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**Introduction**

Recently, on the grand stage of American politics the subject of sister city connections has been intertwined with the Democratic Party’s primaries. Former Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders was entangled in a web of drama relating to his desire years ago to find a Soviet sister city for Burlington, Vermont when he was its mayor and because of those efforts and involvement in doing this and his connections to the Soviet Union, Senator Sanders has been scrutinized.[[1]](#footnote-1) Because Sanders is a left wing politician some believe these actions prove he is too radical; therefore his contacts with Yaroslavl have provided fodder for those who have sought to discredit him as a politician who was an unsuitable candidate for the office of the presidency. This provides us with a notable reason as to why the topic of sister cities should be discussed. People need to be aware of what sister city connections are and why they are sought out in order to be able to make sound decisions and judgements about those who choose to participate in the actions of them and create them.

Sister cities are a phenomenon that have exploded onto the international arena since the inception of the twinning movement, which could be dated to have occurred in the mid 20th century. Despite the extensive amount of linkages that exist around the world between sisters the literature on this phenomenon is dreadfully underdeveloped. It is a shame and rather puzzling that social scientists have not uncovered more about what the mushrooming of sister city partnerships means for human interaction and international relations in particular. Such linkages appear to demonstrate the construction of a more globalized world and indicate the erosion of state borders and distances between people. In order to paint a more detailed picture of the globalizing world further study of sister cities by social scientists is a necessity.

In this study an examination is conducted on a narrow segment of the development of sister cities, that of the evolution of Russian - American sister cities since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This particular academic work was undertaken to elucidate a portion of the history of Russian-American relations, the relations between Russia and America on a municipal level through the concept of sister cities, providing a novel way to look at how subordinate administrative units of these states interact. It is absolutely critical that we understand more about the nature of Russian - American relations, as a compelling argument could be expounded declaring that these two countries coexisting peacefully side-by-side would help to ensure a significantly more stable world, and if we know more about what can bolster relations between these countries we may be able to move toward creating such a situation. Lastly, uncovering more about the nature of Russian-American relations can help us to determine whether or not relations between these countries are as frosty as they seem to be in the contemporary era.

After much research it appears as if Russian - American sister cities have not been analyzed in depth in the academic literature. This makes this dissertation incredibly important for the social scientific community, as it sheds some light on a topic that has not been illuminated in any marked sense. Furthermore, in the sphere of theory, possible explanations for the denomination of sister cities and other synonymous entities will be demonstrated. Additionally, the discussion on how the sister city relates directly to postmodernism will lend significant credibility to those who would argue that we are living in postmodern times or are entering them. This dissertation also shows why realism is not an effective theory that can be used to explain all international relations phenomena. In the practical sense this dissertation will provide some answers as how to forge a stronger relationship between the Russian and American people. When we know what can spoil sister city relationships and what strengthens them we can use that information to build relationships that are more robust. Such knowledge can allow us to help bring forth more peace and less conflict to the world; therefore readers should be mindful of the information disseminated here, and of the conclusions drawn.

This dissertation also makes an attempt to concisely describe what exactly a sister city relationship is and is not, as it will be useful for readers and for the scientific literature. It is completely unacceptable that the literature has done a poor job of this, as this phenomenon has touched practically every corner of the inhabited world making it worthy of clearly defining. It is true that some scholars have worked on describing the sister city, and their contributions will be noted here, yet the most precise definition of a “sister city” will be given as a construction of their ideas blended with those of this dissertation’s author. Without having a clear idea of what the sister city concept is one cannot begin to understand what the relationships between the examined subjects are; therefore the definition of sister cities is provided as the first subject in the first chapter.

This composition has a clear aim and object and subject of study. In the broad sense, Russian-American relations is what is under examination; therefore this is the object of study. In the narrow sense, the subject of the study is Russian-American relations in the context of their sister city relationships. The objectives or aim of this work are manifold. The first objective is to provide an account of how Russian-American sister city relationships have evolved from the end of the Soviet Union to today, the second is to determine how robust the relations between Russian-American cities are in contemporary times as opposed to the 1990’s, the third is to identify what types of interactions are the most common between the sisters to find out how Russian and American cities connect with one another, fourthly the meaning of the relationships is to be discovered, and last but not least to find out what these relationships mean for the concept of the “state.”

The methodology implemented in this dissertation is thorough, and here in the introduction only a partial explanation is shown; later on more details about methodology is provided where appropriate. To be able to aim for a concise dissertation it has been necessary to restrict the analysis in this study to only nine sister city relationships. The membership list of Sister Cities International (SCI) and the sister cities listed on the U.S.-Russia Chamber of Commerce (USRCC) website were used to compile a single list of Russian-American sister cities. These organizations together surely cover practically every single sister city relationship between Russia and the United States that would possibly be active. Active sister cities shall be deemed here to be those that have an active sister city agreement. Of course, a few drawbacks to this method of finding Russian-American sister cities to analyze is that certain relationships may have gone defunct in-between the fall of the Soviet Union until today and could be omitted from the aforementioned lists of subordinate administrative units that would potentially be examined, and there may be some sister cities that are serious but simply are not operating within the framework of SCI or known to the USRCC. However, it should not be much of a problem to leave out defunct relationships from this study, as there are many active ones to choose from which will show the overall trends in the Russian - American sister city relationship, allow for discussion of these relationships up until the contemporary time and the few that may exist outside of SCI and the USRCC would most likely have an insignificant impact on the overall outcome of the results of this research. From SCI the list of many currently active Russian -American members was drawn, and from the USRCC relationships operating outside the framework of SCI were uncovered.

Out of the list of partnerships nine of them were chosen in the following manner. The populations of each city involved in a Russian - American pairing were researched and only those that had larger populations were considered for selection. Only under examination will be currently active Russian-American sister cities that have the highest cumulative population between partners only including cities of American states which would otherwise have more than one partnership represented. Moreover, the relationships studied will only be those which have partners where both of them have populations of over 400,000 people. A descriptive reasoning for these decisions will be given in Section 2.1. After the nine relationships were chosen, information available from social media, websites about the relationships, and various primary sources were used to construct their stories which are told in Section 2.2.

What is the entire scope of the primary sources that are considered in this study? First, reports of people who witnessed or took part in the nine sister city interactions from mass media is one these sources. Second, the content of the original sister city agreements signed and agreed upon by both sisters is considered. Thirdly, photographs relating specifically to these relationships are used in analysis. Fourthly, any reports that sister city organizations have disseminated are inspected. Lastly, speeches that were made about the relationships under examination are looked at as well. In summation, various forms of primary sources are scrutinized to help put together the informational basis of this study.

Now that everything is clear about primary sources, a return to discussing methodology is in order. Content analysis is applied to determine how the relationships changed from the 1990’s to the post 1990’s era. To reveal what the strength of the sisters are nowadays the online presence of them was taken into account which employed the usage of quantitative analysis, and to compare the strength of the relationships in the 1990’s to the last two decades comparative and quantitative analysis was utilized. Additionally, to find what types of interactions are the most shared between the sisters employed the use of content and quantitative analysis. Lastly, theory was applied to understand what these relationships mean for states, and in particular for Russia and the United States and the overall trajectory of the framework of the world order.

In regards to theory, two sections of the first chapter of this dissertation will be devoted to it and there will be another section pertaining to it in the third chapter. In regards to the first chapter the first section about theory will talk about the naming of paired cities and why they may be called as they happen to be. Why is it that in the United States paired cities are called sisters, yet these pairs can be called brothers, friends or twins elsewhere? This is where the application of feminist and constructivist thought will be applied to help explain the assigned names to the partners. The second section of theory in the first chapter covers how the rise of sister cities can be explained through postmodernist theory, as well as a demonstration of refutation of realist thought about international relations in regard to the theme of this paper. In the third chapter, there is a section specifically about how the Russian and American sister cities in specific bolster postmodernist theory and weaken realist theory.

Lastly, it is necessary to make it entirely clear what the structure of this dissertation is. The first section of the first chapter will elucidate the concept of the sister city in general, then the following two sections will briefly discuss feminism, constructivism, realism and postmodernism in relation to it. After this, the second chapter will start off with how the nine specific city relationships were picked to analyze methodologically, then will switch over to talking about all of them in depth in the second section. The third chapter starts with discussion of how the Russian-American sister cities have evolved from the 1990’s until the contemporary era, and is followed by discussion of where Russian-American sister cities are promoted online and what it means in relation to their strength, followed by what the state of postmodernism and realism look like through the lens of Russian and American sister cities.

**Chapter 1**

**The Phenomenon of Sister Cities: Notions and Concepts**

**1.1**

**What are Sister Cities?**

It is a challenge to find a significant amount of information in the literature about sister cities, and this is lamented by scholars interested in the subject.[[2]](#footnote-2) Wilbur Zelinsky, a major figure of the study of sister cities, said that until 1991, essentially nothing was discussed in the literature about sister cities.[[3]](#footnote-3) Nonetheless, from a significant portion of the literature that does exist we can discover what they are, why they are created, what happens in these relationships, get some insight into their development, uncover part of their history, and draw some conclusions about what they mean for international relations. From cursory research online one can reveal that many world cities and towns have a sister. Due to this reality, the general public and especially the social science community should be aware of what sister city pairing is.

Firstly, we must define what a sister city is, and what it is not, in general, and for the purpose of this dissertation. To start this conversation it is necessary to point out that this is far from a simple task as DeVillers et. al. have stated “there is no consensus on an exact definition of twinning.”[[4]](#footnote-4) (Sometimes, the phenomenon of sister cities is called twinning.) This statement raises great concern, but it appears as if on their most basic level sister cities can be members of administrative units subordinate to the central government to which they belong. Some sister city relationships exist between paired units in the same country; take Moss Point, Mississippi and Burlington, Vermont for example as American paired cities.[[5]](#footnote-5) Actually, the earliest roots of what we know of as sister cities today happen to be from relationships within the same country.[[6]](#footnote-6) There is no requirement for sister cities to be from different countries. Moreover, it is possible that some of the pairings may be informal without formal recognition between the units, yet this is not a true sister city relationship due to the absence of official recognition. In this dissertation what is generally under examination are only sister cities which are formally recognized between foreign countries, and in specific between the Soviet Union and the United States and the Russian Federation and the United States.

Sometimes, there are situations where paired subordinate administrative units are amalgamated together, as indicated in the literature, “twinning stands for shared citiness and figures as a manifestation of new urban forms.”[[7]](#footnote-7) (They state that some of these units are partnered formally.)[[8]](#footnote-8) This refers to bordering municipal units. In the case of this dissertation this kind of pairing is not considered as there are no Russian-American pairs that share a geographic border. Another factor that makes a sister city relationship so seems to be one in which the relationship is supposed to be enduring, not temporary.[[9]](#footnote-9) As an example, if two cities wanted to collaborate on one project and this was the extent of their relationship we should not consider this to be a sister city relationship, rather a temporary partnership. Furthermore, sister cities should arise out of grassroots efforts and have many of their duties provided by volunteers.[[10]](#footnote-10) Such an arrangement ensures the genuine desire of the citizenry to establish ties with an outside community without expectation of compensation and without the presence of governmental influence. The size of the subordinate administrative units involved in the relationships do not matter when it comes to their abilities to become sister cities as well. The populations can be unbalanced as in the pairing between Stamford, Connecticut and Jiangdu, China.[[11]](#footnote-11) Additionally, we can see as examples of many places designated as towns, counties, cities or states or different administrative units in Russia that have been paired with other federally subordinate units in foreign countries in “sister city” relationships. Looking at the membership record of SCI we can see that the State of Maryland in the United States has many partners similar to its own administrative level (the state), which is the largest subdivision of a country.[[12]](#footnote-12) Technically speaking, we have sister partnerships on different administrative levels, yet they appear to get lumped into being designated like a “sister city.” If a significant NGO being a major part of the sister city relationship in contemporary times like SCI feels comfortable putting these different units into the general classification as “sister city" it should be safe to say that we can generally feel the same way about classifying these relationships, even though not all sister cities are actually cities per se. (We can also see that sister “states” in the case of the US operate outside of the boundaries of SCI, such as the partnership between Iowa and its sisters or between Kyoto and Oklahoma.)[[13]](#footnote-13) [[14]](#footnote-14) What truly seems to matter is that a few subordinate administrative units in one country or more than one have decided to formally agree through their governing bodies to create a relationship with each other, and this is what creates an official “sister city” relationship, even though technically the units can be on different administrative levels. However, in this paper only foreign sister cities will be discussed, due to the theme of Russian-American sister city development.

A sister city is not always a twin town or city. A fantastic description is given about what twin “towns" are in three different cases in the work by P. Joenniemi and A. Sergunin; according to them there is the domestic and then the international in a broad and in a narrow fashion; the broad “connote[s] cooperative agreements between cities, towns, and even counties that are not neighbors but located at a considerable distance and even in separate countries to promote economic, commercial, and cultural ties.”[[15]](#footnote-15) This is the definition worked with in this dissertation. Twin towns often are a different phenomenon than sister cities for the reason that they are often adjacent administrative units, which also means that they are often in the same country. As examples of this situation, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota are twin cities as well as Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Florida; they are both in the same state and same country and are close to each other. Twin cities also occur along the borders of different countries which is common in Europe.[[16]](#footnote-16) It is important to make it clear that there is no connection between these twins and the sister city phenomenon, although other definitions of twin cities and towns are synonymous with sister cities. Europe often uses the term “twin towns” and Asian countries “brother cities”, as laid out by Baycan-Levent et. al. to mean the same thing as sister cities.[[17]](#footnote-17) Actually, Russia is like an Asian country in this regard as it uses “brotherly cities”, instead of “sister cities”.[[18]](#footnote-18) There are also “partnership town[s]”, “partner town[s]” and “friendship town[s]”, just adding to the lexicon of phrases that mean the same thing as a sister city partnership.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Sister cities interact with each other in many different ways. One of these ways is by one of them giving the other assistance in the form of aid. Some examples include aid from the US to Africa where school and medical supplies have been sent and technical assistance has been provided in sectors such as farming and supply of clean water.[[20]](#footnote-20) Similar development programs have also taken place between California and Costa Rica with farming knowledge transfer and between Oaxaca and Palo Alto with irrigation.[[21]](#footnote-21) In the case of Bandung, Indonesia’s relationship with Fort Worth, Texas, it is one which has included Bandung learning about how to provide clean water and take away waste water appropriately.[[22]](#footnote-22) Professional development is another area in which we see sister cities interact, as in the case of the training of nurses and teachers from Afghanistan in Nebraska.[[23]](#footnote-23) Sister cities can also lead to the crystallization of economic ties between countries, as argued by B. Ramasamy and R. Cremer because such relationships break down cultural barriers to understanding.[[24]](#footnote-24) Furthermore, gift giving is a notable aspect of the sister city relationship; we can see this in examples such as some of the gifts given by Japan to the US, a Japanese townhouse given to Boston and a meditation garden that was given to Mountain View, California.[[25]](#footnote-25) Students are also often exchanged among sisters.[[26]](#footnote-26) Events are held including sister cities such as the Olimpiade del Tricolor in Italy where sisters have competed against each other in Olympic events.[[27]](#footnote-27) Additionally, libraries have been exchanging information and expertise with each other through sister city relationships.[[28]](#footnote-28) The linkage of schools has occurred in sister city relationships too leading to “exchange of children’s artwork, letters, photo exhibits, music, plays, recipes and artifacts.”[[29]](#footnote-29) This is a potentially significant part of the interaction between sister cities as it directly involves youth, the age group that will carry on what they experience through the partnership for life. A final example of how sister cities interact is through cultural activities that can include “cultural festivals, art and craft expositions, citizen and school events,… and food fairs.”[[30]](#footnote-30) As we can see, interactions between sister cities is extremely varied taking multiple forms.

Sister cities are created for a multitude of reasons and not all of them are purely altruistic or completely rational, but at other times they are. Sometimes, they have been created for political goals as in the case of some US-African relationships in which mayors of American cities wanted African sisters to receive more support from black constituents.[[31]](#footnote-31) In other situations, they might be pushed for by somebody in power like the mayor of San Diego who advocated for establishing a partnership with Shannon, Ireland which tarnishes the idea that sister cities should grow out of grassroots efforts.[[32]](#footnote-32) The names of the units involved are often taken into consideration when choosing a sister city, as we can see in pairings such as: St. Petersburg, Russia and St. Petersburg, Florida, Alburquerque, Spain and Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Toledo, Spain and Toledo, Ohio.[[33]](#footnote-33) Surely, one can easily determine that it may be intriguing to partner with a place far away that has the same name as where you live, and if there is the same name between two cities there may be a good chance that these places may share something in common as there are often common origins in names such as heritage. A specific goal of bolstering a local economy is also part of the reason why sister cities are created.[[34]](#footnote-34) Depuis, Cremer and De Bruin have said that the trend as of their publication has turned to economic reasons for having sister city relations.[[35]](#footnote-35) Places far from each other often will have different products and services that may be desired by each other, so in general this is a particularly good idea to pair up for this reason. Santa Fe and Bukhara became sisters because of the movement to prevent nuclear war, so through this we can see that sisters have been created to evade the policies of the central government.[[36]](#footnote-36) In another case of getting around the policy of the federal government it so happened that many communities did not particularly agree with the American foreign policy toward Nicaragua, so they rebelled against it and created sisters with Nicaraguan partners.[[37]](#footnote-37) Furthermore, sister cities or twin towns also have been advocated for to unify countries together, as supported by the Council of European Municipalities.[[38]](#footnote-38) The “twin town” concept is incredibly important in Europe due to the desire to construct the EU and keep it together. Similarities across different sectors are taken into consideration when seeking a sister city partnership such as geography, economy and events that take place in given areas as well.[[39]](#footnote-39) [[40]](#footnote-40) If a subordinate administrative unit is looking for a partner finding one close to itself may just be the reason that they decide to go the next step and make the partnership come to fruition. Aid definitely is another major reason of part of why certain sister city relationships came to be such as between Nicaragua and the US.[[41]](#footnote-41) These are all major examples of why sister cities have developed, and surely this list is not completely exhaustive.

When it comes to history, sister cities are a rather modern development in the historical record, but have their origins from a long time ago. Zelinsky says that certain “fraternal, professional, philanthropic and political activities of a nongovernmental nature” may be considered as the original roots of the sister city movement, which greatly predates the rise of sister cities.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, out of the ashes of World War II, the sister city movement was truly born. A great portion of the world faced widespread destruction during the war and much healing was needed to move forward into the future. In Europe, administrative units part of different countries that were mortal enemies decided to come together to try to repair some of the damage done.[[43]](#footnote-43) In the United States during the 1950’s President Eisenhower played a very critical role in kickstarting what we know today to be the sister city movement. In 1956, he announced the start of the People to People program, the forerunner of SCI. Since the inception of sister cities major world events affected their development greatly, they have not been isolated from the ups and downs the world has experienced.[[44]](#footnote-44) The crystallization of a European community is one such example. Support for them has come from those interested in bolstering the EU project, and it has been demonstrated that sister cities assist in this mission.[[45]](#footnote-45) As shown by Zelinsky, Eisenhower's People to People program collapsed, yet its Civic Committee lived on, it became a nonprofit called the Town Affiliation Association, and part of that is the SCI we know today.[[46]](#footnote-46) This organization has been a major driver of the sister cities movement, so it is good for one to know how it transformed into what it is now from an idea Eisenhower had. Today, the organization lives on and connects many sister cities to the U.S. and actually encompasses each and every single sister city analyzed between Russia and the U.S. in this dissertation.[[47]](#footnote-47)

The development of sister cities has been rather intriguing as there have been certain trends within it. The research conducted by B. Ramasamy and R. Cremer indicates that similarity between sisters was one of the most important parts in the choice of pairing early sisters.[[48]](#footnote-48) Perhaps, part of the reason for this is because the movement was so new that people were uncomfortable building a partnership with a sister that would be entirely alien for them, some familiarity was most likely desired when choosing a partner, but as time went on, as we saw earlier, the trend switched to partnering for economic purposes. The growth of sister cities has been remarkable, as about ten years after the start of the People to People program initiated by Eisenhower the US had 300 partners and by the 90’s there were about 1,000 of them under SCI, and today there are about 1,800 of them.[[49]](#footnote-49) [[50]](#footnote-50) It should be mentioned that a good portion of sister city proliferation can be credited to SCI, which is not the only organization to manage American sister city relationships, but it is the main one, and that is why it is mentioned here specifically.[[51]](#footnote-51) Eisenhower’s original idea was to have the government be as hands off the sister cities movement as possible, and it so happens that many sister cities have arisen from grassroots movements, as they were intended to being the norm regarding establishment.[[52]](#footnote-52) [[53]](#footnote-53) Interestingly enough, from the very beginning of his People to People program it seemed rather clear that the goal of it from the speech launching it that the program’s not so secret mission would be to subvert the influence of the government of the Soviet Union.[[54]](#footnote-54) Today, it has transformed into something different for the US that has remained on the global stage, and between Russia and the US, even though the Cold War ended, the sister city concept did not die for the US, or around the world. Perhaps, Zelinsky’s idea about the planetary society is what can explain the staying power and growth of sister cities. Zelinsky said that a “planetary society” has been forming, this leads one to think that there is a breakdown of boundaries on a large scale, and he just may be correct.[[55]](#footnote-55)

**1.2**

**Sisters, Brothers, Twins or Friendship Cities? Approaches of Feminist and Constructivist Theories**

It is a challenge to find information on why paired cities are called sisters, brothers or twins, but we can apply the tools of theory to come up with why they may be named as such in certain areas of the world. Before diving into using theory let us look at a possible reason for genderless, male and female words for paired cities regarding language. Looking back to what Baycan-Levent et. al. said, we have twins in Europe, brothers in Asia and sisters in the US.[[56]](#footnote-56) It is apparent that we have one gender unspecific and two gender specific popular ways of calling city pairings. Why use the male term “brother" city in Asia and in Russia? In many major Asian languages the concept of gender in speech is practically absent. This could explain a lot about freer choice in choosing a name for city pairings outside of language structure restraints. In Russian, gender in speech is most definitely a concept that exists with its usage of masculine, feminine and neuter words, and the noun for city happens to be город (gorod), a masculine word. This lends some credibility to the idea that maybe Russians feel more comfortable calling paired cities brothers instead of sisters or anything else.

In the case of those in Europe there is a situation where gender has been removed from the naming of cities, here they are twins. With the great variations in European languages it would only make sense to eliminate using a specific gender to describe these relationships. In the Uralic languages spoken in Estonia, Finland and Hungary gender is not particularly expressed, but the word “city” is usually a feminine noun in the most widely spoken European languages. In Europe, pairings are called twins, and with some deep thought it may be easy to determine why. Twins may be considered to be closer in relation than even brothers or sisters. Twins in the biological sense are always born generally at the same time and are even identical sometimes. Since Europe is clustered together in a relatively small area and there was a significant necessity for this region to heal after World War II is it possible that this could be the explanation for calling their pairings twins? Moreover, the movement to bring Europe together in a union requires a significant effort to be made to advocate for sameness among all European people. Whether or not Russia is a European country is up for debate, but it calls its pairings brothers, perhaps because of language and perhaps because of trying to set itself aside from the rest of Europe or both. In Asia there seems to be more of a choice about what to name pairings, yet they generally choose brothers. This is definitely an area where theory needs to be applied to give a better understanding of why they opted to name pairings what they did.

Applying feminist theory we can uncover why we may have some of the names that we do for pairings. During the time that the sister city movement arose in the US and specifically at the time that SCI was established it was caught up in the fervor of the women’s liberation movement. At this time it was seen as appropriate by many to keep pushing forward with the fight for equal rights for women in the US and many entities and people wanted to help that cause as much as they possibly could. During this period of time would it really have been acceptable to pick brother cities as the naming for pairings between the US and its partners? Notice how as time progressed a significant change happened with the naming of the program that started as the People to People program and evolved into SCI. This represents a switch from a gender neutral name to one which put its direct focus on the feminine. The change occurred from the 1950’s to the 1960’s, a time which saw the US become more liberalized. This could be entirely representative of the need seen by feminist thinkers to overthrow the masculine power structure that is viewed by feminists to be oppressive and dangerous. The sister city moment born from the seemingly self evident need to recover from World War II could be viewed originally as a peace movement and it only seems natural that during the 1960’s giving the name consciously or unconsciously to SCI would be appropriate, as the feminine is almost always viewed as the peaceful opposite partner of the bellicose masculine; moreover at a time which people were afraid of the outbreak of a war between the US and the USSR.

Constructivism applies well to the reason why Europe may use twin as the preferred word for their partners. The idea of viewing each other with sameness and having the partner reciprocate this action would have great appeal in Europe for many. Europe saw such devastation from World War I and World War II that the idea of uniting together became desirable and viewing each other as similarly as possible was what was needed in the eyes of many. Europeans all being in the same neighborhood and suffering as a region together and needing similar things in order to recover from devastation created a sense of unity. “Twins” seems like such a natural fit for naming European partners theoretically in the framework of constructivism.

To explain why Russia and Asian countries tend to use “brother cities” utilization of feminist thought could be applicable. Historically, we must understand that the Enlightenment had a profound impact on Russia and the West, but not Asia. This fact may not make the idea of not calling the pairings “sisters” for political reasons in many Asian countries. The patriarchy has not been as criticized or disintegrated in Asia as in the Western world because traditional Asian ways of thinking have remained largely intact in a sizable portion of the region. Interestingly enough, China calls “sister cities” “friendship cities” bucking the Asian trend of naming them “brother cities”.[[57]](#footnote-57) This could be representative of China grasping onto the idea of Communism, a Western concept in origin which has attempted to ensure that men and women are seen as equal sexes. The overall lack of Western thinking about gender relations may be the main reason why Asians have chosen to apply the masculine term “brothers” to city partnerships. It could possibly demonstrate a sexist attitude toward how important relationships between administrative units should be called.

**1.3**

**The Sister City Concept: Postmodernism and the Theory of Realism**

As the world has become more globalized many would argue that postmodernism has been taking society by storm leading to the weakening of the state structure. The state faces great competition now from multinational corporations (MNC’s) and NGOs which may be a sign we are living in or entering postmodern times. To build the argument that postmodernism is present in today’s society we can turn to popular culture to see this. “Joker” the hit 2019 cinematic blockbuster criticizing the entire structure of the system of the world we currently live in stands as one of the most popular contemporary films, or we can look at modern political discussion where the argument is made repeatedly that gender is on a spectrum, or make the sociological observation that many people are choosing extremely unorthodox ways of living makes it apparent that their argument may be correct. In relation to this dissertation, the sister city concept could be considered to be a phenomenon which has eroded the power and influence of the state, and because of this it surely seems as if sister city pairing could be a part of the postmodern movement.

The sister city concept promotes that which disintegrates traditional borders between peoples of different countries. Within these arrangements travel between countries, cultural exchange, economic activity, and formation of social and political bonds are encouraged. As a result, the people who participate in these activities and even those who do not are effected by this exchange. This only expedites the blending of the ideas and people allowing for the proliferation of a more globalized world. When people worldwide begin to eat the same foods, use the same things to get tasks done, practice the same dances, listen to the same music, run governments in similar ways, begin to see people from far away places as having many things in common with them and become friends or even partners with these people it puts the globe on the path of becoming more alike. Such a process is one of smashing old barriers that have stood between nations for years to routinely expose society to foreign peoples which will only result in a more syncretic future global society if it continues to proliferate.

The idea of sister city partnerships is fundamentally postmodern. It rejects or at very least pushes back against the division of peoples and the borders that exist between them to bring them together. From its very inception Eisenhower said that its goal was to bring as many people into the sphere of life of the West as much as possible.[[58]](#footnote-58) On its face this is a modernist way of thinking, but for such a thing to happen it would require a deconstruction of the world as we knew it and as we know it to be today, this is a postmodern approach. Also, it seems modernist to say that we are moving in the direction of one fundamental truth which essentially was what Eisenhower was saying in a way, that the Western style of life is the correct one and that the way of life in the Communist world is incorrect, but today there is no such division in the world which does not appear to be clearly bipolar. Moreover, the sister city movement lasted beyond the Cold War and grew after it, an indicator that the movement did not just have one purpose, to collapse the Soviet Union and its ideology. Perhaps, the sister city may have started with modernist roots, but it appears to have evolved into a postmodern movement. The contemporary sister city in its purest form is a rejection in full of the idea that there is one right way of life to live; it seems as if there is no judgement about other people’s ways of doing things; it is mainly a process of getting everyone together to try to get to know each other and understand the world a bit more even though postmodernists would argue that we cannot come to really understand each other completely. To postmodernists it seems that the sister city would be an instrument with which to blend the world into one coherent whole, whatever that will be.

Realism proclaims that the state is the central actor in international relations. With gigantic challengers in different areas such as NGO's like Greenpeace, Sister Cities International and Amnesty International and MNC’s such as Apple, Walmart and Google it leads to the question, “Are states really in charge to an extent realists think they are?” As previously demonstrated, communities have used their sister cities to evade their central government’s policies. MNC’s and NGO’s are separate from the government and can do many actions that they wish to in order to advance their goals. With the spread of globalization and the overall advancement of technology the state will have a more difficult time maintaining control over people. Now, with computers and cell phones, people all across the world can immediately communicate with one another, products are made in all corners of the globe and shipped to those far away, transportation has rapidly sped up in the past century, ideas have flowed across borders in multiple forms, and so on. The genie of globalization has been let out of the bottle and there may be no way to put it back in. It is a well known fact that many MNC’s have more money than many of the states on Earth. This allows them to have power over the decisions of states and advocate for their interests; NGO’s are powered by the people with volunteers and money and operate across borders to do the same as MNC’s. The sister city adds to the breakdown of the power of the state and brings it to more localized entities and to the general citizenry. Moreover, it is important to note that even if states decide to attempt to close certain channels by which sister cities operate they could employ technology to evade the actions taken by central authorities in many ways, especially through the use of many of the latest modern technological instruments. Cities are choosing to do what they see fit instead of following every direction and suggestion of their central government’s wishes. The theory of realism is put in a difficult position by sister city relations.

To sum up, postmodernism is the best theory to explain the proliferation of the sister city, specifically the Russian-American ones and their ability to remain as active entities. The world is morphing into something new, an amalgamation of all of its different parts. The Russian-American sister city is part of this movement; it goes against the established structure of state supremacy which particularly crushes the main tenet of realism. The day that the state may be accepted as something far from being the main actor on the global stage may be soon; this study is a harbinger of it.

**Chapter 2**

**Russian-American Sister Cities**

**2.1**

**Сase-Studies on Russian-American Sister City Relationships: Methodology of Selection**

It was a difficult decision to decide on exactly which Russian-American sister cities to examine for this dissertation. Firstly, the main concern was finding reliable sources to draw information from regarding sister city pairings. A well known and respected NGO, SCI, was the natural place to look for information first. Conveniently, they have a full record of the 2019 membership posted online on their official website for those interested in viewing it. It was not enough to only consider possibly choosing SCI registered relationships, so the decision was made to find another reliable source to find those not registered with the NGO; this is where the USRCC came into utility. On their website they have multiple Russian-American sister cities not registered with SCI listed. The list of potential partners to examine was drawn entirely from whatever sister cities the USRCC and SCI say that exist today. (Drawbacks to this method were previously discussed in the introduction.) After much deliberation on how cities should be chosen for analysis it can be said with confidence that the following criteria used here may be considered by future researchers studying city diplomacy.

Selection of nine cities seemed to be a manageable number that is not too small of a sample to extract from the sixty nine relationships that were found from the aforementioned reliable sources. It is was necessary to opt for a scientific way of picking the nine cities, and firstly it seemed as if population would be an appropriate way of figuring out which relationships to choose; however interestingly the populations of many partners are extremely lopsided.[[59]](#footnote-59) [[60]](#footnote-60) [[61]](#footnote-61) Separating cities by year of establishment was another idea to determine cities to select. However, an interesting fact showed up when researching their establishment dates, a great portion of them were established in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.[[62]](#footnote-62) Due to their clustering around these dates it seemed like a better idea to choose a different way of selection.

Cities with large populations almost always have significance within their respective countries, economically, culturally, historically, and so on. By opting to select such cities assurance can be given that those picked are important to their respective countries and are worthy of intensive study. Additionally, by using this selection method it prevents choosing relationships which involve places that may not be cities, but are classified almost like a member of a sister city would be.

The decision was made to examine only large/medium sized cities with active partnerships which have two partners with populations exceeding 400,000 people each, and choosing only the highest populated partnerships from American states which may have had more than one representative. The reasoning behind opting for these relationships is numerous. Firstly, larger sized cities are significant players on the international stage, ensuring that the interactions between them are definitely worthy of paying attention to, due to their influence this segment of partnerships is the most warranted to examine. Surely, smaller cities are important to a certain extent, yet because of their limited size they usually do not have the same impact on the world as large cities do. Focusing on only larger cities also ensured staying away from any different kinds of partnerships that are considered to be like sister cities, but are something else, such as partner states, and small cities that oftentimes may not be considered by many to fit the definition of a “true” city due to such low population. Only active partnerships were chosen in order to be able to tell the stories of the relationships up until the contemporary time and to be able to obtain more information about them, as defunct relationships may have significantly less information available. 400,000 people plus per partner in regards to the dataset of Russian-American sister cities appeared to be an axiomatic requirement to pick nine relationships from for examination; in the Russian and American mindsets it would be easy to argue that cities of this size are large and medium sized. In order to avoid overrepresentation of certain states only the most populated state partners were chosen in the cases of California and Texas, as placing too much of a focus on them may skew results too much in the favor of what is occurring in these specific geographical areas of the United States. It is true that analyzing each and every known relationship would give the most detailed depiction of the story of Russian-American sister cities, but focusing on a handful of the most significant partnerships will be adequate to give us their general story.

**2.2- Nine Russian-American Sister City Relationships In Detail.**

Before discussing these nine relationships it should be stated that all of the climate data for each city was retrieved from one source.[[63]](#footnote-63) Additionally, all American city populations are based on 2018 estimates from the US Census Bureau and Russian ones from the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, but based on 2019 estimates which were also conveniently located on one website.[[64]](#footnote-64) All climates, coordinates and populations are provided to give a sence of where the cities are, what kind of environments they have and how large they are. This information allows all readers to get an idea of what the places are like under discussion and how they are related to each other.

**Los Angeles, California and St. Petersburg, Russia**

Los Angeles, California (≈34°N 118°W) has a temperate climate with a dry and hot summer and a population of around 3,990,000 people, whereas St. Petersburg, Russia (≈59°N 30°E) of about 5,384,000 people has a continental climate with warm summers and no dry season. The relationship between these two cities has been sustained since 1990 when mayors Bradley and Sobchak established the Los Angeles - St. Petersburg sister city partnership making it a relationship established predating the collapse of the Soviet Union.[[65]](#footnote-65)

According to one of the official websites of the Sister Cities of Los Angeles (sistercities.lacity.org), there has been collaboration across multiple sectors including “cultural, educational, business, and technological co-ventures” and we know that from the dates mentioned on the website that they are talking about the period of the 1990's leading into the early 2000’s.[[66]](#footnote-66) Despite the fact that L.A. and St. Petersburg are active sisters this website seems as if much of its information has not been updated in a very long time, as the page pertaining to the relationship mentions how it was preparing for the 300th anniversary of Saint Petersburg which occurred in 2003![[67]](#footnote-67) This page states how plans were in the works at this time for “journalism exchange, book exchange, and a medical seminar.”[[68]](#footnote-68) It also mentions how annually between these cities there have been “film festivals, exclusive premieres, world class ballets, art exhibits, and musical evenings” that took place.[[69]](#footnote-69) Notably, the website was posting events up until 2016, so it is not as if it fell into disuse many years ago. Events mentioned pertaining to the relationship included a virtual tour of St. Petersburg in 2009 and a display of student artwork about the sister cities was featured in 2011.[[70]](#footnote-70) Specifically highlighted on the site was the fact that the L.A. - St. Petersburg Sister City Committee has significantly contributed to charity helping orphans and sick children in St. Petersburg.[[71]](#footnote-71) In this website about the sister cities there is only one picture clearly depicting the L.A.-St. Petersburg relationship, and this is of a representative of St. Petersburg marching in the Hollywood Christmas Parade of 2006.[[72]](#footnote-72)

It does appear that there is a more advanced and modern website about the Sister Cities of Los Angeles, and they do have a profile for their partnership with St. Petersburg, but they do not list anything about the relationship with Los Angeles and when you go to click on the link to learn more about the relationship the link does not work.[[73]](#footnote-73) The organization Sister Cities of Los Angeles does have a Facebook page that mentions their partnership with Russia briefly. In 2012, they decided to show a picture of a sign that incorporated the distance of L.A. from St. Petersburg indicating that they are sisters.[[74]](#footnote-74) The next year in August 2013 they posted about a protest of Russian legislation by L.A. council people and community members in regards to Russian laws that restrict the freedoms of the LGBT community.[[75]](#footnote-75) On Instagram, the Sister Cities of Los Angeles posted nothing pertaining to Saint Petersburg, and on Twitter it was the same situation.[[76]](#footnote-76) [[77]](#footnote-77) On the official website for the city of Saint Petersburg it does not appear that they have a special section devoted to the relationship with Los Angeles, if so it would be difficult for one to find.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Taking a look at what was able to be found about the history of the program beyond these websites, a handful of information was revealed; the historical record of the L.A.-Saint Petersburg relationship is scanty to say the least. In 2003, because of the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg’s founding there was an event held by the L.A. - St. Petersburg Sister City Committee (LASPSCC) to “[recognize] individuals who have dedicated themselves to promoting the mission of the committee” and it included notable people such as Vladimir Zelman (anesthesiologist), Stanislav Medvedenko (basketball player), Ed O’Ross (actor) and Victor Luzin (Council General of Russia).[[79]](#footnote-79) Moreover, it was stated in 2010 in a Sputnik article that the LASPSCC has been assisting a nonprofit in St. Petersburg which aids old women (babushkas) with daily chores and that “teachers, lawyers, and city officials” have come to L.A. because of the relationship.[[80]](#footnote-80) Interestingly, this article comes from a person who was the head of this organization and he complained that when some when important officials came from St. Petersburg they did not want to interact with the mayor of Los Angeles believing that this person was too insignificant, but one of the people who was a teacher went along with the program planned.[[81]](#footnote-81) He also laments the fact that the organization has done much to assist St. Petersburg orphans in the sector of sport, yet when going to send shoes to one specific orphanage there was obvious corruption taking place because they asked for shoes only in adult sizes, but he also mentions positivity, as they have helped with safeguarding the works of Anna Akhmatova and helped St. Petersburgers with kidney disease.[[82]](#footnote-82) Furthermore, there was a major children’s art exchange (done through the medium of paintings) in 2011 between the cities, and supposedly this was the second year the LASPSCC funded such an event.[[83]](#footnote-83) In addition, there was a movement in Los Angeles to cut its ties with Saint Petersburg because of the “anti-gay” legislation enacted in Russia in 2013, yet as we can see today this effort was not successful.[[84]](#footnote-84)

**Chicago, Illinois and Moscow, Russia**

Chicago, Illinois (≈41°N 87°W) has a continental climate with no dry season a hot summer and a population of 2,706,000, and Moscow (≈55°N 37°E) of 12,433,000 has a continental climate with no dry season and a warm summer. This relationship started in 1997 following the collapse of the Soviet Union when mayors Daley and Luzhkov cemented a sister city agreement.[[85]](#footnote-85) Chicago Sister Cities International (CSCI) has a website that lists various kinds of interactions between the cities over the years in the fields of social services, medicine, economic development, environment, art, education, sports, government, business, music, architecture and cultural events.[[86]](#footnote-86) The most recent events posted occurred in 2016, and the most distant was that of the signing of the sister city agreement in 1997; the events that took place between the cities in this period of time were so numerous that it would be too tedious to mention them all here. In total they highlighted a total of sixty events between the two cities, twenty eight belonging to the fields of culture, one to architecture, three to music, nine to business, ten to government, one to sports, four to education, four for art, one for environment, two for economic development, two for social services and four for medical, per their categorization of the events.[[87]](#footnote-87) (There was some overlap in the categories which makes the total of events and the categories they belong to have different numbers.) According to their records the highest number of events held between the cities was 2009 with a total of eight interactions, and the second highest were 2008 and 2012 with seven each, the weakest were 2004, 2005, and 2015 with a grand total of zero events.[[88]](#footnote-88) Chicago is an important area of economic activity between the US and Russia, as it has been the area of operations for many Russian businesses and it has held the Russian-American Business Forum, which is unsurprising for a relationship with so many interactions.[[89]](#footnote-89)

There is even a Moscow Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International and they started posting on Facebook in June of 2009 and they have been very active posting about Chicago and Moscow’s sister city partnership, with plenty of pictures, stories and events.[[90]](#footnote-90) Following generally along the lines of the spheres mentioned that interactions took place in they mention those that pertain to cultural events, education, government, business, music, medicine, and additionally commemoration of cooperation in WWII.[[91]](#footnote-91) Regarding CSCI’s Facebook presence and relationship with Russia notably shows Moscow being featured in a cultural event in 2017, and the Firebird Gala in 2016.[[92]](#footnote-92) Out of around 300 posts only five pertained directly to the relationship with Moscow on Instagram and they were made from 2016 to 2020, all were positive, one talked about women in leadership, another showed St. Basil’s Cathedral lit up and during Earth Hour, another the Kazan Temple, one was just a greeting on World Cities Day, and lastly there was a post about the Moscow metro system and how it helps to guide blind passengers.[[93]](#footnote-93) The Moscow Committee of Chicago Sister Cities International is not on Twitter, but CSCI has had an active Twitter account since 2009 posting and retweeting often; the organization that the Moscow-Chicago sister city relationship is underneath is strong.[[94]](#footnote-94) However, they only directly mention their relationship with Moscow in a greeting on Russia Day in 2018.[[95]](#footnote-95) On the official site of the city of Moscow it was not able to find information about the Chicago - Moscow relationship. Of course the relationship has not been completely rosy; just like in Los Angeles the idea of terminating the sister city partnership because of gay rights issues came up, but the idea was nixed by Chicago in 2013, and in 2014 the Mayor of Chicago shot down the idea that Chicago suspend relations with Moscow over Crimea.[[96]](#footnote-96) [[97]](#footnote-97)

**Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and Ulyanovsk, Ulyanovsk Oblast**

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (≈35°N 97°W) has a temperate climate with a hot summer and no dry season with a population of 649,000 people, and Ulyanovsk (≈54°N 48°E) has a continental climate with a warm summer and no dry season and 628,000 people. In June 1996 Ronald Norick and Sergei Ermakov established relations between these cities.[[98]](#footnote-98) In the establishment agreement it said that the partnership was created “For the purpose of further development of fruitful, mutually beneficial cooperation between organizations and structures of Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk in various spheres of activity and considering desire of the American and the Russian nation for mutual understanding.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Following this they stated that their goals were to “exchange historical, social-demographic, and other information of mutual interest and characterizing Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk.”[[100]](#footnote-100)

There is a website for the sister cities of Oklahoma City called Sister Cities OKC Inc., which is not presented in an aesthetically pleasing fashion.[[101]](#footnote-101) In their calendar of events there are no events listed that pertain to the Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk relationship, and no specific photos in their gallery that depict anything from it, although they do mention that Ulyanovsk is a partner, the population of Ulyanovsk, and the date of the sister city establishment.[[102]](#footnote-102) [[103]](#footnote-103) [[104]](#footnote-104) Additionally, they have a Facebook page with many postings, yet there is nothing posted that can be directly linked to the relationship whatsoever, and they appear to have no social media presence on Twitter or Instagram as well; Ulyanovsk and Oklahoma City are not represented on these platforms![[105]](#footnote-105) The only thing that pertained to the relationship posted on social media that was able to be found was a comment by Mayor David Holt lauding the Oklahoma City Sister Cities program this year on January 21st.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Digging deeper, it was possible to find information about their interactions. According to the main website of the city of Ulyanovsk relations between the cities came from education links established in 1992 between their universities and due to the fact that both cities were deeply involved in manufacturing it was logical for them to partner.[[107]](#footnote-107) There has been cooperation between Ulyanovsk State University and Oklahoma City University having connected Russian-American departments starting in 1995 predating the official formation of the sisters by only one year.[[108]](#footnote-108) In 1997, Oklahoma City sent medical aid to Ulyanovsk only to have it destroyed because certain parts of the shipment expired after it went through a circuitous journey to get there, and supposedly other kinds of aid sent to Ulyanovsk have been destroyed as well.[[109]](#footnote-109) Zooming ahead to 2007 judges from Ulyanovsk were sent to Oklahoma by the Open World program to learn about the American judicial system.[[110]](#footnote-110) Moreover, the Methodist communities of both of these cities are also linked together, a partnership kindled in the 1990’s.[[111]](#footnote-111) Lastly, it is known that Mayor Michael Cornet of Oklahoma City travelled to Ulyanovsk in 2008.[[112]](#footnote-112)

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Nizhny Novgorod, Nizhny Novgorod Oblast**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (≈39°N 75°W) has 1,584,000 people, a temperate climate with no dry season and a hot summer, and Nizhny Novgorod (≈56°N 44°E) with a population of 1,254,000 has a continental climate with a warm summer and no dry season. The agreement between Philadelphia and Nizhny Novgorod was signed by Edward Rendell and Dmitri Bednyakov both mayors of their respective cities on October 15, 1992.[[113]](#footnote-113) The document starts off with demonstrating commonalities between the cities as listed, “vast human and natural resources, including science, technology and business know-how”, then talks about “foster[ing] greater cooperation and communication between business professionals, governmental officials, scientists, educators and technical experts.”[[114]](#footnote-114) The last stated goal was “to advance world peace and economic cooperation by encouraging and assisting organizations and citizens… to share with the other city opportunities, interests and expertise, [such as] employment and business opportunities, the arts, sciences, education, the professions and government.”[[115]](#footnote-115) Immediately upon signing the two cities wanted “exchanges between business people, civic leaders, university representatives, sports and cultural figures, and governmental officials.”[[116]](#footnote-116) Lastly, the cities wanted to “explore mutual opportunities for tourism and educational and cultural exchanges.”[[117]](#footnote-117)

In Philadelphia there is a nonprofit called Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia (CDI Philadelphia) that appears to be very involved with the connection between Philadelphia and Nizhny Novgorod; they argue that their goal is “to represent [their] city and the United States through person-to-person diplomacy.”[[118]](#footnote-118) On their page about the relationship between Nizhny Novgorod and Philadelphia it mentions characteristics of the Russian sister and a story about how in 2010 a group of five sailors came to Philadelphia from Nizhny Novgorod to visit, goes on to show some photos of other people who have gone from there to Philadelphia and an old collection of photographs from 1997 featuring a trip Philadelphians took to visit Nizhny Novgorod.[[119]](#footnote-119) They began posting on Facebook in May of 2014 and have talked about the relationship; in 2019 they stated that the Philadelphia Eagles professional American Football team gave a special tour of their stadium to Russian visitors, and how this was “the first State Department Sports Diplomacy Program for American Football.”[[120]](#footnote-120) It also shows thirty pictures pertaining to the visitation of journalists in Russia in 2018 and a trip involving Russians to visit citizen diplomats in Philadelphia in the same year.[[121]](#footnote-121) In 2017 it was mentioned that Russian religious leaders came to Philadelphia to meet with organizations involved in the religious community in Philadelphia and that Russians had come to visit with Citizen Diplomacy, a meeting between Russians and Americans in 2016 involving Citizen Diplomacy, Open World and the Committee of Seventy and thanks were given to American hosts of Russians in the US for the Open World program, a photo of the Russian Open World program participants enjoying their day was displayed, and an event that was a reception for Russians to meet with “Young Diplomats” in Philadelphia was featured.[[122]](#footnote-122) Interestingly, the relationship specifically with Nizhny Novgorod itself is only mentioned once in this Facebook page and it is about a fun party featuring Philadelphia’s sister cities.[[123]](#footnote-123) Furthermore, there is an Instagram account for CDI Philadelphia, but it is undeveloped with only twenty pictures and none of them refer to the relationship with Nizhny Novgorod.[[124]](#footnote-124) On Twitter the only place where Philadelphia is mentioned in relation to Russia through CDI Philadelphia is in a tweet by the organization called WBEC East where female Russian entrepreneurs came to visit them through CDI Philadelphia.[[125]](#footnote-125)

If one looks up Philadelphia in the search area of the main website for the city of Nizhny Novgorod lots of information can be found on the relationship. It said that during the 1990's and early 2000’s opportunities were taken by Nizhny Novgorod to participate in business related events in Philadelphia.[[126]](#footnote-126) Moreover, there have been youth art competitions involving schools since the late 1990’s between the sisters.[[127]](#footnote-127) Since then they mention many more interactions in the spheres of music, political contacts, art, technology, tourism, medical assistance to Nizhny Novgorod, medicine, jurisprudence, education, culture and sport from 2000 to 2010.[[128]](#footnote-128) From 2011 to 2015 they talk about interactions in music, culture, education, cooking and art, but they do not not talk about events since 2015.[[129]](#footnote-129)

Some specific events that have happened in the relationship were the Philadelphia Boys Choir performance in Nizhny Novgorod in 2000, and an initiative in 2002 to develop Russian American ties in the technology sector that was created by the International Visitors Council of Philadelphia.[[130]](#footnote-130) [[131]](#footnote-131) Again, like in previously shown cases, there was a movement to end the relationship between the cities in 2013 over the same gay rights issue in aforementioned partnerships.[[132]](#footnote-132) However, the mayor discarded the idea in favor of keeping the relationship to show Russia “what diversity and Western values are all about.”[[133]](#footnote-133)

**Louisville, Kentucky and Perm, Perm Krai**

Louisville, Kentucky (≈38°N 85°W) with a population of 973,000 has a temperate climate without a dry season and has a hot summer, whereas Perm, Perm Krai (≈58°N 56°E) of 1,054,000 people has a continental climate with no dry season and a warm summer. Louisville has a website devoted to its sister cities and a page for its relationship with Perm.[[134]](#footnote-134) It states that it started at the initiative of a few professors in 1994, and that “leaders in both communities have provided strong support in the political, cultural, educational, business, and medical arenas.”[[135]](#footnote-135) It also mentions that Louisville and Perm share a similar kind of extreme park and how the partnership has been facilitated by the Open World Leadership Center.[[136]](#footnote-136) They highlight two exchanges, one of businesswomen that came to the US, and another to have youth learn about engagement in volunteerism by meeting with people in the government in 2017 and 2015 respectively.[[137]](#footnote-137) Besides this, generally only info about traveling to Perm, things to see there, and some brief remarks about its history and culture are shown.[[138]](#footnote-138) Separately, they mention how medical professionals from Perm came and visited in 2009.[[139]](#footnote-139) The depiction of the city on the website comes from two photos, one of a bridge and river in the wintertime, and one of a cityscape during the warm season.[[140]](#footnote-140) [[141]](#footnote-141)

Sister Cities of Louisville (SCOL) has been posting on Facebook since August 2015 where they mention receiving people from Perm in June 2019 to meet with those “involved in community development and neighborhood planning”, and particularly about the time businesswomen came to Louisville in 2017 which included visiting an elementary school and different companies, eating with Mitch McConnell, a discussion on entrepreneurship, and a few other activities, in which these postings included many pictures of the women’s delegation.[[142]](#footnote-142) SCOL started Tweeting in 2013 and most recently they posted about the Open World visit of Perm visitors showing some pictures of them enjoying their time spent in the United States, from March 30, 2017 to April 5, 2017 they tweeted often about the businesswomen that visited and also about a Chekhov play and a lecture on Russian politics at the Louisville Library showing photos of people waiting for the play, a flyer about the play and lecture, the businesswomen dancing and them at a farewell dinner, in February of 2014 they posted about the salt industry of Perm and about the city being a hub of modern art.[[143]](#footnote-143) On Instagram, they started posting in March of 2015 and in November they showed young people from Perm enjoying their stay whose purpose was to “learn about social change through volunteering,” in February 2017 they shared photos of students in Louisville creating “friendship card[s]” to share with Perm, and in June 2019 there was a photo showing young Permians who visited to learn about “community development and neighborhood planning.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

Looking beyond what was mentioned in social media and what was shown on the SCOL website many things were discovered about Perm and Louisville’s deep involvement with each other. For example in 2003, it was stated that there has been great collaboration “in the political, cultural, educational, business, and medical arenas” over the years since establishment.[[145]](#footnote-145) In regards to education, Perm State National Research University and the University of Louisville have worked together, Americans have gone to Perm to study Russian, and in a particular case in 2014, students and faculty went to Perm to learn about human rights and the political system of the city, met with governmental officials there, and plans were made for students going to Perm State to intern at the University of Louisville.[[146]](#footnote-146) Additionally, Perm State University has hosted American professors and had students come from Louisville to participate in conferences and celebrations in what seems to be 2016.[[147]](#footnote-147) Furthermore, it is known that Permians visited the League of Women Voters in Louisville in June 2019, and in an interview with the president of the Louisville - Perm Committee it is noted that there have been attempts to hold festivals pertaining to the relationship, but it has been a challenge to put them on and face organizational issues.[[148]](#footnote-148) [[149]](#footnote-149) On a final note, citizens of Perm have also come to Louisville to learn about community development through the Open World program.[[150]](#footnote-150)

The City of Perm reported about the meeting between itself and Louisville in Yekaterinburg, and things mentioned on their website include how Perm adopted different things from Louisville such as “Mayor’s Community Conversations” in 2006, and in 2009 the concepts of an extreme park and a city call-center.[[151]](#footnote-151) Perm states that both cities are similar in geography and are both “strong industrial and university centers” which may contribute significantly to the success of the relationship.[[152]](#footnote-152) During the opening of the aforementioned extreme park the Russians paid for multiple talented BMX riders and skateboarders sent by Sister Cities of Louisville to show off their skills there making the event grander which surely had an impact on the promotion of the Louisville - Perm sister city relationship.[[153]](#footnote-153) Perm’s website also states information about the city such as where it is, some of its history, and the spheres in which the sister city relationship is supposed to work within which are “education, youth policy, healthcare and culture.”[[154]](#footnote-154) They also talk about the opening of the extreme park in 2009, the adoption of a closer connection between the Tyumen city government and its citizens since 2006 inspired by Louisville, and the opening of a call center in 2008 for Tyumen residents to get information like in Louisville.[[155]](#footnote-155)

The city also has been publishing newsletters about its “brother cities" since 2017.[[156]](#footnote-156) In October 2017 their newsletter recapped events already mentioned earlier that year, but also about Thomas Dumstorf, a chairman of “Louisville Sister Cities” visiting Perm for Victory Day.[[157]](#footnote-157) The following month their newsletter talked about an American student who came from Louisville to study in Perm.[[158]](#footnote-158) Next year in June, they talked about Louisville taking part in Perm's 295th anniversary celebration.[[159]](#footnote-159) Their subsequent newsletter in November of 2018 talked about Marcel Duran representing the US (Louisville) in September 2018 as a tango dancer for the 295th anniversary of Perm and the announcement of a new website to link all of Perm's sisters "brothers” together was made.[[160]](#footnote-160) In April 2019, they said how a high school student from Perm was invited to Louisville to participate in a sports project there.[[161]](#footnote-161) In the July letter, they published an interview with a visiting professor from Louisville to Perm, Michael Losaivo, and in November 2019 they talked about how Perm and Louisville participated in the first Russian- American municipal forum in Moscow in October.[[162]](#footnote-162) [[163]](#footnote-163) In addition, they discussed the visitation in 2019 mentioned earlier, and beyond this showed an interview with an American student studying in Perm and an exchange of Christmastime/New Year’s gifts between Louisville and Perm.[[164]](#footnote-164)

**Houston, Texas and Tyumen, Tyumen Oblast**

Houston, Texas (≈29°N 95°W) a city of 2,326,000 has a temperate climate with no dry season and a hot summer, and Tyumen, Tyumen Oblast (≈57°N 65°E) with 789,000 residents has a continental climate with no dry season and a warm summer. On October 12, 1995 Councilperson Eleanor Tinsley and Mayor Vitaly Terentjev brought Houston, Texas and Tyumen, Russia together.[[165]](#footnote-165) The main goal of partnering up stated in this document was to further the friendship of these two cities, and this would be done by “engag[ing] in a program of exchanges in the fields of commerce, education, culture, humanitarian, and other fields with the goals of enhancing the development and prosperity of both cities, economically and otherwise.”[[166]](#footnote-166)

Houston’s relationship with Tyumen is managed by the USRCC. The organization states six specific sectors in which they wish to focus on developing further between the two cities; education, entrepreneurship, public - private partnership and infrastructure projects, regional tourism, oil and gas and healthcare.[[167]](#footnote-167) On their website there are featured stories about how the organization was represented at the 2018 SCI conference, how it hosted important figures in the Russian healthcare and agricultural fields in 2018, as well and its participation in the US-Russia Mayors Summit in 2017, attendance at Tyumen’s oil and gas forum in 2016, and travelled to Tyumen to talk with government officials about future cooperation in 2012. [[168]](#footnote-168) [[169]](#footnote-169) [[170]](#footnote-170) [[171]](#footnote-171) [[172]](#footnote-172) On Facebook, the USRCC talked about sending its representatives of the Houston-Tyumen Sister Cities Committee to the SCI conference in August 2018, and in February of this year they talk about the same committee and how they were going to put on a reception for Russian healthcare and agricultural delegations.[[173]](#footnote-173) In July 2017 the USRCC director went to the US - Russia Mayors Summit with the goal of the USRCC to “support Houston - Tyumen business relations.”[[174]](#footnote-174) This was the entire extent of the mentioning of the Houston - Tyumen relationship on their Facebook page since they began to post in 2013.[[175]](#footnote-175) The USRCC is present on Twitter and mentions the partnership in 2018 in relation to the sister city representation at the 62nd SCI conference in two separate tweets in 2018.[[176]](#footnote-176) Moreover, the USRCC has a weak presence on Instagram with only 18 photos and none that feature the Houston - Tyumen partnership.[[177]](#footnote-177)

There is a specific Facebook page for the sister cities of Houston appropriately called Sister Cities of Houston (SCOH). Here, the Houston - Tyumen relationship is mentioned in 2012 where it has promoted visiting the Andreyevskoye Museum in Tyumen.[[178]](#footnote-178) This is the only thing they have mentioned in their entire posting history about the cities on Facebook. The website of SCOH mentions the healthcare and agricultural delegations reception talked about earlier, but nothing else of significance pertinent to the Tyumen - Houston partnership.[[179]](#footnote-179) SCOH retweeted from the USRCC about the 62nd SCI conference participation, but this is all they have said on Twitter in regards to the Houston - Tyumen relationship.[[180]](#footnote-180) SCOH created an Instagram page, but never posted anything on it.[[181]](#footnote-181) From further research it has been revealed that Halliburton, a major oil company from Houston, Texas cooperated with the Tyumen State Oil and Gas University and opened a training facility there in 2007.[[182]](#footnote-182) It was not possible to find information about the Houston - Tyumen relationship on the webpage for the city of Tyumen.[[183]](#footnote-183)

**Portland, Oregon and Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Krai**

Portland, Oregon (≈45°N 122°W) with a population of 653,000 has a temperate climate with dry and warm summers, and Khabarovsk, Khabarovsk Krai (≈48°N 135°E) of 617,000 people has a continental climate with a dry winter and a warm summer. Portland and Khabarovsk have been sisters since June 10, 1988.[[184]](#footnote-184) Although not a terribly advanced website that for the Portland Khabarovsk Sister City Association (PKSCA) contains some interesting information.[[185]](#footnote-185) In an interview published on the website it talks about how there have been significant connections between young students in both cities and how the idea for the partnership was derived from a trip Oregonians took to establish peaceful ties to the Soviet Union.[[186]](#footnote-186) It was also explained that the connection was most likely established in part because of geography.[[187]](#footnote-187) Things the organization has done in Portland include giving flowers to women on the 8th of March, holding a Victory Day celebration, putting on a yearly event called the Bridge to Russia which includes music and food, and lastly the group has been able to send musicians to Russia.[[188]](#footnote-188) On the website’s homepage information is listed about membership and its importance to the organization, about visiting Khabarovsk, and a link to an interview conducted with the president of the PKSCA discussed above.[[189]](#footnote-189) The PKSCA does not have a Twitter page or Instagram account.

The city website for Khabarovsk has an easily accessible area for learning about their sister cities, one can click on an area that says “About Khabarovsk” and find its section about brother cities a few places down on the list.[[190]](#footnote-190) They mention the day of signing the agreement, some basic information about Portland, jazz artist and children’s art exchange, and waste management strategies and water purification for Khabarovsk that are assisted by Portland.[[191]](#footnote-191) Additionally, they talk about student exchange between the cities, creation of the “Russian-American School of Business Management” stemming from the relationship in 1990 and the International Radio Games being held in Khabarovsk in 2011 with participants from Portland.[[192]](#footnote-192) Additionally, the administration of Khabarovsk states that the Khabarovsk Pedagogical University and Lewis and Clark College have a student and professor exchange.[[193]](#footnote-193)

There is a group on Facebook for the Khabarovsk-Portland relationship, and it has been active since 2008; many different stories have been posted here, as back in 2009, they started to talk about the "Bridge to Russia” event, Russian related events in the Portland and Oregon area, and a cultural fair that took place in November of that year.[[194]](#footnote-194) In 2010, there was information about a Victory Day celebration in May.[[195]](#footnote-195) In 2011, they talked about the Bridge to Russia event again, yet this year the posts were numerous and extensive.[[196]](#footnote-196) The following year, the Victory Day celebration is mentioned, PKSCA’s participation in that year’s Rose Parade and the Jazz Bridge Project too.[[197]](#footnote-197) In 2014, it was shown that a Russian delegation met with the mayor of Portland, and that the Bridge to Russia event was held in November.[[198]](#footnote-198)

Over the course of the next few years, a video about PKSCA’s involvement in solutions to Khabarovsk’s waste management was featured, mention was made that a Victory Day celebration was held, Elbe Day's commemoration in Beaverton, Oregon is shown, another Jazz Bridge Project event was held, PKSCA was represented in the Rose Parade again, and another “Bridge to Russia” concert happened.[[199]](#footnote-199) In 2018, they showed young students that came from Khabarovsk as exchanges and a 30th anniversary event for the sister city organization.[[200]](#footnote-200) Finally, in 2019 gymnasts from Khabarovsk came to visit Portland, Elbe Day was commemorated, and PKSCA participated in an annual Slavic Culture Festival.[[201]](#footnote-201)

The connection between these two cities has turned out to be deep and wide. These cities have found a way to connect over jazz music through the Jazz Bridge Project which was organized in 2010.[[202]](#footnote-202) [[203]](#footnote-203) Also in the sector of music in 1998 there was a group of music teachers that visited Khabarovsk as part of an exchange that had started the previous year when Russian teachers visited Oregon, and in 2016 PKSCA invited “Three For Silver” to perform at Khabarovsk’s City Day.[[204]](#footnote-204) [[205]](#footnote-205) Furthermore, in 2018 a bluegrass band was sent by PKSCA to Khabarovsk.[[206]](#footnote-206) Additionally, they have established the Bridge to Russia Project as well which encompasses even more elements than was mentioned earlier such as film screening, a display of photographs, information about their relationship and a Russian program at Portland State University.[[207]](#footnote-207) This relationship has also led to the creation of the Friendship Radiosport Games, which is now a multinational event and even how to manage city waste and how to keep water supplies clean, mentioned earlier but important to restate.[[208]](#footnote-208)

To say even more about cooperation, 2013 was a difficult year for Khabarovsk as it faced flooding, resulting in Portland's offer of technical expertise to Khabarovsk, and previously in 2006/2007 Portland helped people come from Khabarovsk to learn about water treatment, meaning that a precedent of Portland’s provision of technical assistance to Khabarovsk was established.[[209]](#footnote-209) There also have been sister high schools established between the cities.[[210]](#footnote-210) Plus, Portland has helped the Krai Children's Hospital through applications of its technology.[[211]](#footnote-211) On a last note, in 2018, PKSCA celebrated Women’s Day, Victory Day, sent delegates to Khabarovsk for its Day of the City, participated in the Rose Festival, went to the Slavic Festival, and was part of the Bridge to Russia project.[[212]](#footnote-212)

**Minneapolis-St.Paul, Minnesota and Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk Oblast**

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota (≈44°N 93°W) of 753,000 people has a continental climate, no dry season and a hot summer. Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk Oblast (≈55°N 82°E) with a population of 1,618,000 has a continental climate, no dry season and a warm summer. In their twinning agreement signed in 1989 they stated that they intended on “establish[ing] contacts and … exchang[ing] information and delegations in… [the] business, culture, education, [and] medical [fields].[[213]](#footnote-213) The city of Minneapolis though what appears to be its tourism page acknowledges Novosibirsk as its sister.[[214]](#footnote-214) Information about the relationship in particular is not well developed on the page; it generally only states that the relationship was formed in 1988, who the mayor of Novosibirsk is, the distance between the two cities, the population of Novosibirsk, a paragraph about its history and another about its industry, fun facts about Novosibirsk and a link to its city website.[[215]](#footnote-215) Interestingly, this page indicates that the relationship operates through a liaison called the American Siberian Education Foundation.[[216]](#footnote-216) This foundation is a non-profit founded in 1995 and serves as a link between Siberia and the US, in particular between Minnesota and Siberia.[[217]](#footnote-217) At the start of the relationship there were many ideas for cooperation between the two partners.[[218]](#footnote-218) During the era of the relationship in the Soviet time in the late 1980's many connections were created between them including those involving “students and educational, cultural and sports leaders.”[[219]](#footnote-219)

There is no official page or group for the Minneapolis - Novosibirsk relationship. The closest one can get would be the page for the American Siberian Education Foundation (ASEF) which started to post on Facebook in 2014 and they mention how they gave “travel grants to faculty and students from Siberia,” back in 2012.[[220]](#footnote-220) Additionally, they state how there was a push for economic development opportunities and to sign a rededication of sister-city agreements between the sisters in 1997.[[221]](#footnote-221) There were also the ideas of having a medical technology forum in 2014, and “museum collaboration, [and] interaction between the business communities”, and posts that alluded to the Crimean annexation causing trouble for the organization.[[222]](#footnote-222) Then they said in 2017 that they wanted to do an art exchange in 2018.[[223]](#footnote-223) There is no mention of the relationship through the American Siberian Education Foundation on Twitter and Instagram as well. Regarding the city website of Novosibirsk on the third tab from the left there is a dropdown for a section about Novosibirsk and a link to a page about sister (brother) cities. Here, only their sisters are mentioned and the day of establishment.[[224]](#footnote-224)

Some additional information was able to be found about Minneapolis-St.Paul and Novosibirsk's interactions. In 1990, there was a delegation of professors that went to Novosibirsk from St. Thomas College who wished to establish exchanges between the institutions.[[225]](#footnote-225) (It is important to note that St. Thomas College is in St. Paul which is the adjacent twin of Minneapolis.) Moreover, there were also high school exchanges through an organization called Connect US/USSR.[[226]](#footnote-226) Lastly, zooming ahead to 2015 Minneapolis included Novosibirsk in its exhibition of sister cities at its Sister Cities Day.[[227]](#footnote-227) [[228]](#footnote-228)

**Charlotte, North Carolina and Voronezh, Voronezh Oblast**

Charlotte, North Carolina (≈35°N 80°W) population 872,000 has a temperate climate with no dry season and a hot summer, whereas Voronezh, Voronezh Oblast (≈51°N 39°E) with 1,054,000 people has a continental climate with no dry season and a warm summer. Their sister city relationship was cemented on June 26, 1991 by both city’s mayors. They said the main point was to create a partnership that would be “friendly, cooperative, and beneficial.”[[229]](#footnote-229) “Exchange of cultural, educational, medical, sports, artistic, and commercial information” was stressed as a particular goal, which would involve “performing artists, students and faculties, medical educators, researchers and practitioners, coaches and participants for athletic competitions, professional artists, and business and industrial leaders.”[[230]](#footnote-230)

The official page for the City of Charlotte directly sends one to get information about the relationship on Facebook.[[231]](#footnote-231) This group called the “Charlotte-Voronezh Sister City Relationship” was created by the Charlotte International Cabinet which posted on its own page about an Open World delegation from Russia that visited to learn about American governance and social media engagement, but it was not specifically mentioned if they were specifically from Voronezh, yet it was likely that they were.[[232]](#footnote-232) Then, in August 2010 a news story about fires and high temperatures in Russia was posted, and it was noted in their post that Voronezh was effected.[[233]](#footnote-233)

When it comes to the city of Voronezh their official city website has a section that talks about their sister cities and their (brother) cities are conveniently located under the first tab on the city’s homepage. They say that “The cooperation developed mainly through the exchanges of specialists in the field of education, healthcare, public order protection, representatives of the judiciary, fire service and business circles. About 50 specialists and students from Voronezh [have undergone] training and internships under the grants of the US State Department at universities in Charlotte and various state and commercial organizations.”[[234]](#footnote-234) This appears to be the entire extent of what Voronezh has to say about their American partner.

If one goes to the group named the “Charlotte-Voronezh Sister City Relationship" to find information about the sisters they would not find much; the group was created in August 2017 and mentions some information about Voronezh, yet there are no posts that show us any information about exchanges that can be directly linked to the Voronezh and Charlotte relationship.[[235]](#footnote-235) There is no activity pertaining to the relationship on Instagram, and on Twitter only the fires mentioned earlier is tweeted by the Charlotte International Cabinet.[[236]](#footnote-236)

Outside of social media it is possible to find more information about Charlotte and Voronezh. Like other cities, in 2013, there was a push to sever their partnership because of the anti gay propaganda legislation passed in Russia, yet today the relationship remains active.[[237]](#footnote-237) Additionally, there has been assistance provided by Charlotte to Voronezh regarding the advancement of the disabled community in Voronezh “to raise awareness on disability issues,” and “Charlotte supported the Voronezh Rehabilitation and Training Center through the donation of medical supplies and the exchange of healthcare professionals.”[[238]](#footnote-238) Also, in the sector of medicine, UNC Charlotte and Voronezh State Medical Academy college students teamed up to learn more about healthy living in 2015 and there was a video meeting in 2014 about the topic of healthy living for young students in Russia and the US between the UNC and the Voronezh State Medical Academy.[[239]](#footnote-239) [[240]](#footnote-240)

**Concluding Remarks Regarding the Stories of the Sisters**

These chosen sister cities unarguably demonstrate the multifarious tapestry which Russia and the United States are woven from. The large/medium cities of both countries discussed here are significant engines of Russian and American power which gives each country appropriate representation. Additionally, we can see that the decision made to draw information from social media enriches the stories of these cities and allows us to discover connections between sisters that may be challenging to find otherwise, as in contemporary times social media is one of the most significant ways individuals and organizations communicate. The coupling of using social media sources with mixed media sources and especially twinning agreements (when they were able to be found) enabled a comprehensive look at what has happened among the nine sisters since their respective founding dates. From this we have been able to see how much some of the sisters have been in contact with one another and vice versa and how they have interacted with each other.

**Chapter 3- Sister Cities: Diversity of Relationship**

**3.1- Russian - U.S. Sister Cities: Moving to Diversity of Relations in 2000’s**

The experience of the 1990’s was radically different for the U.S. and Russia, an era of collapse and erosion of power for Russia and one that reigned in a period of prosperity and a newfound position of being the world’s monopole for the U.S. The Soviet Union became a thing of the past, Russia was seriously enervated and was thrown into a position much weaker than that of the U.S. A look at the difference in interactions and the different types of them discovered is very telling in how the relationship between Russian and American sisters was radically altered from the 1990’s to the dawn of the new millennium. With time and a strong new leader for Russia, Vladimir Putin, the country returned to a situation being one of the world’s strongest players. As the world shifts in a more multipolar direction with power centrifuging in many different directions we can see that more serious competitors on the gameboard have brought Russia closer to the U.S. in terms of relative power in the past twenty years give or take. How did the Russian - American sister city relationships change from a time when Russia was weak to a point where it regained some of its former strength? We will look at only the interactions that can be directly traced to the 1990’s and the post 2000’s eras respectively. Moreover, all of them mentioned here can be found easily in the text of Chapter 2.2, so as to avoid excessive citation one can refer back to this section of the dissertation to find the sources of information listed in this chapter.

Firstly, we shall take a look at what we know definitely happened in the 1990’s among the sisters. During the 1990’s in the Minneapolis-St.Paul - Novosibirsk partnership there was the idea to fight for more economic development, high school exchanges were held and there was a push to linkup higher education institutions, whereas in Portland - Khabarovsk’s a school of business management was established as well as music teacher exchange. In the case of Nizhny Novgorod and Philadelphia in the 1990’s we know there was people to people contact, art competitions and business events and between Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk there was higher education linkage, an attempt to provide Ulyanovsk with medical supplies and connection was established between the Methodist communities of both cities. Between Moscow and Chicago, there were social service exchanges, a meeting pertaining to economic development, multiple cultural programs and an exchange relating to environmental issues. Also, during this time “cultural, educational, business, and technological co-ventures” were held between St. Petersburg and Los Angeles.[[241]](#footnote-241) These are all of the interactions that were able to be directly attributed to the 1990’s.

Since the Moscow and Chicago partnership provides us with such an abundance of different interactions as seen earlier, using their relationship as a yardstick by which to measure all of the others should be adequate. How can this be accomplished? If we take the document by which the Moscow - Chicago relationship reported on its interactions from 1997 to 2016 they list medical and social services, economic development, environment, art, education, sports, government, business, music, architecture and cultural events as the kinds that have occurred between their cities.[[242]](#footnote-242) We can use these categories to categorize the interactions between all eighteen of our sisters. The more kinds of interactions we see or in other words the more diverse the interactions are will allow us to determine how robust the relationship is. It is logical that if sisters are cooperating in multiple spheres they are quite strong whereas those that are not are weaker. We can also see how the kinds of interactions changed from the 1990’s until the modern day.

We should apply the aforementioned measuring stick to the 1990’s and then later to the 2000’s. During the 1990's we have exchanges that fall underneath the categories of economic development and education for Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk, education, business and music for Portland - Khabarovsk, and art, education, and business between Philadelphia and Nizhny Novgorod. Moving on between Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk there was contact in medicine, social services and education. Between Moscow and Chicago, social service, governmental, educational, business, music, cultural, art and environment are areas in which we know contacts occurred.[[243]](#footnote-243) And lastly, there were contacts in culture, education and business between Los Angeles and St. Petersburg. If we tabulate the different kinds of interactions we get two for Minneapolis-St.Paul - Novosibirsk, three for Portland - Khabarovsk, three for Philadelphia and Nizhny Novgorod, three for Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk, three for Los Angeles and St. Petersburg, and eight for Moscow and Chicago. Tabulating the different kinds of interactions in the 1990’s we know about we get six in education, four in business, two in music, two in art, two cultural, one in economic development, one in medicine, two in social service, one governmental, and one environmental. Furthermore, it is evident that during the 1990’s that Moscow and Chicago had the most diverse interactions and we have three partnerships in which we could not particularly trace interactions to: Charlotte - Voronezh, Louisville - Perm, and Houston - Tyumen, so we could say that the most diverse during this period of time was Moscow and Chicago and those with untraceable interactions are most likely those that were the least diverse, but of those that we could trace Minneapolis-St.Paul - Novosibirsk was the the least diverse.

Now, we shall move on to the interactions that can be directly attributed to the following decades. We know that between Charlotte - Voronezh that people came from Russia to learn about American government and that there was collaboration about health issues between the University of North Carolina and Voronezh State Medical Academy. For Minneapolis-St. Paul and Novosibirsk there was assistance given to students and faculty members in Novosibirsk, and Novosibirsk was included in a sister city celebration in Minneapolis. Between Portland and Khabarovsk we know that there have been holidays popularly celebrated in Russia promoted in Portland, cultural events have been held and there has been musical exchange as well as children’s art exchange and assistance for the management of water and garbage have been exchanged too, and the International Radio Games were held in Khabarovsk in 2011 with Portland’s participation, in 2014 there was a meeting between the mayor of Portland and a Russian delegation. We also know about student exchange in 2018 and gymnasts from Russia visiting in 2019, and that there are sister high school partnerships between the cities.

Regarding Houston and Tyumen they have had contacts between agricultural and healthcare sectors, have discussed further cooperation on a governmental level, and have had relations between Halliburton and the Tyumen State Oil and Gas University with an educational component involved. Louisville and Perm have had Russian businesswomen come to the US, as well as youth come to learn about volunteerism from governmental officials and medical professionals too. Moreover, it is known that the Louisville had a Chekov play and a lecture on Russian politics during the time the businesswomen visited and that there has been art exchange through school. Perm State National Research University and the University of Louisville have collaborated and American students and faculty have met with Russian governmental officials as well. Moreover, people from Perm visited the League of Women voters in Louisville and there has been collaboration in extreme sports and in their newsletters from recent years they talk about contact culturally, in dance, sports and education.

The relationship between Philadelphia and Nizhny Novgorod mentions people to people contact, sports contact in the form of American football, that journalists and citizen diplomats from Russia also came to Philadelphia to visit as well as religious leaders and Russian female entrepreneurs, and Nizhny Novgorod was featured at a party as a sister city of Philadelphia. Beyond this there have been youth art competitions between their schools, visitation of the Philadelphia Boys Choir, attempts to strengthen technology ties, and business meetings held as well. We also learn that there were many interactions in music, political contacts, art, technology, tourism, medical assistance, medicine, jurisprudence, education, culture, education, cooking and sport, too many to list here.[[244]](#footnote-244) When it comes to Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk we know there were connections relating to educating people from Ulyanovsk about the American judiciary system, that there was governmental contact and that the Methodist communities of these cities continued cooperation.

Regarding Moscow and Chicago social services, economic development, medical, art, education, sports, government, business, music, architecture and cultural events were all held between the two cities, due to the plethora of interactions that have occurred there we will dispense with the details here. We know that between St.Petersburg and Chicago that there was a virtual tour of Saint Petersburg arranged as well as student art exchanges and that St. Petersburg was included in a Christmas parade in California, a recognition event was held for those who supported the sister city relationship, that L.A. has been helping the elderly of St. Petersburg and have had government officials and those involved in education visited, as well as collaboration on protecting the works of Akhmatova.

What are the results of the interactions that have occurred because of the sister city partnerships over the past two decades? Between Charlotte - Voronezh there was contact relating to government, education and medicine whereas between Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk education and cultural contact were present. In regards to Portland - Khabarovsk cultural, music, art, architecture, environmental, sport, governmental and education intercourse occurred. Houston and Tyumen in environment, medicine, government, business, and education. Louisville and Perm had connections relating to business, social services, medicine, culture, art, education, sports and government. Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod has brought about interaction in sports, government, social services, culture, business, art, education, music and medicine. For Oklahoma City and Ulyanovsk there were contacts culturally, governmentally and educationally. Between Moscow and Chicago social services, economic development, medical, art, education, sports, government, business, music, architecture and cultural contact was had, as stated earlier. And lastly, between St. Petersburg and Los Angeles there were cultural, social services, education, art and governmental exchanges. In this era the most diverse relationship was that between Chicago - Moscow followed by Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod and the weakest was between Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk.

Breaking everything down we get some interesting results. In the twenty years following the 1990’s there were nine education, eight government, seven cultural, five medicine, five art, four sport, four business, four social services, three music, two architectural, two environmental, and one interaction directly related to economic development. If we compare the 1990’s to the following decades we can determine if there was lesser or greater diversity in the interactions that took place. Looking to the appendix we can see what categories the interactions fall underneath, and we can easily determine that education was the number one area of contact between the sisters across all time and in both decades. Most importantly, in the 1990’s education and business alone took up ten interactions out of 22 in the categories listed representing about 45 percent of those we know occurred at that time. If we only use the top two categories which are education and government for the 2000’s we get about 31 percent of interactions for them. If we take the bottom six categories for each relationship and add up their interactions they only represent about 18% of all interactions for the 1990’s and about 30% for the 2000’s. This clearly indicates that the interactions between Russian and American sister cities were more diverse in the 2000’s signaling a more robust relationship between the sisters in the post 1990’s era. If one looks at the appendix they will notice some interesting things such as that where education contacts occurred they generally stayed throughout the thirty year range examined, business related interactions notably fell as a percentage of interactions from the 1990’s to the 2000’s, culture and medicine retained their significance in sister city interactions, and there was a gain in governmental contact from the 1990’s to the 2000’s. Also, the Chicago - Moscow relationship is the most diverse taking the 30 year period of examination and that Louisville - Perm became a vibrant relationship in the two decades following the 1990’s and the Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk partnership is one of the weakest, as well as Charlotte - Voronezh which only had traceable interactions in the 2000’s and only three of them.

**3.2- Social Media Representations of Russian - U.S. Sister Cities**

There is some significant variation in the representation of Russian - American sister cities online. Here, a breakdown of all of the places where there are direct mentions of the sister cities under examination on websitesand social media accounts that represent the relationships are shown to demonstrate how promoted the sisters are in the virtual world. This gives us some insight into how strong the nine partners talked about are during the contemporary era. If a relationship can be found across multiple platforms it is a good indicator that there is a strong network of people actively working on keeping the sister city relationship alive and thriving, signaling its virility. Presence of the relationships on American city pages is not considered, as representation of sister cities in the U.S. is primarily the function of non-governmental entities.

* Twitter presence- Charlotte-Voronezh, Houston - Tyumen, Louisville - Perm, Chicago - Moscow
* Facebook presence- Charlotte-Voronezh, Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk, Portland- Khabarovsk, Houston - Tyumen, Louisville - Perm, Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod, Chicago - Moscow, Los Angeles - St. Petersburg
* Instagram presence- Louisville - Perm, Chicago - Moscow
* Russian city webpage presence- Charlotte-Voronezh, Minneapolis - St. Paul - Novosibirsk, Portland - Khabarovsk, Louisville - Perm, Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod
* Mention of sister city relationship on official website that represents the partnership - Portland - Khabarovsk, Houston - Tyumen, Louisville - Perm, Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod, Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk, Chicago -Moscow, Los Angeles - St. Petersburg

As we can see there are some major differences between online representation of different sisters. Louisville - Perm is represented across all five areas, Chicago - Moscow on four, Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod / Charlotte - Voronezh / Portland - Khabarovsk / Houston - Tyumen on three, Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk / Los Angeles - St. Petersburg on two, and Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk on one. Facebook is the most popular platform to promote the relationships, and the least is Instagram. Perhaps, the reason for this is because Facebook is more text based, but incorporates videos and photographs often; Instagram is less text heavy, and Twitter is primarily text based. When promoting relationships a mixed usage of text, photos and videos is beneficial; moreover the popularity of Facebook may play a role in why the most relationships are promoted there. Another interesting side note is that VK accounts about the sister cities were not able to be found. When we look at how varied the interactions are in the 2000’s and compare them to how many websites representing their relationship and social media sites they are on we find that those which are the most diverse are those represented the most on social media accounts and websites representing the relationships. Out of the nine, Louisville - Perm is represented the most and is at the higher end of diversity, Chicago - Moscow is the most diverse and represented the 2nd most, and looking at the opposite end of the spectrum Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk is represented online the least and comes in near the very bottom for diversity. Generally, the more platform representation there is the more diversity in interactions are observed. This would also mean that in the modern era that the Louisville - Perm and Chicago - Moscow relationships are most likely some of the strongest Russian - American sister city partnerships and that Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk, Los Angeles - St. Petersburg and Charlotte - Voronezh are some of the weakest.

**3.3- Implications of Russian-American Sister Cities for the Theories of Realism and Postmodernism**

The concept of the state is in grave danger in the modern era. The entity that is the state should be supreme over its subordinate units; however we can see that in contemporary times other actors like MNC’s and NGO’s have been challenging the power of the state. The city as another actor has risen through the modern concept of the sister city to destabilize the state. It is unlikely that President Eisenhower knew how central of a role he would play in this development from his launch of the People-to-People program, but his actions surely fostered it. Perhaps, Mikhail Gorbachev’s rule also did much to disintegrate the power of the state concept by allowing foreign influence to flood into his country including that from sister cities, helping to tear down the strong barriers a powerful state possesses. He surely fostered the proliferation of the sister city, as we can see in the dataset used in this dissertation that four of the nine sisters talked about were established during his rule. Gorbachev and Eisenhower, politicians of different eras poured gasoline on the fire which is slowly but surely consuming the state.

For years the Soviet Union had the image of being an impenetrable country, hard and unwelcoming, but with the leadership of Gorbachev the narrative took a different turn. Many cities in both countries began to partner in an era of hope that the Cold War was truly drawing to a close; the 1990’s was marked by Russia being in a weak position, yet with many significant US cities willing to maintain what had been started or push forward and create new partnerships. Following this, we can see that the Putin era was more vibrant, as the country recovered quite a bit from severe economic hardship which most definitely allowed Russia to be more of an equivalent partner to the U.S. Despite these changes in the power dynamic the Russian - American sister city lived on and became stronger.

Russia and the United States have not always got along easily, but this study proves that regardless of the disagreements the states have with each other the cities of the states can carry on and continue their relationships. Take the situations mentioned multiple times when both gay rights and the Crimean issue became central to straining the relationship between the sisters. These major American cities resisted the calls to cut ties despite the fact that these issues may be considered to be those that have soured relations the most between Russia and the United States except for possibly the situation with the ongoing war in Syria. This shows the resilience of these partnerships and proclaims that despite serious differences cities should and do continue relations. It also is demonstrative that the cities have liberty in fostering connections with places that they wish to do so, even though the federal government may wish those cities would do otherwise.

Through music, sport, dance, film, political contacts and other interactions between cities in the US and Russia there has been a significant human element attached to Russian - American relations. Russians and Americans were only pitted against each other after World War II because of the power vacuum left behind from a defeated Japanese Empire and diminished European powers, not because of any radical differences in the people of each respective country, and now the United States is observing the rise of a multipolar world, so naturally it will be skeptical of Russia and her ambitions, leading to the sowing of some distrust of Russia among American people. The real blockages to cooperation between the two have mainly been distance and politics, not because the people of these nations cannot begin to understand one another, and their sister cities prove this. When they get together and exchange ideas, ways of living, and most simply get to know each other they decide to continue their relationships.

In regards to postmodernism these specific relationships show that even with the significant obstacles put in place by the Russians and the Americans through such things as sanctions and difficulty of obtaining visas, their sisters have staying power. The borders between Russia and the US are disintegrated by their sister cities. One may wonder if the countries begin to place more obstacles between the two if their relationship would fade away. Actually, this situation seems doubtful, as technology could be employed more and more by citizens wishing to remain connected no matter what, and in the modern era it is easier than ever to do this. The reality is that the globalized world is one in which the state unless it is incredibly repressive it can do little to control its people to connect with others as they wish. Cities appear to attempt to have whatever relations they desire to with a foreign entity even if it is considered by the state to be an adversary. It is clear that postmodernism is applicable to large Russian - American sister cities. They actively push to tear asunder the walls put up by their countries, they seek to establish a certain degree of independence and go against the narrative pushed by the central government, they challenge the entire construct of the status quo system of the state being a sovereign unit, essentially the Russian - American sister city discards the notion that Russia and the US should not freely interact with one another, which is postmodernist in nature. Surely, this dissertation provides a boon to the theory of postmodernism.

The mere fact that Russian - American sister cities still exist today shows great resistance to the idea that there should be a cutoff of interactions between the US and Russia. US cities remaining sisters with Russian partners shows opposition to the idea that Russia should not be a partner of the US. Opposing the idea that the state should dictate all internal affairs of its constituents and interact with outside entities leads to postmodern thinking, thinking that transcends and does not respect boundaries.

Beyond this, the ties between Russia and the United States shown here destroy realism’s hard stance on state supremacy. One can look at the varied nature of these relationships, ones that are not so robust and on the contrary, and yet they have survived. The cities that have remained in relationships are crucial cities in their respective countries such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St.Paul and Philadelphia to name some of them! Russia and the US have done so much over the years to put stoppages to free flow of connectivity between the countries; however their sister cities still survive and in some cases thrive. Both realism and strong states surely are put into jeopardy by the Russian-American sisters. The ascendency of the city has gone hand in hand with the decline of the capitalization of power in the hands of the state.

**Conclusion-**

It is clear that sister cities have the ability to build bridges between people from sometimes extremely disparate places. Such people like Bernie Sanders have done a great service to the world by bringing forth an attempt to get to know those on the “other side.” Without contact between foreign peoples and knowledge of them they can become alien to each other, which can be greatly destabilizing to world order. Actually, it could be argued that sister cities are the most needed between those that may have hostilities toward one another in order to promote understanding and harmonization of peoples that have differences that could lead to conflict. To assume that someone like Mr. Sanders was up to no good by associating with the “enemy” is foolhardy. The world has suffered enough from the terrors it encompasses; cognizant of this reality we have seen that people have stepped up to support sister cities without compensation in order to promote understanding and goodwill. Of all twinning partnerships the Russian - American sister cities may be some of those most worthy of preserving due to the potential of these two great powers to unleash disastrous consequences upon each other and the world. To deepen our understanding of sister cities, and in particular Russian - American ones means to get closer to discovering the ingredients to the recipe for cooperation instead of confrontation.

The relationships we have looked at shows us how Russians and Americans can connect with one another and what could break them apart. Notice the presence of fun activities they have participated in such as sports, art exchanges, festivals and musical events. Such things are enjoyed by people in practically every corner of the world and Russians an American are no exception to this. These are relationships that have lasted over the course of years, so perhaps their interactions in such peaceful mediums may be a partial answer as to why they have stayed afloat even though they have gone through the turbulence of the relations between the two countries. It is possible that these kinds of interactions could be applied on a grander scale and among more cities in order to promote peace and cooperation. What can destroy the relationship are calls to end them by people who do not agree with the actions of the partner. In this case it is important to resist those calls and continue the relationship to try to better understand why the partner is acting in such a fashion, allowing the relationship to end only severs the connection that could lead to further harmonization.

The central governments of Russia and the U.S. have squared off against each other for many years, especially since the end of World War II which left them as the sole superpowers in a newly formed bipolar world. Since then relations have generally been turbulent, but due to the political decisions of both Eisenhower and Gorbachev and the actions of ordinary citizens a way was created to tie the two countries together through their cities. Cities and citizens do not always follow in lockstep with their federal governments’ views, and the Russian - American sister cities are surely representative of this. The mere existence of these partnerships indicates that the people of both countries are willing to talk and work together to find some common ground and gain a greater understanding of one another.

The relations between these countries is definitely more cordial than it is typically considered to be. Oftentimes, we think of relations between countries as those between their central governments, and this is a great mistake because much goes on between other governing units such as cities, states, provinces and so on. It is evident that many of their major cities have found multiple ways through which to cooperate and weather difficult times in the Russian - American relationship. Moreover, if we want to see an improvement in the relations between both countries it is apparent that fostering connections particularly in education will most likely provide the most impactful results, as we know that education contacts were the most common in the 1990’s and the 2000’s. The overall nature of education is rather peaceful as well and it could easily be argued that it is the best way to build understanding between peoples. Education also usually involves many youngsters which makes education contacts a wonderful investment for those seeking to make peace between Russia and the United States, as those young people will grow up with more knowledge about Russia and vice versa.

Furthermore, in this dissertation thorough coverage was given to what the notion of the sister city is, a synthesis of information about them allowed us to know what they are and various aspects of them in one concise chapter. In the second chapter we learn much about what has happened within nine different sister cities and how they are represented online. Finally, we learn about implications these relationships will have on the state and for postmodernism and realism, what kinds of interactions have been the most popular between Russia and the US and how the relationship has changed since the 1990’s. We have also seen how the theories of realism and postmodernism are interwoven with this subject in a fitting way and how it truly puts realist thinkers in a difficult position.

Currently, we are living in extraordinary times which leads to some tantalizing speculation about what the future of Russian - American sister city relations will look like down the road. While this dissertation was being written the world has been living through the era of the COVID-19 crisis, and it seems extremely likely as if this virus will have some major impacts upon the trajectory of the world and also upon the Russian - American sister cities. Major changes may be coming in the form of more restrictions for those traveling from foreign countries and more events between the sisters may be held online due to concerns about illness. It is unsure as of now if we have a coming dark age of sister city relations, but there is a possibility that Russian - American sisters will see a negative impact from the current situation we are living in now. With more restrictions likely to be in place and fear being present of traveling we could see a cool down of Russian - American sister city activity, especially regarding any events that take place in present. Conversely, the usage of more technology as to keep distance could bolster the relationship.

For future research relating to this topic it would be fascinating if some different routes would be taken. One could do the opposite of what was done here and study the relationships of the least populated Russian - American sisters and see how strong and active they are. Another take would be to incorporate the three least populated, the three which represent the median populations, and the three biggest and do the same research. Moreover, in depth studies about specific Russian - American relationships encompassing interviews and deep archival study would be very useful to add to the literature. There is much work to be done reveal more about the reality of Russian - American relations.

To conclude, it must be said that there is hope for Russian - American relations to significantly improve despite obstacles that stand in the way. If the federal governments of both countries want to stand in the way of their citizens from intreating with each other they can do that, albeit only to a certain extent because the modern world we currently live in gives people the tools they need in order to connect with those far way from them. This study shows that many of the Russian and American sisters have been able to withstand the ups and downs of economic and political situations and if historical experience teaches us anything we can be safe saying that they will most likely overcome other obstacles in the future.

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**APPENDIX-**

**Discovered Kinds of Interactions Between Russian and American Sister Cities Belonging to Twelve Different Categories**

**In the 2000’s-**

Education- 9 #1

Government- 8 #2

Cultural- 7 #3

Medicine- 5 #4

Art- 5 #4

Sport- 4 #5

Business- 4 #5

Social Services- 4 #5

Music- 3 #6

Architectural- 2 #7

Environmental- 2 #7

Economic Development- 1 #8

**In the 1990’s-**

Education- 6 #1

Government- 1 #4

Cultural- 2 #3

Medicine- 1 #4

Art- 2 #3

Sport- 0

Business- 4 #2

Social Services- 2 #3

Music- 2 #3

Architectural- 0

Environmental- 1 #4

Economic Development- 1 #4

**Types of Interactions in the 1990’s**

Economic Development and Education - Minneapolis-St.Paul - Novosibirsk - 2

Education, Business, Music - Portland - Khabarovsk - 3

Art, Education and Business - Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod - 3

Medicine, Social Services and Education - Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk - 3

Social Service, Government, Education, Business, Music, Culture, Art and Environment - Chicago - Moscow - 8

Culture, Education and Business - Los Angeles - Saint Petersburg - 3

**Types of Interactions in the 2000’s**

Government, Education and Medicine - Charlotte - Voronezh - 3

Education and Culture - Minneapolis-St. Paul - Novosibirsk - 2

Culture, Music, Art, Architecture, Environment, Sport, Governmental and Education - Portland - Khabarovsk - 8

Environment, Medicine, Government, Business, and Education - Houston - Tyumen - 5

Business, Social Services, Medicine, Culture, Art, Education, Sport and Government - Louisville - Perm - 8

Sports, Government, Social Services, Culture, Business, Art, Education, Music and Medicine - Philadelphia - Nizhny Novgorod - 9

Culture, Government and Education - Oklahoma City - Ulyanovsk - 3

Social Services, Economic Development, Medical, Art, Education, Sports, Government, Business, Music, Architecture and Culture - Chicago - Moscow - 11

Culture, Social Services, Education, Art and Government - Los Angeles - St. Petersburg -5

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