A Hybrid Emerges in Pursuit of Dynastic Goals: Principles of Child-Rearing and Pedagogy in the Florentine Household of Cosimo I de' Medici

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Introduction

In the sixteenth century, humanistic and religious consideration in child rearing and education practices evolved throughout Europe.[1] Building on momentum begun in the fifteenth century, development of a child's personality and individuality became a focus for literati, clerics and civic humanists.[2] The dissemination of printed books, the emergence of a tiered merchant class, and the rise of courtly societies contributed to this evolution in Italy.[3] In Florence, known throughout Europe as a mercantile city, the court of Cosimo I de' Medici transformed from that of an elite merchant family to a ducal court.[4] Having accumulated wealth through their success in banking and wool trade in the fifteenth century, the Medici entered the sixteenth century ruling a 'rhetorical republic' as oligarchs often accused of exceeding their power.[5] In 1532 the republic of Florence became a hereditary monarchy with the appointment of Alessandro de' Medici as the first Duke of Florence, a descendant of the dominant family line who had been the de facto rulers of Florence. By 1537, Alessandro had been assassinated, allowing for seventeen-year-old Cosimo's rise to power as the Duke of Florence from a lesser branch of the Medici family.

During this political transition, Cosimo (1519-1574) and his wife Eleonora di Toledo (1522-1562) orchestrated the childrearing and education of at least eleven children. Eight of these children were their own, five sons and three daughters that reached maturity: Maria (1540-1557), Francesco (1541-1587), Isabella (1542-1576), Giovanni (1543-1562), Lucrezia (1545-1561), Garzia (1547-1562), Fernando (1549-1609), and Pietro (1554-1604).[6] From contemporary documentation, at least three other children are believed to have been raised alongside the children as wards: Giulia (1535-1588, illegitimate daughter of Cosimo's assassinated predecessor, Alessandro de' Medici), Bia (1536-1542, Cosimo's illegitimate daughter before his marriage to Eleonora), and Dianora (1553-1576, Eleonora's niece and Pietro's wife-to-be).[7] This

[1] I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to Matteo Duni and Sara Matthews-Grieco for their guidance and support.
[2] See, for example, Desiderius Erasmus, "A Declamation on the Subject of Early Liberal Education for Children [1529, first Italian translation 1545]," ed. Erika Rummel and trans. Beert C. Verstraete (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 95-96. This essay was composed during Erasmus's travels in Italy.
[3] See Christopher Carlsmith, "Troublesome Teens: Approaches to Educating and Disciplining Youth in Early Modern Italy," in *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150-1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 151.
[4] Florentines frequently faced disparaging remarks from other Italians about their merchant status, such as Pope Pius' characterization that "they most excel in trade, which philosophers find sordid." Catherine Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence: The Spectacular Life and Treacherous World of Alessandro de' Medici* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 35.
[5] Ibid., 36
[6] Three of Cosimo and Eleonora's children died in infancy: Pietro (1546-1547, sometimes referred to as Pedricco), Antonio (1548-1548), and Anna (1553-1553). After Eleonora's death, Cosimo fathered two other illegitimate children: Don Giovanni (1567-1621) and Virginia (1568-1615).
[7] On the integration of ducal wards Giulia d'Alessandro (along with her brother Giulio and their half-sister Porzia)

essay considers the rearing of these children during the ducal couple's marriage (1539-1562) and campaign to establish their rule over Tuscany. During these years, nine of these children were born, five died, and the surviving children matured from *infanzia* and *puerizia* (the first two stages of Italian Renaissance childhood) to *adolescenza* (adolescence, which began at age fourteen), marking the beginning of their adult roles.

To stabilize the contested rule of the Medici family, Cosimo sought recognition of his position as the head of the Florentine state from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In 1539, merchant-born Cosimo gained aristocratic legitimacy through marriage to the noblewoman Eleonora, the daughter of the Spanish viceroy of Naples and third cousin to Charles V. Together, the ducal couple stabilized their family's position in the city-state of Florence, expanded their rule over territories throughout Tuscany, and developed a rapport with the leading courts of Europe. While Italian courts remained largely provincial, they strove to cultivate close contact with foreign courts and to enhance their international standing through gift exchange, displays of hospitality, and strategic marriage alliances with higher-ranking foreign families. At Cosimo and Eleonora's Hispano-Florentine court, Medici heirs were shaped by the example set by powerful family members, instructed by esteemed tutors, and exposed to international pedagogical methods. This essay explores the understudied strategies of early training that prepared Cosimo's children for success in future dynastic roles designed to achieve their parents' sociopolitical goals.

As historian Paul Grendler observed in his comprehensive study of *Schooling in Renaissance Italy* (1989), education always reflects the society it serves.[8] Cosimo's Tuscany was no exception: during the years of his children's tutelage, Cosimo's fledgling ducal court was in a state of social and political transition. The childrearing program directed by Cosimo and Eleonora appears to have been both influenced by and designed to accommodate political alliances in Italy, Spain, France, and Austria. Surviving correspondence of the couple and their courtiers suggests the Medici curriculum synthesized dynastic and social values distilled from classical and Christian texts. The pedagogical agenda of the ducal couple extended beyond their domestic sphere exerting influence on the schooling available in Tuscany. At a time when education proved a unifying force among Italy's disparate states, Cosimo and Eleonora used educational and childrearing practices as tools to distinguish their dynasty and support Medicean ambitions that extended beyond provincial rule.[9]

This essay will analyze the philosophical and cultural factors that shaped the Medici childrearing program to best meet the dynastic needs of the ducal family in 1537-1562. Scholars have referenced the early lives and education of the Medici children in studies focused on their adult years and their parents' lives, though few have studied these childrearing practices in detail.[10] Analysis of these practices when comparing the training of Medici ancestors and princely

and Dianora di Toledo see Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 124, 175.

[8] Paul Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 409.

[9] For more on education and the unification of Italian states divided by political, social, and economic differences, see Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, 410.

[10] Focused attention on the early lives and education of Cosimo and Eleonora's children and wards can be found in Daniela Stiaffini, *Cosimo I de' Medici ed Eleonora de Toledo: Vita coniugale a Pisa* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2016); Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Caroline P. Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici: The Glorious Life and Tragic End of a Renaissance Princess* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008). Maria Pia Paoli has written a survey of court education

peers will reveal that the education and fashioning of the ducal children played a critical role in the lasting political efficacy of the dynasty. For the first time, Florence was ruled by the largest ducal family in Italy, and the offspring and wards of Cosimo and Eleonora (whose appellation was "La Fecundissima," *The Most Fertile*) could be mobilized to secure Florence's position as an international power through multiple avenues of consort, courtier, military leader, high-ranking clergy, and monarch. The sections of this essay are organized thematically to explore shifting attitudes toward child-rearing and education in Italy, the influence of parents and tutors, and the effect of gender and cross-cultural influence on childrearing in the Medici household. The sociopolitical needs of Cosimo I's ducal court in the mid-sixteenth century included solidifying regional rule and strengthening international alliances. These needs inspired the development of a hybridized pedagogical model for Florentine ducal children that incorporated the practices of the merchant and noble classes, social and intellectual traditions established in the fifteenth cen tury, with new courtly standards introduced by leading contemporary humanists. The resulting model shaped the Medici children into ideal Florentine citizens and international courtiers in a Spanish Habsburg Empire.

I. Shifting Attitudes Toward Child-Rearing and Education in Sixteenth Century Florence

At the time when Cosimo and Eleonora were raising their children, parents and teachers assumed a civic responsibility to rear children to model and perpetuate community values. From the mid-fifteenth century, it became customary for court children throughout Europe to receive a humanist education, that is Classical ethics integrated with chivalric ideals. Differing schools of thought regarding the growth and intellectual development informed how children were raised. Humanists expressed the belief that the education of the mind and body should begin from infancy. For example, in his 1450 *De librorum educatione*, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) wrote that "both [instruction of the body and mind] should be done together from infancy, the education of a boy should begin from the first 'little fingernail,' as they say."[11] Pedagogist Pier Paolo Vergerio wrote "A man who is a good king is also a brave fighter. The body, then, should be trained from infancy for military service and the mind should be shaped for endurance," in his *De ingenuis moribus et liberalis studiis* (1402-1403).[12] Scholars widely regard this work as the most influential of Italian Renaissance educational treatises; publishers created forty editions of it by the end of the sixteenth century.[13] According to popular Florentine practices, toys such as dolls, swords, and hobby horses were chosen to direct children toward their future roles by age four or five. The childrearing programs for girls and boys diverged around age seven, when formal education began for boys and girls received domestic training

directed by Medici women, in which she has identified a host of tutors for Cosimo and Eleonora's children from payment records. These include four grammar tutors, Pier Vettori, Angeli da Barga, and a Greek tutor, Giovanni di Pietro Vergezio da Candia. Maria Pia Paoli, "Di madre in figlio: per una storia dell'educazione alla corte dei Medici," *Annali di Storia di Firenze* 3 (2011): 80.

[11] See Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, De librorum educatione, "The Education of Boys [1450]," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 135.

[12] Pier Paolo Vergerio, *De ingenuis moribus*, "The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth [1402-03]," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 69.

[13] On Vergerio's reception, see Maya Corry, "Delight in Painted Companions: Shaping the Soul from Birth in Early Modern Italy," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Maya Corry et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 314.

and religious education from their mothers.[14] In fifteenth and sixteenth-century Florence, there was a renewed interest in the medical humanities and auxology (the branch of science that investigates human growth). The revival of ancient medical texts and philosophy led scholars to divide growth stages into periods of seven years, with birth through age seven representing the earliest stage of childhood, *infanzia*, and age seven through fourteen representing *puerizia*, boyhood and girlhood.[15] In his 1529 *Libro della vita civile*, humanist historian Matteo Palmieri distinguished the ages of man according to the system set forth by Isidore of Seville. Palmieri identified age fourteen as the age of reason.[16] This notion was echoed by scholar Filippo di Niccolò Capponi in 1556.[17] Although humanist scholars renewed the Neo-Platonic proposals of the equality of men and women, boys were understood as having more stages of growth and development than girls who were considered to have two stages: pre and post-menstruation, signaling their eligibility for marriage.[18] The treatment of children at the Medici court reflects this understanding of the various stages of childhood, based on accounts of age-appropriate academic achievements, and play.

Although the humanist educational model in Renaissance Florence was initially intended for older students, it was expanded to include the early education of children of elite families. They believed that exposing children to classical virtues found in poetry, history, oratory, and philosophy of antiquity would create moral leaders.[19] In this regard, the ducal children could be offered a curriculum that resonated with established humanist traditions of their illustrious Medici ancestors in the fifteenth century. For the most part, the sixteenth-century Italian *studia humanitatis* curriculum and the Jesuit *ratio studiorum* imitated the humanistic curriculum developed by fifteenth-century Italians.[20] Within the Medici household, children appear to have shared the same tutors and were offered the same curriculum at the elementary level. It was in their later education that programming became more specialized by gender and dynastic role.[21]

14 See Paul Grendler, "The Schools of Christian Doctrine in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Church History* 53, 3 (1984): 319-331.

[15] See, for example, Solon, "Elegy [6th Century B.C.]," in *Greek Elegiac Poetry*, ed. and trans. Douglas E. Gerber (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 149; Ivan Nicoletti, *Gli artisti rinascimentali italiani scienzati della crescita del bambino* (Florence: Centro Studi Auxologici, 2012), 29. See also Isidore of Seville, "De aetatibus hominum," *Etymologies* 11.2.1-17 [c. 600-625], ed. and trans. Stephen A Barney et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 241-42.

[16] "Qui abbiamo parlato di due eta di corpo, cioè de la infanzia & pueritia, la quale secondo l'altra divisione e chiamata eta dignoranza. Hora seguita la adolescenti, in nella quale comincia anima ad havere cognizione de viti & virtu." Matteo Palmieri, *Libro della vita civile* (Florence: Filippo Giunta, 1529), 14-15. For discussion of Matteo Palmieri's model, see Ilaria Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani: crescere a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2001), 66, 119-27. Cosimo I was well aware of Palmieri and his works: in his own time, Palmieri was a supporter of Cosimo the Elder, and his portrait was among those commissioned by Cosimo I from Cristofano dell'Altissimo in 1552. William Harrison Woodward, *Studies in Education During the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 65.

[17] Filippo di Niccolò Capponi, *Libro intitolato facile est inventis addere, nel quale si trattano molte cose utili agli uomini nelle lor operationi e moti* (Venice: Domenico da Farri, 1556), f. 107r.

[18] See Nicoletti, *Gli artisti*, 35; Ilaria Taddei, "Puerizia, Adolescenza, Giovanezza. Images: Conceptions of Youth," in *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150-1650*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 15-26.

[19] For more on the development of humanist education in Italy, see Craig Kallendorf, "Introduction," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), vii.

[20] Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, 377.

[21] Vergerio's educational treatise, directed toward princes and aristocrats, acknowledged that intellects differ and that any general program of study should be adapted to the strengths and weaknesses of the student. Vergerio,

The social imperatives of religion-based systems of morality deeply influenced child-rearing practices within the Medici household, the Florentine community, and international courts. The advice that humanists revived from ancient philosophers conflicted with the recommendations made from Catholic pulpits, forcing parents and tutors to reconcile competing pedagogical models in order to adhere to social mores. For example, while some authors of educational treatises such as Battista Guarino discouraged play as a distraction from the pursuit of intellectual studies, many preachers encouraged play as a valuable way for children to learn Catholic morals.[22] Records of toys ordered for the Medici princes and princesses show that play was an important part of their young lives. For example, a letter in November 1548 requests a doll for eight-year-old Maria, and another in January 1552 makes reference to an educational toy used by five-year-old Garzia to learn the alphabet to his mother's satisfaction.[23] Similarly, following the admonishments of popular preachers in Italy and Spain, carried from the fifteenth century into the mid-sixteenth century, Eleonora dressed her children simply and modestly in their daily lives as a visible sign of their virtuous character.[24] However, to do justice to their newly acquired status as princes and princesses, for official appearances she ordered fine clothes that reflected their family's wealth, rank, and lineage.

The mid-sixteenth-century Florentine family was organized according to certain rules which bridged civic values and individual expectations.[25] Like the pedagogical teachings of educational treatises and sermons, the sixteenth-century *Economica* tradition (various household treatises based on classical texts) influenced child-rearing practices, inspired by Plato and Aristotle.[26] Revisions of the *Economica* placed emphasis on Catholic virtues as part of the Counter-Reformation (a period of Catholic resurgence in response to the Protestant Reformation, beginning in 1545), and stressed hierarchy within the family with the father as head of household above the mother. While Cosimo was the head of household as the husband, Eleonora, as an aristocrat, outranked him through her noble birth. Records of her role at court emphasize her independence as a mother, patroness, businesswoman, and ambassador. Although aristocratic hegemony led to classed pedagogical recommendations, instruction in religion and social graces

"Character and Studies," 57

[22] Battista Guarino, *De ordine docendi et studendi,* "A Program of Teaching and Learning [1459]," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 305. On the role of toys and play for the formation of good Christians, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber's foundational essay "Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in Florence in the Quattrocento," in *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), 310-29. On play for girls, see Michele Nicole Robinson, "The Material Culture of Female Youth in Bologna 1550-1600," in *The Youth of Early Modern Women*, ed. Elizabeth S. Cohen et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 238-39.

[23] Mariotto Cecchi to Pier Francesco Riccio, 5 November 1548. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato (henceforth ASF, MdP) 1174, fol. 413 (Medici Archive Project, henceforth MAP, doc# 18506); Agnolo Dovizi da Bibbiena to Pier Francesco Riccio, 21 January 1552. ASF, MdP 1170a, fol. 45 (MAP, doc# 5582).

[24] Among these are Giovanni Dominici, who advocated for rough cloths as modest dress, and Juan Luis Vives, who advised that clothes should be neat and spotless, but not luxurious. Giovanni Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare parte quarta: On the Education of Children* [1400-05], trans. and ed. Arthur Basil Cote (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1927),37; Juan Luis Vives, *De institutione feminae Christianae* [1523], ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 91-94.

[25] Fabien Lacouture, "'You Will Be a Man, My Son': Signs of Masculinity and Virility in Italian Renaissance Paintings of Boys," in *The Early Modern Child in Art and History*, ed. Matthew Knox-Averett (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 99.

[26] See Manuela Doni Garfagnini, "Autorità maschili e ruoli femminili," in *Donna, disciplina, creanza Cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: Studi e testi a stampa*, ed. Gabriella Zarri (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), 239-42.

was an important part of the whole education for all Florentine children.

While growing up in Renaissance Florence, Cosimo and Eleonora's children straddled two classes. Their challenging position complicated the curriculum that shaped their development. For the children of princes and merchants, education involved study, recreation, and adopting the social, professional, and political responsibilities of their families.[27] Therefore, the career trajectory of the child was one of the greatest factors in determining his course of education. By the end of the fifteenth century the Medici, as merchants who routinely interacted with heads of state, had established a tradition of balancing a princely lifestyle with republican expectations. Cosimo became formally recognized as Duke of Florence in 1537 during the earliest days of his children's lives. This marked a transition of the Medici dynasty from the ducal class to nobility. Cosimo's contemporaries noted the cultural conflicts of this transitory period, as they witnessed him straddle the divide between citizen and prince.[28] His marriage to Eleonora produced children with aristocratic blood who had a legitimate claim to a place among European nobles; yet the Medici could not depart too quickly from the traditions associated with their Florentine identity without risking the goodwill of their subjects.

The education provided to Cosimo and Eleonora's children successfully bridged the requirements developed for royal children and those for the children of wealthy merchants. The children of wealthy merchants were often educated at home or in small schools, whereas the children of Italian princes were often sent to other courts or to famous condottieri (respected military leaders) for their education in arms and letters to imitate the practices of foreign nobles. While merchant children primarily learned grammar, mathematics, religious and civic duties, an Italian prince was expected to be well-versed in many subjects, which motivated the Medici and nobles across Europe to provide their children with instruction in the liberal arts, dancing, hunting, fencing, horsemanship, fine manners and music.[29] Humanist educators from the fifteenth through sixteenth centuries encouraged the teaching of both Latin and Greek to noble children. Though Latin was far more popular among the children of noble and merchant classes, educator Battista Guarino cautioned that "without a knowledge of Greek, Latin scholarship itself is, in any real sense, impossible."[30] The introduction of printing during the last three decades of the fifteenth century had a great impact on the production of schoolbooks; copies of the Roman classics were turned out in large quantities to satisfy the demands of teachers and pupils.[31] In his studies of the evolution of education in early modern Florence, historian Robert Black demonstrates a gradual decrease in Latin as part of a general education.[32] However, Latin remained a requirement as part of a princely education. The ducal children were trained to be proficient in

[27] Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, "Introduction," in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, ed. Naomi J. Miller et al. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 5.

[28] For example, in his autobiography, court artist Cellini declares that Cosimo behaves more like a merchant than a duke. Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography* [1563], trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 315.

[29] Giovanni Pontano, *De Principe*, ed. Guido M. Cappelli (Rome: Salerno, 2003), 29. See also Dominique Julia, "L'Infanzia agli inizi dell'epoca moderna" in *Storia dell'infanzia*, ed. Egle Becchi (Rome: Laterza, 1996), 280-81.

[30] Guarino, "Teaching and Learning," 297. Other humanists such as Piccolomini encouraged the teaching of Greek without being able to read the language themselves, though they frequently referenced Greek literature translated into Latin. See Michael Von Cotta-Schönberg, *Collected Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*, ed. and trans. Michael von Cotta-Schönberg. Vol. 1: Introduction. Final edition, 1st version. (Copenhagen: HAL Archives-Ouvertes, 2019) 294. hal-01707661.

[31] Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 270.

[32] Ibid., 56, 273,

both Latin and Greek, and they had separate tutors for these languages. While the princely and merchant educations had some shared elements and similar texts, the princely education also had the specialized aim of raising a perfect sovereign.[33]

The education of the Medici daughters also sets apart the ducal children from the merchant class. Private classical education had become a status symbol in Florence, as it separated the children of the elite from other children who studied reading and learned abacus skills.[34] However, girls rarely received such humanist instruction.[35] The average Florentine prioritized modesty and virtue in the upbringing of young girls, often to the detriment of a formal education. Urban elites most often wrote treatises on the family, which outlined the separate roles of sons and daughters. The daughters of merchants were taught to read in the vernacular, but the Medici princesses eclipsed this level of education with additional proficiencies in Latin, Greek, and Spanish, languages that made them eligible for advantageous marriages to powerful rulers throughout Europe. Comparing the skills taught to the ducal children with those taught to their princely and Florentine peers indicates that the hybridized education of the Medici family continued the humanist traditions of their merchant ancestors yet incorporated additional elements of a princely education. The hybridization proved necessary for the sons, daughters, and wards of Cosimo and Eleonora, who would become contenders in the international arena of European elites.

II. Child-Rearing Practices and Education at the Medici Court

In addition to analyzing the foundation of skills and knowledge provided to the ducal children, we should consider the psychological influence of the parents and grandparents on the development of each child. Since Florentine elites saw the child as a reflection of both the mother and the father, it was the duty of both parents to oversee the raising of the children.[36] While Eleonora played a more direct role in the daily affairs of her children, Cosimo also engaged in the training of his sons and daughters. In Florentine culture, grandparents also had a formative influence on young children. Humanist educational treatises exhorted respect owed to elders such as the grandmother, who should be considered almost equal to the position of parents.[37] The Medici children were no exception to this local tradition, as they spent their early years in the care of their paternal grandmother, Maria Salviati.

Until her death in 1543, Maria appears to have been the dominant figure in the lives of the ducal children. Prior to Cosimo's marriage to Eleonora, Maria was tasked with raising his natural daughter, Bia, and later, his first three legitimate children with Eleonora, Maria, Francesco, and Isabella. Surviving documentation attests that the ducal children and illegitimate heirs were raised together in the court nursery, and received similar treatment.[38] In the ducal palazzo, Maria had rooms above Cosimo and below Eleonora, connected by a spiral staircase that led to

[33] Egle Becchi, "Umanesimo e Rinascimento," in *Storia dell'infanzia*, ed. Egle Becchi (Rome: Laterza, 1996),149-152.

[34] Robert Black, *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 440.

[35] Ibid., 468.

[36] From the fifteenth through sixteenth century, popular preachers and humanists such as Giovanni Dominici and Giovanni Ruccellai addressed their childrearing advice to both parents. Dominici, *Regola del governo*, 42, 47; See also Carlo Delcorno, "Maestri di preghiera per la pietà personale e di famigla," in *"Quasi quidam cantus": Studi sulla predicazione medieval* (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 123-146.

[37] Vergerio, "Character and Studies," 25.

[38] For more information on the other children at court and Maria's protective role, see Paoli, "Di madre in figlio," 75-76.

the rooms of the children on the upper floor.[39] The prominent role of the duke's mother in the raising of his children reflects the Medici court's adherence to a tradition accepted both locally and internationally.

Sixteenth-century Italian advice manuals give the impression that protecting children's health was of the utmost concern to their parents. The ducal family was no exception: when Maria and the children were at Castello or Florence during their parents' hunting expeditions, there were constant inquiries of her health and the health of the children.[40] The children were raised in both the country and the city, where they had recourse to what were perceived as the most important environmental elements for child-rearing: fresh air and exercise in the country, combined with the moral and intellectual models of good government and Florentine culture provided in the city.[41] As part of their child-rearing strategy, Cosimo and Eleonora delegated to Maria the important task of providing a Florentine identity and nurturing environment for young children who were not guaranteed to survive to maturity.

Art historian Janet Cox Rearick has shown that Cosimo's household public and private purposes overlapped to an unprecedented degree, evident in the art he commissioned, such as dynastic portrait series and frescoes in his palace to celebrate the family's ancestry and fortify their right to rule.[42] Likewise, the choices Cosimo made regarding his children were embedded with political significance. Cosimo's children featured heavily in his public imagery, reinforcing his promise of Florentine peace and prosperity through a new Medici dynasty that would bring stability to the historically unsettled city.[43] Cosimo's strong political motivations influenced the development of his children and wards. The skills of the father could be seen to reflect his skills as a ruler, as many contemporary writings equated the ideal prince to the father of his subjects.[44] Cosimo developed strategies to further his own aspirations for his individual children as future rulers, clergymen, and consorts to the most powerful families throughout Europe. To this end, Cosimo acquired a team of tutors for his children, employing renowned intellectuals and promising young scholars alike. He cultivated the development of the tutors themselves by providing an education for the young man who would become the Medici Latin tutor, Antonio Angeli da Barga, summoning humanist Piero Vettori to teach Greek and Latin in the Studio Fiorentino as well as the ducal classroom, and employing his own former tutor and majordomo Pierfrancesco

[39] An inventory reference to *deschi per la scuola dei signorini* indicates that the children may have received their education in this part of the palazzo between 1549 and 1555. Ilaria Hoppe, "A Duchess' Place at Court: The Quartiere di Eleonora in the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo, Duchess of Florence and Siena*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 103.

[40] In her letters to Maria, Eleonora insists that the children have fresh air, a concern shared by contemporary philosophers and authors of Florentine family treatises. In November 1542, for example, Eleonora was upset that the children were exposed to Florence's unhealthy air and encouraged Maria Salviati to move to Badia di Fiesole for fresh air. ASF, MdP 1170, fol. 149 (MAP doc. #5941).

[41] Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence: I Libri Della Famiglia/Books One-Four* [1433-40], trans. Renee N. Watkins (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 193-194.

[42] Janet Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel of Eleonora in the Palazzo Vecchio* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), 250.

[43] Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel*, 259. See, for example, Giovanni Antonio de' Rossi's 1558-1562 cameo of the ducal family now housed in the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti, Treasury of the Grand Dukes, Inv. Bg. 1917 (VII), no. 1.

[44] Juliann Vitullo, "Fashioning Fatherhood: Leon Battista Alberti's Art of Parenting," in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality* ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 349.

Riccio as a tutor to his children.[45] Through the surrogate of the tutor, Cosimo ensured that his children would adopt the intellectual and social customs he valued.[46] The Medici court's high regard for these tutors is evident in correspondence praising Riccio's mentoring of Cosimo as "Aristotle was to Alexander the Great," with further comparisons to Cicero and Nestor.[47] Beyond the appointment of tutors, documentary evidence suggests that Cosimo remained involved in the education of his children: a 1545 letter describes his attendance of two-year-old Francesco's grammar lessons and his direction of what texts the child should study next.[48]

While Cosimo's attention to the formation of his children served political ends, he also spent quality time with his family, counter to the princely fashion of the time. Children at other courts did not eat meals with their parents, but the Medici children are known to have dined with their parents on several occasions.[49] Many European noble children saw little of their parents. Margaret of Austria, Charles V's daughter and Cosimo's first choice for a bride, likely met her father for the first time upon the occasion of her betrothal to Alessandro de' Medici.[50] In contrast to this aloof father-daughter relationship, Cosimo's concern with his daughter Isabella's baby teeth is recorded, requesting that the extraction of the child's loose tooth be gentle and cause no discomfort.[51] While Cosimo could be tender with his children in an intimate setting, it was also his duty to set a public example of morality and decorum as ruler of both the household and Tuscany.

The rigid and hierarchical social structure of sixteenth century Italy was organized by gender and rank. Thus, it became the father's role to transmit and perpetuate this model, which was also seen as emblematic of Christian virtues.[52] In Cosimo's circle of academics, the court's writers sought to defend traditional virtues such as clemency, justice, and religion.[53] Medici literati such as Paolo Giovio, Cosimo Bartoli, and Benedetto Varchi presented Cosimo as a moral exemplar for both his children and his people in their panegyrics. Consistent with his role as a *paterfamilias*, Cosimo styled himself with modesty; his dress and comportment was faithful to tradition, closer to the styles of bourgeois Florentines than to the practices of other courts.[54] Inventories of his wardrobe show that he favored *saios* (traditional Florentine short tunics) in black and brown fabrics, in contrast to the brightly dyed fabrics, elaborate garments such as silk doublets with slashed sleeves, and lavish ornamentation that were popular elsewhere.[55] His man-

[45] Paoli, "Di madre in figlio," 80.

[46] "Poi scelto tale maestro, il padre comandi a figliuoli che quello seguitino, a quello ubidiscano, & da quello sollecitamente imparino le cose gli mostra ammonisca il fanciullo che il maestro glie in luogho di padre no di corpo ma dell'animo & de costumi." Palmieri, *Libro della vita civile*, 12.

[47] Bono di Barone Cappelli to Pier Francesco Riccio, 1 September 1538. ASF, MdP 1169, fol. 144 (MAP, doc# 5435).

[48] Andrea Mancinelli to Pier Francesco Riccio, 20 November 1545. ASF, MdP 1170, fol. 837 (MAP, doc# 6104).

[49] "Sua Excellentia è andata stamani a falconi et è poi tornata a pranzo et cosi hoggi s'è riposata e sta bene con la Signora Duchessa e i suoi figli." Letter from Cristiano Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio, 24 November 1546. ASF MdP 1172, fol. 6 n. 23. Carteggio dei Segretari, quoted in Stiaffini, *Vita coniugale*, 58.

[50] Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence*, 70.

[51] ASF MdP 1175, fol. 45, cited by Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, 34.

[52] Frigo, *Il padre di famiglia*, 114, 122.

[53] Gregory Murry, "Rescuing Virtue from Machiavelli," in *The Medicean Succession: Monarchy and Sacral Politics in Duke Cosimo dei Medici's Florence* ed. Gregory Murry, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 106.

[54] Eleonora's father, Don Pedro of Toledo also seems to have been fairly modest in his dress, following the example of the Emperor. Roberta Orsi-Landini, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: Lo stile di Cosimo I de' Medici* (Florence: Pagliai Polistampa, 2011), 23.

[55] Stiaffini, *Vita coniugale*, 47-49.

ner of dressing reflected contemporary sentiments expressed in *Galateo*, Giovanni della Casa's 1558 treatise on manners: "In order to show respect to others, everyone must dress according to his status and age, because if he does otherwise it seems like he disdains other people" and "a man's garments should be suitable to the place where he lives."[56] Cosimo fulfilled his role as a traditional guide for his children and subjects, allowing Eleonora to be the one who brought novel international fashion and etiquette to Florence.

Eleonora's significance as consort and her unprecedented level of participation in court life represented an innovation in the gender-power dynamic of Florence, which was still adjusting to the relative youth of its new ruler.[57] While Cosimo dressed in a way that adhered to Florentine traditions, Eleonora exerted Spanish influence on fashion and courtly behavior. When she arrived in Florence to marry Cosimo, Eleonora brought an entourage of Spanish and Neopolitan knights and ladies whom her father selected, many of whom would remain in her service at court as companions to the children.[58] This Spanish influence extended to the practices of raising of her children, who were the grandchildren of the Viceroy of Naples and Marquis of Alba.

Eleonora, who was born in Spain but raised in Naples from the age of ten, was educated according to the practices of Spanish court, which involved tutoring by a noblewoman and participation in public gatherings and hunts.[59] With the assistance of her spiritual mentor, Diego Laínez, Eleonora seems to have directed a similar educational program for her children, following the Spanish and Catholic pedagogical models of her family.[60] For her daughters in particular, Eleonora offered the same kind of Spanish Catholic pedagogy proposed in scholar Juan Luis Vives's *De institutione feminae Christianae* (the first Italian translation of which was dedicated to her in 1546).[61] Vives's works were well received in Italy, and he presented a pedagogy that was complementary to the ethic of courtly behavior prescribed by Cosimo and Eleonora in Florence.[62] His popularity elsewhere in Europe also made his pedagogy attractive to parents with aspirations for strengthening imperial alliances. In 1517, Erasmus wrote to educator Thom-

[56] Giovanni della Casa, *Galateo: A Renaissance Treatise on Manners* [1558], trans. Konrad Eisenbichler et al. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1994), 41, 90. Baldesarre Castiglione's 1528 *Libro del cortegiano* addresses the costume of noble families in a similar manner. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* [1528], ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 88-90. For more on Cosimo I's conservative dress, see Grazietta Butazzi, "Indicazioni sull' abbigliamento infantile dale liste della Guardaroba Granducale tra le fine secolo XVI e il secolo XVII," in *I principi bambini: abbigliamento e infanzia nel Seicento* ed. Cristina Piacenti Aschengreen Florence: Centro Di, 1985), 28.

[57] Nicholas S. Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty: Political Culture in the Florentine Renaissance, 1480-1550* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 225.

[58] Carlos Jose Hernando Sánchez, "Naples and Florence in Charles V's Italy: Family, Court, and Government in the Toledo-Medici Alliance," in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion 1500-1700* ed. Thomas James Dandelet et al. (Boston: Brill, 2007), 146.

[59] Bruna Niccoli, "Eleonora di Toledo Duchessa di Toscana, nella storia e nella leggenda," in *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: Lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza*, ed. Roberta Orsi-Landini et al. (Florence: Pagliai Polistampa, 2005), 15.

[60] Jesuit Father Laínez was a direct disciple of St. Ignatius. Niccoli, "Eleonora di Toledo," 16. Ignatius also corresponded directly with Eleonora. Chiara Franceschini, "'Los scholares son cosa de su excelentia, como lo es toda la Compañia:' Eleonora di Toledo and the Jesuits," in *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 182-183.

[61] Modenese Pietro Lauro dedicated the Venetian edition to Eleonora, along with Vives' *Dell'ufficio del marito come si debba portare verso la moglie*. Paoli, "Di madre in figlio," 77.

[62] Vives offered a moral repertory for family matters that complemented the Christian-Stoic syncretism of moral models in the Hispano-Florentine environment. Sánchez, "Naples and Florence," 150-151.

as More about Vives from the court of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in Brussels, and later recommended Vives as a tutor to young Prince Ferdinand, the future Holy Roman Emperor.[63]

Vives acknowledges a mother's immense influence in the development of her child, and encourages mothers to strengthen this bond of affection in order to raise their children according to Christian ideals.[64] Vives contends that a woman's character is the jewel of the family and the mother's virtue is essential to raising virtuous children, keeping with the Italian traditions long promoted by preachers and writers such as Leon Battista Alberti and Giovanni Pontano.[65] Records from the Medici court reflect such a bond between Eleonora and her children. Historian Maria Pia Paoli has discussed Eleonora's pedagogical role in the context of subsequent Medici grand duchesses, in her study of mothers directing their sons' education at the Medici courts of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries.[66] Her attention to the public appearance of her children is also evident through her choices of clothing for the frequent commissions of the children's portraits, which were often sent as diplomatic gifts to Spanish, French, and papal courts.[67] Usually, the selection of such clothing would have been a privileged task reserved for Cosimo, but letters from Eleonora give explicit instructions regarding the dress of her children to suit the occasion. For example, a portrait commissioned for the minister of Charles V depicted Francesco in clothes similar to those he had worn to greet Philip II three years earlier.[68] Likewise, portraits as diplomatic gifts would have traditionally been part of Cosimo's patronage, making Eleonora's role in their commission and execution all the more remarkable.[69]

Although it was Cosimo who selected his children's tutors, it was Eleonora who maintained a correspondence with the tutors to monitor her children's progress. In November 1550, Eleonora requested information from ducal secretary Pasquino Bertini and Latin tutor Antonio degli Angeli da Barga regarding the education of her children and various court members. In response, Bertini particularly praises the eldest son and heir Francesco's proficiency in Latin, while the rest of the children are reported to have an amateur understanding.[70] Such documentation must be read critically, as it behooved tutors to make favorable reports of their young charges' progress and the children's purported abilities contributed to the self-fashioned image of the Medici as exceptionally cultured intellectuals. The supposed precocity of the children was

[63] Charles Fantazzi, "Introduction," in *De institutione feminae Christianae*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 145-46.

64 Vives, *De institutione*, 272. For a discussion of the interiority that linked children and women, see Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, 66.

[65] Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 213. Similarly, Giovanni Pontano charges wives to tend to their children, guided by Virtue. Giovanni Pontano, *On Married Love* [1503],", trans. Luke Roman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 39.

[66] Paoli, "Di madre in figlio," 65-145.

[67] Letter from Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio, 20 March 1545. ASF, MdP 1171, fol. 295 (MAP doc. #2447); letter from Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio, 26 September 1549. ASF, MdP 1175, fol. 12 (MAP doc. #13304).

[68] Letter from Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio, 20 January 1550. ASF, MdP 1176, fol. 1 (MAP doc. #3243); Roberta Orsi-Landini, "L'amore del lusso e la necessita della modestia. Eleonora fra sete e oro," in *Moda alla corte dei Medici: gli abiti restaurati di Cosimo, Eleonora e don Garzia*, ed. Roberta Orsi-Landini et al. (Florence: Centro Di, 1993), 35.

[69] Bruce Edelstein, "Bronzino in the Service of Eleonora di Toledo and Cosimo I de' Medici: Conjugal Patronage and the Painter-Courtier," in *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sheryl E. Reiss et al. (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 228.

[70] Letter from Pasquino Bertini to Pier Francesco Riccio, 28 November 1550. ASF, MdP 1176, fol. 15 (MAP doc. #3041).

frequently recounted in the court correspondence: Francesco learned archery with crossbows at age four, second son Giovanni learned to recite the tale of Morgan le Fey just after his third birthday, and at two years old, the third son Garzia never forgot what he learned.[71] Regardless of their real aptitudes, several of the ducal children received titles even before reaching adolescence: Garzia, for example, was nominated Supreme Commander of the Tuscan Navy at age thirteen.[72]

The repeated emphasis on language proficiency in ducal correspondence reflects the importance of a larger curricular debate taking place in Italy. This debate helps illuminate how Eleonora's educational influence was felt not only in court, but in Tuscany through her advocacy on behalf of the Jesuits. Following the implementation of curricula by Gasparino Barzizza, Guarino Guarini, and Vittorino da Feltre, most schools in northern Italian towns taught the *studia humanitatis* curriculum including the study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, moral philosophy, Latin, and Greek. The Jesuit *ratio studiorum* curriculum closely resembled the *studia humanitatis*, though it differed significantly by elevating the study of Greek.[73] Although the ducal children did not formally take part in Jesuit schooling, the available evidence of their studies suggests compatibility with the Jesuit curriculum. This curriculum was divided into five classes that involved the memorization of Latin and the study of works by Guarino, Vives, Vergil, Ovid, Sallust, Cicero, and Isocrates.[74] While the Medici children received their humanistic training at court, Cosimo and Eleonora debated the merits of providing access to such a curriculum to the children of other elites and merchants in Florence. Spanish theologian Ignatius Loyola expressed interest in founding a Jesuit college in Florence in the mid-sixteenth century, but Cosimo was unmoved to finance the proposed school. In fact, the realization of the project was only made possible by Eleonora's intercession. In the summer of 1551, Eleonora's confessor Diego Laínez wrote a long memorandum to Cosimo on the subject with the persuasive arguments that founding such a college would produce faithful citizens of the ducal state and situate Cosimo in the company of other rulers who had done so, including Charles V, Ferdinand I, and the kings of France and Portugal.[75] Furthermore, Eleonora's father, the Viceroy of Naples, had already welcomed a Jesuit college there. Requiring further persuasion, Cosimo only allowed the opening of the school in 1552 after Eleonora herself committed a sizeable subsidy.[76]

Keeping with the humanist tradition practiced in Italy and at the other European courts, the ducal children learned the necessary liberal arts along with the creative arts prized in courtly societies. Within the court and beyond, Cosimo and Eleonora each exerted their own influences, derived from the traditions of the class and culture of their own upbringing. Even as they balanced their individual interests in the shared goal of raising children who would become successful diplomatic figures, the ducal couple do not seem to have compromised on their positions for education beyond the court. Upon Eleonora's sudden death in 1562, the Jesuit college

[71] Letter from Giovanni Francesco (Il Lottino) to Pier Francesco Riccio, 3 September 1545. ASF, MdP 1170a, fol. 408 (MAP doc. #5726,); Letter from Cristiano Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio, 21 November 1546. ASF, MdP 1172, fol. 528 (MAP doc# 20470); Letter from Agnolo Dovizi da Bibbiena to Pier Francesco Riccio, 11 October 1549. ASF, MdP 1175, fol. 47 (MAP doc. #12889).

[72] Stiaffini, *Vita coniugale*, 60.

[73] Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, 379.

[74] Ibid., 378.

[75] See June 1551 letter from Diego Laínez to Cosimo de' Medici in *Lainii Monumenta: Epistolae et acta Patris Jacobi Lainez* [1536-1556], Vol. 1 (Madrid: Gabriel Lopez del Horno, 1912), 183, let. 72.

[76] 10 July 1551 letter from Diego Laínez to Ignatius Loyola in Ibid., 188, let. 73. See also Franceschini, "Eleonora and the Jesuits,"189.

suffered from Cosimo's withdrawn support, as he demonstrated indifference to their cause without his wife's influence. In a letter bemoaning this deprivation, the Jesuit rector expressed his belief that "the Florentines lacked enthusiasm for study because they were merchants."[77] Despite his noble aspirations, Cosimo continued to be plagued by such disparaging remarks recalling his humbler beginnings. Though the ducal children were now prepared to take their place in the broader European aristocracy, they remained tied to their merchant Florentine roots.

III. The Emergence of a Hybrid in The Service of Dual Dynastic Goals

The creation of a novel, hybrid pedagogical model for the ducal children was required to incorporate elements of Florentine humanist, bourgeois, princely, and Spanish pedagogy. Analysis of the Florentine court's cross-cultural relationships further supports the position that the decisions made regarding the child-rearing of the Medici children were influential in achieving the sociopolitical success of the dynasty. Indebted as he was to Charles V, Cosimo expressed his reliance on the Habsburg dynasty in the first five years of his court through imitation of Spanish court culture.[78] The adoption of Spanish customs in Italian courts had precedents in the early sixteenth century, but the ducal couple's employment of these practices was tied directly to their fealty to the imperial family and their Toledan relatives. Grendler has identified broad patterns of elite education throughout Western Europe in the mid-sixteenth century that reveal pedagogical similarities by rank and destiny, despite geographic difference. For example, pedagogical authors such as Erasmus were greatly influential at both Italian and Spanish courts.[79] While the customs and ideas of one court were necessarily reinterpreted in the context of another, the passing on of Spanish tradition enabled the ducal children to participate in diplomatic exchange. This education fostered familiarity with the etiquette, dress, and language of their international contacts.

Families such as the Medici used their children as vehicles for maintaining relationships with foreign courts. Regular reports on the health of the princes and princesses were sent to Spanish courts, and when Eleonora's Spanish relatives visited Tuscany, Cosimo included the children in intimate dinners.[80] Children could be used to forge future alliances or consolidate family power. For example, when the French king Francis I attempted to undermine Cosimo's rule, negotiations began for the betrothal of nine-year-old Francesco to Francis's teenage daughter Elisabeth, who was later promised in marriage to king of England Edward VI and king of Spain Phillip II.[81] Records of diplomatic portraits further illuminate the role of the children as

[77] Letter of 29 April 1564 as quoted in Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, 367.

[78] Giovanna Lazzi, "La moda alla corte di Cosimo I de' Medici," in *Moda alla corte dei Medici: gli abiti restaurati di Cosimo, Eleonora e don Garzia*, ed. Roberta Orsi-Landini et al. (Florence: Centro Di, 1993), 33. On Spanish artists working in Italy in the early sixteenth century, see Francesco Abbate, "Per Una Mappa Artistica Delle Due Penisole," in *Italia e Spagna tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, ed. Pina Rosa Piras et al. (Rome: Aracne, 1999), 81. On Florence's political development in this period and the impact of the Spanish presence in Italy, see Sánchez, "Naples and Florence," 138.

[79] According to Grendler, by the mid-sixteenth century the children of the elites in Venice, Spain, France, and Germany shared a common rhetoric. Paul Grendler, "Schooling in Western Europe," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43 (1990): 783. See also Karl Enenkel, *The Reception of Erasmus in Early Modern Europe* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 3-7.

[80] See, for example, the correspondence between Pier Francesco Riccio and Andrea Pasquali, 14 July 1545. ASF, MdP 1171, fol. 445 (MAP doc. #7235). For example, Cosimo requested food to be sent from Florence to Villa Castello, where he dined with his brother-in-law, Luis de Toledo, and his children, 8 June 1547. ASF, MdP 1173, fol. 211 (MAP doc. #8103).

[81] Laura E. Hunt, "Cosimo I and the Anglo-French Negotiations of 1550," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot and Burlington: Routledge, 2001), 29.

political assets, with portraits sent to French, Spanish and papal court that adhered to homogenous courtly ideals expressed throughout Europe, while including details of dress and iconography tailored to the sensibilities of the recipient.[82] Consider, for example, a childhood portrait of the second ducal son Giovanni, attributed to painters Agnolo Bronzino or Francesco Salviati in 1550-1551.[83] The general humanities class of the Jesuit curriculum began with the study of Isocrates's *Nicocles*, at age fourteen or fifteen. This detail is significant in the context of the visual record of Giovanni, because in this portrait he reads Isocrates' *Nicocles* in legible Greek at age seven or eight. This showcase of Giovanni's purported precocity strategically advertised his potential for a career in the Church, a path that had been predetermined from his birth. A portrait fitting this description was sent to the papal court as part of a diplomatic overture to the newly elected Pope Julius III in 1551, the same year that Giovanni was made a deacon and promised a future archbishop seat and cardinalate. The inclusion of the Greek text reinforces the importance of Greek in the training of a young cardinal: while there were few professors of Greek at Italian universities, the papacy encouraged the teaching of Greek to young men with prospective careers in Rome.[84]

The specialized fashioning of the children can also be seen in their gendered public and private lives. To secure elite international status, their daughters had to be capable of demonstrating their intellect and sophistication, yet publicly project and maintain an image of modesty and piety. It is general knowledge that Renaissance boys would have received far more educational opportunities than their female counterparts, yet the early instruction of the Medici princesses did not differ substantially from that of their brothers, with whom they shared tutors.[85] Recalling Eleonora's 1550 letter to Bertini regarding Francesco I's progress with Latin, she asked that he proceed the same way with the Medici princesses.[86] Three months later, another letter includes a report from one of Eleonora's Spanish ladies on the third daughter Lucrezia's great Latin proficiency.[87] Exposure to the same curriculum prescribed for princes would

[82] While Eleonora's official portraits do not explicitly reference foreign styles, her daughters are portrayed in modern garments with high collars in the French style. According to Roberta Orsi-Landini, Eleonora's style was designed as a meeting point between Habsburg, to a lesser extent French, and Florentine styles. Roberta Orsi-Landini, "Lo Stile di Eleonora," in *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: Lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza*, ed. Roberta Orsi-Landini et al. (Florence: Pagliai Polistampa, 2005), 34.

[83] See Agnolo Bronzino, *Giovanni de' Medici*, c. 1550-51, oil on panel, 66.2 x 52.8 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. For further discussion of this portrait exchange, see Dana Hogan, "Constructing the Image of a Cardinal-Prince: Child Portraits of Giovanni de' Medici by Bronzino and Salviati," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 50 (2019), 139-175.

[84] Paul Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 233-35.

[85] Miller and Yavneh, *Constructions of Gender*, 10; Roberta Orsi-Landini, "Notizie, episodi, curiositá sulla vita dei bambini Medici dalla fine del secolo XVI a tutto il secolo XVII," in *I principi bambini: abbigliamento e infanzia nel Seicento, ed. Cristina Piacenti Aschengreen* (Florence: Centro Di, 1985), 18.

[86] "Risposile di sorte che io me ne contentavo, parendomi che il signor don Francesco [I] maxime si vadia in mo' accomodandosi nel comporre e' latini quasi per tutte le regole, come nel imparare a mente…Doppo questi ragionamenti sua excellentia mi comandò che a nome suo scrivessi alla signoria vostra et li ricordassi la primessa che la gl'ha fatta dinsegnar a coteste signore illustrissime costì." Letter from Pasquino Bertini to Pier Francesco Riccio, 28 November 1550. ASF, MdP 1176, fol. 15 (MAP doc. #3041).

[87] "La signora donna Ysabella [Isabel de Reinosa] si raccomanda alla signoria vostra et dice che la basci le mano a tutti cotesti signori in suo nome, facendo lor saper che la fa latini che son lunghi [cancelled: illegible] più che vostra Bibbia. Et la signora donna Lucretia [Lucrezia de' Medici] ha raddoppiato gli offiti et dice tante oratione che in breve si farà dotta anche lei" Letter from Mariotto Cecchi to Pier Francesco Riccio, 17 February 1551. ASF, MdP 1176, fol. 793 (MAP doc. #3173).

have been unusual for girls in Florence, though necessary for the education of potential female rulers. Cosimo's daughters needed specialized skills that their Florentine peers and merchant ancestresses did not. For other elite girls in Florence, education was largely conducted in the convent and was meant to prepare them for their roles as pious and obedient wives and mothers. The ducal princesses' education was better aligned with that of the young women of courts such as the Este court at Ferrara, which equipped women to participate in sophisticated social and cultural circles.[88] This cultural preparation may have served a role in enabling Maria's betrothal to Alfonso II d'Este, followed by her sister Lucrezia's marriage to Alfonso upon her sister's death. Humanists from the fifteenth through sixteenth centuries recommended courses of study for female aristocrats that aligned with what we know of the curriculum prescribed for the Medici children. For example, dedicated to aristocrat and poet Battista Montefeltro, humanist historian Leonardo Bruni's "The Study of Literature" (1424) emphasized the importance of religious authors such as St. Augustine and St. Jerome in the education of women, along with study of the ancients, particularly Cicero, Livy, Virgil, and Sallust.[89] For daughters and wives of ruling families, he further encourages a knowledge of moral philosophy, history, and poetry.[90] For girls, Vives prescribes a knowledge of Scripture and the philosophers, and allows for some study of Greek and Roman poetry.[91] In 1545, Ludovico Dolce rewrote Vives's treatise for an Italian audience in his *Dialogi della institutione delle donne*, in which he concedes that women who must govern a kingdom should learn the whole Latin humanistic curriculum, but not Greek because it would be "a heavy weight on the shoulders of women."[92] However, according to cultural historians Caroline Murphy and Gabrielle Langdon, the eldest Medici daughter Maria was called upon to help Francesco with his Greek.[93] Their education may be viewed as aspirational, as they were not born to noble status and were being groomed for advantageous marriages into such illustrious families as the Dukes of Ferrara, and the Roman Orsinis. Even the ducal wards were raised in preparation for such strategic alliances: Dianora married Cosimo's own son, Pietro and Giulia married Francesco Cantelmi, Duke of Popoli, followed by Cosimo's cousin Bernadetto de' Medici, Prince of Ottajano. In the classroom, the daughters had some parity with the sons and were praised for their academic accomplishments; this was in sharp contrast with records of their public personas and evolving attitudes toward girls' education.

While elements of continuity emerged between humanist thought and the Counter-Reformation, educational goals shifted in the mid-sixteenth century, placing increased restrictions on girls.[94] The revival of the Neo-Platonic debate about the nature of men and women emphasized differences in the education most appropriate for each gender. From an Aristotelian

[88] Langdon, *Medici Women*, 108.
[89] Leonardo Bruni, "The Study of Literature [1424]," in *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 97-99.
[90] Ibid., 107-111.
[91] Vives, *De institutione,* 68, 76.
[92] "La Greca io lascio da parte, si per non mettere cosi gran peso sopra le spalle delle Donne" Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogi della institutione delle donne*, (Venice: Gabriele Giolioto de' Ferrari, 1547), 19.
[93] Caroline Murphy, *Murder of a Medici Princess* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41, Langdon, *Medici Women*, 108.
[94] For elements of continuity, see Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, 4. A more rigid enforcing of gender hierarchy can be seen in court records, marriage manuals, dramas, paintings, songs, sermons, and tracts devoted to the education of girls. Allison P. Coudert, "Educating Girls in Early Modern Europe and America," in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 390.

point of view, men and women were not equal, and women should learn different things due to natural inferiority.[95] Like other European princesses, while the ducal daughters had to be knowledgeable enough to fulfill their roles as sophisticated and informed consorts, their public appearance could not risk any sense of impropriety. In the service of securing marriage alliances, official visual and textual records of their girlhoods emphasize their culturally accepted feminine virtues over their academic achievements. Conversely, the ducal sons' intellectual development was closely monitored, celebrated, and disseminated in official portraits which depict them holding letters and books.

Outside the classroom, further distinctions emerge between the public and private lives of the daughters and sons. From contemporary documentation it is known that the princesses received training in music, dancing, and horseback riding.[96] These activities exceeded the training offered to other elite girls in Florence and prepared the princesses for public roles as future consorts, parallel to the princes' preparation for the masculine sphere of political life. However, it is also apparent that the Medici princes led a more public life than that of the young princesses within the confines of the palace. Modern historians of the Medici family have promoted the impression that Eleonora reserved stricter treatment for her daughters.[97] Following the precepts of Vives that unmarried young women should rarely appear in public, the princesses were notably absent from the public view in the city of Florence. According to Vives, a good woman will "stay at home and be unknown to others…it is befitting that she be retiring and silent, with her eyes cast down, so that some perhaps may see her but none will hear her."[98] Maria, Isabella and Lucrezia were brought up in a Spanish style of dress and comportment, and were kept in the company of their mother and her Spanish ladies.[99] According to Vives, when a girl is old enough to walk and talk, she should be kept away from the company of her brothers and other men.[100] In complement to this admonishment, Pier Paolo Vergerio's educational treatise advises that young boys be kept away from all association with women.[101] By safeguarding the girls' public reputation while they privately acquired the knowledge and skills necessary for their future roles in international courts, Cosimo and Eleonora promoted the princesses' eligibility as consorts for various powerful families in societies which all prized female virtue. The legacy of this careful training persisted for generations: in a 1611 letter to the Tuscan ambassador of Spain, Grand

[95] Proponents of the Platonic school believed that both men and women possessed essentially the same nature with a different outer shell; though they were spiritually and morally equal, women were socially subordinate. Castiglione's discussion of the nature of men and women in the third book of the Courtier presents both sides of the debate. See Peter Burke, "The Courtier in its Time," in *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's Cortegiano* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 27-28. According to Konrad Eisenbichler, Firenzuola was an anomaly for asserting that men and women have the same natures and abilities. Agnolo Firenzuola, *Dialogo delle bellezze delle donne* [1548]," trans. and ed. Konrad Eisenbichler et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), xxxi-xxxvi.

[96] Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, 39-41.

[97] See Stiaffini, *Vita coniugale,* 59; Niccoli, "Eleonora di Toledo," 16.

[98] Vives, *De institutione,* 72. Vives also says that an unmarried woman has no business appearing in public, and it jeopardizes her chastity. Vives, *De institutione*, 110.

[99] For example, the daughters wore their hair in a tight center part with side braids gathered at the back in a net, a Spanish style introduced to Florence by their mother. Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, 32. See also Langdon, *Medici Women*, 108-09.

[100] Vives, *De institutione*, 11, 55, 131. Vives does not require a close relationship between the mother and the son, because boys learn about morals outside of the home, whereas girls must be carefully guarded within the home; he does not wish the girl to be too learned. Vives, *De institutione,* 54.

[101] Vergerio, "Character and Studies," 21.

Duke Cosimo II disparages the liberal behavior of one of the princesses of the rival d'Este family, while the Medici princesses by comparison have received a proper education and been raised in a grave and restrained environment.[102]

For the Medici sons, public presentation was expected for their advancement within courtly societies and the Church. In adolescence, the sons were sent to Spanish and papal court to develop specialized skills, serving as emissaries of the family and continuing the traditions of previous generations. As an adolescent, Cosimo's predecessor Alessandro joined Charles V's court in Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne to cultivate graceful speech and skills of hunting and jousting.[103] In 1562, Cosimo sent Francesco to Spanish court on the advice of Eleonora's brother Fernando. Francesco was considered by his contemporaries to be a prototype of the Hispanicization of the aristocracy, because of his education, courtly conduct, and political attitudes.[104] In 1565, the pope requested that Francesco send his younger brother Ferdinando to Rome so that he could receive an education in preparation for the cardinalate.[105] Before him, Giovanni had received a warm reception at the papal court in 1560 when he was made a cardinal and received approval to return to Tuscany to continue his education.[106] Giovanni and Garzia perished from illness in their teens, but their siblings went on to make advantageous marriage alliances. The accord with the Habsburg empire, for instance, carefully cultivated by Cosimo and Eleonora, was maintained through Francesco I's union with Joanna of Austria, the youngest daughter of Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. Likewise, Cosimo and Eleonora sent news and portraits of their children from infancy to Catherine de' Medici, Queen of France; subsequently, she persuaded her favorite granddaughter, Christine of Lorraine to align herself with the Florentines through marriage to Ferdinando I. Francesco and Ferdinando would each, in turn, become the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and each had an impact on the educational landscape of the region as had their parents before them. They improved the Sienese law school, appointed Greek lecturers at the University of Pisa, and reallocated financial support among the universities of the region according to their individual interests.[107] The Medici princes were raised to imitate their ancestors, both Spanish and Florentine, perpetuating the lineage personified by their mother and father.

Conclusion

In conclusion, evidence suggests that the Medici family was operating with two sets of priorities: to position their children for potential strategic international alliances while maintaining their regional power-base by publicly demonstrating continued loyalty to Florentine traditions. Cosimo longed to be viewed as a peer to royal rulers, yet his rise to duke was dependent upon the support of Florentine citizens. On a broader cultural scale, the Florentine court accepted innovations that were adopted at international courts. However, the Medici repurposed these

[102] "...ma potete ben considerare che l'educatione et costumi di queste nostre Principesse [Eleonora e Caterina de' Medici], allevate con tanta ritiratezza et gravità, sieno del tutto contrarii al suddetto libero vivere di Modena..." Letter from Belisario di Francesco Vinta to Orso Pannocchiareschi d'Elci, 24 October 1611. ASF, MdP 1176, fol. 15 (MAP doc. #3041).

[103] Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence*, 65-67.

[104] Sánchez, "Naples and Florence," 180.

[105] Letter from Bartolomeo Concini to Cosimo I de' Medici, 29 January 1565. ASF, MdP 1687, fol. 63 (MAP doc. #26524).

[106] Andrea Gáldy, "Lost in Antiquities: Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici (1543-1562)," in *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety, and Art, 1450-1700*, ed. Mary Hollingsworth et al. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 154.

[107] Grendler, *Universities*, 52-55, 299, 464.

practices with moderation so as not to appear too distant or remote from their fellow citizens of Florence. The same could be said for their methods of child-rearing and education, which were derived from longstanding cultural traditions from both the mother and the father, while engaging with current philosophies circulating within the intellectual milieu of the Florentine court and the international courts to which they aspired.

The proper education and character development of the ducal children were paramount to the continuation of Medicean ambitions. During the transitional stage from first among equals to established dukes, the Medici do not appear to have adhered to a single model in raising their children, or even drawn predominantly from one. I argue that the child-rearing program at the Medici court was designed to satisfy the competing aims of producing children who would be embraced by their international relatives, as well as powerful imperial and papal connections, while still projecting an identity that engendered the goodwill of their Florentine subjects. Incrementally, a hybrid program of child-rearing and education was developed at the Medici court, drawing on elements of Florentine humanist, bourgeois, princely, and Spanish pedagogy. Within the confines of the palace, the Medici sons and daughters were provided with a challenging curriculum that the satnisfied standards of their local and international peers, yet, publicly they conformed to the strict gender roles reinforced by the rigid social structures of Italian and Spanish Catholicism. Regarding the education of the children, Cosimo respected the traditional practices of his famed ancestors. Outside of the classroom, Eleonora introduced an internationalism to Florentine court that addressed costume, manners, and language. This division of responsibilities prepared the children for future roles on an international stage as dukes, cardinals, and royal consorts.

By exploring this often-overlooked dimension of Medici court culture, this essay has illuminated how Cosimo and Eleonora deployed their renowned acumen to develop a hybrid child-rearing and pedagogical program that would position their children for strategic dynastic alliances. Though they were not unique in using their children as vehicles for stewarding important international and local relationships, their complex political realities inspired a curriculum for their children that straddled tradition and innovation in a manner that could best appeal to multiple stakeholders.

The methods and tools of child-rearing at the Medici court had implications beyond the dynastic interests of the family. The curriculum chosen for the ducal children had a ripple effect in the academies, schools, and universities across Tuscany that relied on financial support from the Medici. Even their toys and recreational accessories were imitated by their peers, as evidenced by Camillo Orsini's instruction to his son to purchase the same crossbow used by ten-year-old Francesco, "no matter the cost."[108]

Future researchers may benefit from revisiting principles and practices of courtly child-rearing and education to unearth insights into the dynastic ambitions and progressive strategies of powerful historic figures in their roles as parents. From the example of this dynastic line, it has become clear that the educational practices of a single family have the potential to both reflect the synthesis of multiple traditions and lead to the establishment of lasting trends.

[108] Letter from Fabrizio Ferrari to Pier Francesco Riccio, 20 November 1552. ASF, MdP 1170a, fol. 244 (MAP doc. #23796).