by adults from closer to eye level. Thus, the rituals associated with the day on which a *toga virilis* was first worn may also be a point at which a child had grown to the height or higher than the height necessary to look straight into their household *Lararium*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the linkage between the *Lares* and not just watching, but cultivating the household may make a tangible linkage between the physical growth in terms of height of children and the well-being of the household as a whole.<sup>51</sup>

The frieze from the *atrium* of the Praedia Julia Felix that ran around the room above the level of the doors has been recently reinterpreted as a series of scenes representing a *mercatus* (market) being held in the Forum of Pompeii.<sup>52</sup> Its position causes the view of the figures to be distant and looked up to, unlike the publication of the frieze in books. Thus, the position of the viewer is not dissimilar to the viewer of the frieze of the Ara Pacis that also included children.<sup>53</sup> The frieze was drawn in the eighteenth century on excavation and these drawings, alongside photographs taken more recently, provide evidence for how children would appear in public, their gestures and their activities.<sup>54</sup>

Most of the activities involve forms of commerce and trade. Fragment 9 shows the sale of bronze vessels and features children in two roles. The first is seated but hard at work with a hammer, whereas the second is holding the toga of a customer and carrying a small basket (see Figure 3.4). The latter may remind us of the children on the Ara Pacis, who hold the hands of female adults, but the clothing of male adults.<sup>55</sup> In addition, there is at the left of this scene, a person shorter than the adults around him selling bread. Fragment 10 shows another scene of sale, of textiles to two seated women – behind whom is standing a female older child, whose body language is created to be erect and stationary without interacting with the other adult figures. The distancing, here, may be due to the age of this person or perhaps their status as a slave attendant to either the female customers or the seller. Fragment 15 includes scenes of the sale of metal items and of shoes, to the left we can see a naked baby sat on the lap of the customer – presumably carried to the Forum enfolded in the woman's garments.<sup>56</sup> To the right, an older male can be seen actively purchasing or discussing the metal goods. The female adult rests a hand on his shoulder that delineates the child's dependency through touch, just as the younger child in Fragment 9 was holding the clothing of a male adult. A clear indicator of dependency for children was the physical contact between themselves and adults; whereas adults have no contact with each other. Fragment 11 shows a female seller,



Figure 3.4 Sale of bronze vessels in the Forum of Pompeii. Frieze from the *atrium* of the Praedia Julia Felix (detail). Photo: Wikimedia Commons

who is upright and almost stationary with a tray of goods and also further baskets of goods at her feet. Her location at the north end of the Forum is indicated by the presence of the triumphal arch that flanks the Capitolium and we can suggest that she is strategically placed to sell to people moving into the Forum.<sup>57</sup>

Another architectural feature of this fragmentary frieze are the columns to the rear of any scene. As we have seen above, columns were a prime location for graffiti and need to call our attention to them as a key feature of Roman public space. Fragments 4 and 13 provide some guidance to their use by children of different ages. Fragment 4 shows two female and male figures draped around a column, whilst a togate figure looks on. In contrast, a naked toddler can be seen in Fragment 13 interacting with a female adult. The famous school-teaching scene, Fragment 12, also features people leaning on columns and watching the lesson from within the colonnade and we see on the far left beyond the scene of whipping a person writing on a column.<sup>58</sup> The structure of the frieze with action both in front of the colonnade and further action within the colonnade itself illustrates a key spatial feature. Those in the colonnade are not conducting business, but might be said to be at play – whether gazing at each other or at the action in the foreground, these people could be seen to be partially hidden – revealing a key quality of the presence of columns in the ancient city, the columns created segmented spaces that were partially obscured. Thus, they were also facilitating contact between male and female older children.

A notable feature of Fragment 14 of the frieze from the *atrium* of the Praedia Julia Felix is the scene representing adults and a child reading a notice set out across three equestrian statue bases.<sup>59</sup> The notice is suspended from the top of the statue bases, thus, we might suggest it was suspended at a height of over a metre and, taking a scale from the adults would suggest a height of about 1.3 m. In this representation, the adults look down on the notice – in closer proximity to it than they would be an inscription on the statue base, whereas the shorter child (?) has an eye level at the lowest part of the notice. This rather ephemeral evidence for the

public display of a notice illustrates the distinction between permanent writing and the temporary notice. The latter is placed so that it could be read by adults and older children at a greater height than the inscriptions on the statue bases.

### **Conclusion – The materiality of agency in childhood**

Agency tends to be discussed with reference to individuals and has been associated with a shift from a descriptive analysis based on societies to one that is focussed on the individual within archaeology.<sup>60</sup> However, within other disciplines, agency can belong to not just individuals, but also social powers and institutions.<sup>61</sup> Often these include social workers and public institutions today, elements simply absent from Pompeii, yet we should still consider where else agency might have rested in Pompeii.

The discussion in this chapter has focussed on a dialogue between the growth of children and the physical environment of the Forum, bars, water-fountains, local shrines, and household shrines identified a changing relationship as the child, quite literally, grew up. Their interaction with all these elements would have been cyclical based on daily routines, such as water-collection, and cyclical events held in the Forum and at local shrines. This caused them to interact with not just the urban environment of the everyday, but also with a city's *lieux de memoire* of past activities.<sup>62</sup> The latter causes the physical urban environment to have a form of agency that was not static or simply present, but subject to change. Examples of these changes include the connection of the aqueduct or the construction of a crossroad shrine. The physical features of Pompeii, in particular, altars and statues, represented in material form the institutions of the state in terms of religion and power. Thus, these were primary locations for developing a conception of wider identity that linked the child in Pompeii to Rome and to the power of the emperor.

As with any discussion of agency, social context is critical. The child of a slave would have lacked the same autonomy that might have been associated with a freeborn child. However, recent research in neuro-science has shown that social context affects physical brain development, and also recognises that unlike speech, reading is the result of the activation of a complex network linking sound and shape of letters to be decoded.<sup>63</sup> The implications for the study of Pompeii are that the instruction of children in their ABC was a necessity for literacy. The fact that this took place at the crossroad in literary sources would suggest a convergence of the child's schooling with the location of water-fountains and crossroad shrines.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, schooling also took place in the Large Palaestra with its toilets and swimming pool pointing to the convergence of urban amenity and education that underpinned adult identities. Taking a functionalist stance, we might see such locations as simply being the main facilities for children – education, drinking water, and so on.

However, these were locations of interaction between children and their environment, which would have affected their development – water was not simply for the function of drinking, but, as we see today, has a potential for play.

The raising of access to water to a height beyond the reach of the youngest children regulated access to wetness and reflects a view of the competency of young children, or their ability to disrupt the smooth operation of an older adult world based around functionalism. The height of any element of the urban environment at Pompeii can be seen to regulate children under a certain age, through a denial of access to it. As we have seen, in Pompeii, children over seven had access to most features regulated by height; but their access increased as children grew taller and gained through repetition greater experience of using water-fountains, bars, altars, and the Forum. This is not to say that younger children were denied access to these features of the urban environment, but, instead, to suggest that adults or older children were needed to facilitate or regulate their access. Just as the opening or closing of doors to rooms and houses could have limited the range of roaming by children. This returns us to the three key concepts associated with the learning of urbanism and suggests a means to comprehend these in the context of Pompeii.<sup>65</sup>

- a. preparatory stage: that we may associate with children under seven years of age, in which their access and understanding of urbanism was dependent on adults or older children;
- b. play: that we can associate with middle childhood, in which access is enabled through social interaction often at the crossroad, or in the Forum, and with school in the public spaces of the city;<sup>66</sup>
- c. the game: that can be understood to have been full independent interaction with the public realm of the city, even if that person was not fully independent legally.

Not every person in Pompeii reached the third stage, some may simply have not developed the knowledge of urbanism due to their social environment of slavery or of child labour. Whether a child could reach the third stage without any form of literacy would require a much longer discussion, but a preliminary position might be one that emphasised the role of writing (in the form of graffiti) in the first two of the three stages above.

Informed by this knowledge of children's interaction with the urban environment, we may consider how a six-year-old acted as a decurion, rather than simply as being a child, aided by his father, in a state of becoming an adult.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, given that we have knowledge of three children who were decurions in Pompeii (tightly dated to the second half of the first century CE), with two known from the same family tomb next to their villa, perhaps, we should no longer see children as decurions as an uncommon phenomenon,<sup>68</sup> and we need to incorporate the powerful child into our understanding of historical phenomena of the Roman city and into wider Roman historical discourse.<sup>69</sup> These children lived out of the city, perhaps, but when in town – they would have been seen alongside the adult members of the *ordo* of decurions.

**Notes**

- 1 Oscan alphabets from Pompeii: Crawford 2011: Pompei no. 74–83. No. 81 in the Casa di M. Obellio Firmo, Reg. IX, 14, 2+4 is 1.17m above the ground. Huntley 2010; Garraffoni and Laurence 2013; see also Huntley in this volume.
- 2 Pufall and Unsworth 2004 for discussion of a need to understand agency of children. See also Vuolanto in this volume.
- 3 Stevens 2013.
- 4 Tuan 2005.
- 5 Dasen 2011: 293–4 on the physiology of infants; also Baker 2010.
- 6 On medical thinking on age and childhood see Harlow and Laurence 2008. For discussion of stages of life, see Harlow and Laurence 2002 and, more recently, Parkin 2010 and 2011.
- 7 Flemming 2013.
- 8 For the reproduction of culture and citizenship, see Laurence, Esmonde-Cleary and Sears 2011, especially 4–6. Compare how school texts from the Roman world taught norms of adulthood: Bloomer 1997.
- 9 Harlow 2013.
- 10 Corbeill 2004: 117.
- 11 Vuolanto 2010 for overview; Hemelrijk 2006, 2007, 2009, 2013; Flemming 2007; and Rives 2013 for specific studies. On movement and walking: O’Sullivan 2011 and papers in Laurence and Newsome 2011.
- 12 Children being carried to meet the emperor Trajan are a feature of the friezes on the Arch at Benevento, see Currie 1996.
- 13 For limits of participation of women in Pompeii, Laurence 2007a. The term “limits of participation” comes from van Bremen 1996.
- 14 Flower 2002; consider the discussion of Eumachia’s image by D’Ambra 2012 as a mode of memory creation. See also D’Ambra 2002 and 2012.
- 15 Key texts are: *CIL* IV 60, 128, 470, 480, 783, 7667, 7676, 7706, 7747. Laurence 2007b: 40–5 for an overview of approaches. For discussion of politics and *vici*, see Mouritsen 1990, and 1988: 67–8. An alternative reading is given by Castrén 1975: 80–2, and 275–6; or Jongman 1988: 304–6.
- 16 Both Wallace-Hadrill 1994 and Laurence 1994 have this basis from which to work forward. Both books can be seen to have limitations in their focus, compare Savunen 1997 and Laurence 2007a for a focus on women in space. For children in houses, see discussion by Allison 2004: 164–6.
- 17 It is worth examining the overview volume edited by Dobbins and Foss 2007, there are chapters on women and slaves, but no chapter on childhood – children are referred to in the index, but only fleetingly. Education might be considered a proper subject for discussion and García y García 2005 provides an overview.
- 18 Jansen 2007: 259.
- 19 *Puteal* heights are found in the following houses to vary between 40 and 60 cm, following examples suffice: House of the Cei: 45 cm – Michel 1990: 22; House of the Nozze d’Argento: 40.5 cm – Erhardt 2004: 41; House of the Caccia d’Antica: 60 cm – Allison and Sear 2002: 18; and House of the Fabbro: c. 55 cm – Ling 1997: 375.
- 20 *CIL* X 846. This inscription is linked by others to that of his father within the precinct, see recent examples: Beard 2010: 307; Jongman 2007: 511; Zanker 1988a: 126–7. Interestingly, 100 years earlier, Mau 1899: 164–5 linked the child’s inscription to others within the precinct to suggest the agency behind the rebuild rested with both his parents – *CIL* X 848 lists his mother (?) his father (?) and uncle (?) – for description of the finds and their recording in the years 1765–66, see D’Alessio 2009: 72–6.
- 21 De Spagnolis Conticello 1993–4 for context of the excavation of a tomb adjacent to a rural villa = *AE* 1994 no. 398 aged 8 *AE* 1994 no. 395 – the family produced a flamen and games giver of equestrian status. Also *CIL* 10.1036 Marcus Alleius Libella died

- aged 17 – a decurion. For listing of epigraphic references to young decurions see Laes 2004b, but note decurions of Pompeii lack epigraphic visibility – as Mouritsen 2005 demonstrates – note also this single excavation of a rural tomb complex substantially increased the number of inscriptions of under-age decurions at Pompeii.
- 22 Laurence 2007b: 167–81 on the learning of urbanism in childhood.
  - 23 Laurence 2007b: 39–61 and 102–33 provides the detail to fill out the picture set out here with illustrations; Van Nes 2011 draws together these results and applies a more sophisticated understanding of space syntax to the issues. The overall pattern though is not greatly different.
  - 24 For discussion: James and James 2004: 2. There are many studies of children and space – Elwood and Elwood 2012 engages with the topic of agency at the centre of this book.
  - 25 For the body and space in childhood see Teather 1999: 1–26.
  - 26 Wilson 1980.
  - 27 Jones and Cunningham 1999.
  - 28 Pile 1996: 46; Thrift 1983.
  - 29 On the body and space, see Lefebvre 2014.
  - 30 See for example, <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/NEW%20Boys%202-18yrs%20%284TH%20JAN%202013%29.pdf>. For introductory discussion of skeletal heights in Pompeii and Herculaneum and health: Laurence 2005. We should not get too bound up with the knowledge that our own children would have been giants by 10 years at the height of the average 14-year-old in Pompeii. What is more important for this paper is to identify how height and growth of a child to certain height caused that child to have a view of some features of urban life for the first time.
  - 31 Figures from Benedetti, Gaiani and Remondino 2010.
  - 32 Pliny the Elder, *NH* 34.17 clarifies the link between reading inscriptions and collective memory in the Forum. Indeed, inscribed letters created a different mode of reading (Petronius, *Sat.* 58.7 *sed lapidarias litteras scio*) often informed by associated imagery, see Susini 1989; Corbier 2013 (= translation of Corbier 2006, chapter 1).
  - 33 For measurements of height, see Kockel 2005.
  - 34 Horsfall 1991: 62–3 comments: this is precisely how he learnt to read as a child; compare reading of CAVE CANEM at Petronius, *Sat.* 29.1, discussed further by Corbier 1991: 107–9, and 115.
  - 35 Müller 2011 for triumphal arches in the Forum.
  - 36 Koortbojian 1996: 219 on how image and inscriptions could be read by those unable to read documents.
  - 37 Millar 1994: 85–117 on use of touch and vision.
  - 38 For examples see Laurence 2000 on the Ara Pacis and Figure 3.4 (p. 37) on the images from the atrium of the Praedia Julia Felix.
  - 39 Compare Oswell 2013: 37–61.
  - 40 For example. Wallace-Hadrill 1995, but the question remains, how were these values and the texture of Pompeii learnt? Compare discussion of D’Arms 1995, who suggests historians need to address the question of how children learnt to drink alcohol in Roman culture. A question that 20 years on from publication, to my knowledge, remains unanswered. D’Arms suggested drinking would occur for males after the *toga virilis* in their teens.
  - 41 Variation in height is from 0.55–1.12 metres. I am indebted to Paula Lock (PhD student at the University of Kent) for providing the data and also for the conversation about design and height that inspired this paper. See discussion in MacMahon 2005: 76–9 on comparative height of counters Pompeian and modern and Monteix 2010: 92–7 for additional discussion.
  - 42 Estimates of the number of children vary, but we should expect 40–50 percent of the population to be under 18.
  - 43 Van Andringa 2000 for evidence of each altar published with its height.

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- 44 For images of the altars, see Lott 2004.
- 45 Creighton 2000: 87–101 argues that the child hostages of barbarian kings learnt the visual language of Augustan Rome that was reproduced on coins struck in mints on their return to their kingdoms later in life. What was true of foreign children should also apply to Roman children – Augustan imagery was learnt, Zanker 1988b was crucial to the development of this hypothesis.
- 46 Fröhlich 1991 for measurements of height; see also Boyce 1937.
- 47 Lauritsen 2013.
- 48 Bodel 2008.
- 49 Mols 1999: 58–62 with figures 137–47; Maiuri 1958: 252–55.
- 50 Harlow and Laurence 2002: 67. Harmon 1978 for dedication of the *bullae* to the *Lares*, especially Propertius 4.1.131–2; Persius 5.30–31.
- 51 Foss 1997: 196–7 on Plautus, *Aulularia* 1–8 usage of the verb *colere*. See also Orr 1978: 1563–9.
- 52 Olivito 2013 is the most recent and most extensive study to link the fragments of the frieze to the structures in the Forum, and it includes illustrations of all fragments alongside eighteenth century engravings (37–83). See Newsome 2013 on writing and space.
- 53 Laurence 2000 for children and the life course as depicted on the Ara Pacis.
- 54 Olivito 2013: 249–63 for discussion of the position of the frieze and alternative reconstructions. *Le Pitture Antiche d'Ercolano e Contorni Incise con Qualche Spiegazione*, Naples 1762 contains the earliest drawings of these scenes: Fragment 4 = Tav XLIII, p.227; Fragment 9 = Tav XLII, p.221; Fragment 10 = Tav XLI, p.213; Fragment 11 = Tav XLIII, p.227; Fragment 12 = Tav XLIII, p.227; Fragment 13 = Tav XLI, fig. p.213; Fragment 14 = Tav. XLIII, p. 227; Fragment 15 = Tav XLII, p.221. Mau 1899: 54–7 utilises the frieze to place activities into the Forum, including those of children.
- 55 Laurence 2000.
- 56 For an online colour image, see <http://www.romeinspompeii.net/forum.html>.
- 57 Olivito 2013: 58–61.
- 58 For an online colour image, see <https://vico.wikispaces.com/Clothing>. Laes 2011a: 107–47 for an overview of texts and schooling.
- 59 Olivito 2013: 68–72. For an online colour image, see <http://www.romeinspompeii.net/forum.html>.
- 60 Barrett 1997 on agency in the Roman Empire coincides with Oswell 2013: 37–61 on agency and children. See also Vuolanto in the present volume.
- 61 Van Nijnatten 2013: 7.
- 62 Seifer 2012.
- 63 Wasserman and Zambo 2013.
- 64 Garraffoni and Laurence 2013: 126–9 with notes at 133–4.
- 65 Wilson 1980.
- 66 Bloomer 1997.
- 67 This paradigm shift is discussed by Corsaro 2015: 73–6 with examples of historians' work.
- 68 De Spagnolis Conticello 1993–94 for the excavated context; Laes 2004b that needs to be read with Mouritsen 2005 on epigraphic recovery rate of decurions from Pompeii.
- 69 Such a viewpoint might even adjust the opening of the *Res Gestae* and our conception of Octavian as one too young to hold power at the age of 19. Elite children need not be seen as separated or delineated by age from adults, their status did not depend on their age, but upon their father's (biological or adopted – dead or alive) power, and their own agency to have power over others inferior by status yet older.