

Risa F. Isard

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Education

University of Massachusetts – Amherst

2020-

- Doctor of Philosophy, Isenberg School of Management
- Concentration: Sport Management; McCormack Department of Sport Management

Duke University

2008-2012

- Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*
- Designed specialty interdisciplinary major: “Social Change at the Intersection of Culture, Gender, and Sports”

Academic Awards

- Received distinction and was nominated for highest departmental award for honors thesis: *Towards a Level Playing Field: The Faces and Forces Behind Title IX and Women’s Educational Equality, 1969-1975* (2012)
- Middlesworth Award recognizing outstanding original archival research with \$1,000 prize: *The ALFA Female: Sexuality & Separatism, Coalition Building & Counterculture in the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance* (2011)
- Six-time Dean’s List honoree, including four consecutive semesters (Junior – Senior years)

University Leadership and Service

- Duke Distinguished Leadership & Service Award, “Building Alliances Through Collective Engagement,” individual honor recognizing leadership throughout student tenure (2012)
- Duke Distinguished Leadership & Service Award, “Leading at Duke;” executive board member of recognized student-run LGBTQ and Ally network (2012)
- Featured Student, *Duke Magazine*; recognized for leadership, innovative ideas about sport in society (2012, [online](#) and in print)

Original Research

- *Towards a Level Playing Field: The Faces and Forces Behind Title IX and Women’s Educational Equality, 1969-1975*
 - Year-long research project for honors thesis in the history department including oral history interviews with former Senator Birch Bayh, Bernice Sandler and others; plus archival research at Harvard, Library of Congress, Oregon Historical Society, and elsewhere. Culminated in 160-page history of the untold story of Title IX.
 - Committee members: Dr. William Chafe (Alice Mary Baldwin Professor Emeritus of History), Robin Kirk (Co-Chair, Duke Human Rights Center), Dr. Kristin Goss (Kevin D. Gorter Professor of Public Policy and Political Science)
- *North Carolina Feminisms*
 - Oral history and archival group research project-turned-website exploring feminist organizing, alliances, and divisions in Durham and Chapel Hill in 1970s

- Advisor: Max Krochmal (currently Associate Professor of History and Chair of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, Texas Christian University)
- *The ALFA Female: Sexuality & Separatism, Coalition Building & Counterculture in the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance*
 - Oral history and archival research on longest-lasting lesbian-feminist organization in U.S. history; broader exploration of themes from 1970s feminist movement
 - Advisor: Max Krochmal (currently Associate Professor of History and Chair of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, Texas Christian University)

Research Interests

- Social Change, Protest, Resistance, Social Responsibility Through Sport
- Sport as Microcosm of Culture / Culture as Macrocosm of Sport
- Intersectional Diversity and Identity in Sport – Gender, Sexuality, Race, Class, Ability
- Practices and Implications of Mixed-Gender Sport

Professional Career

KABOOM! *Associate Director, Thought Leadership (and Sports)* March 2019-June 2020

- Create and lead sports and thought leadership strategy for national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring every child has the balanced and active play they need to thrive
- Oversee conference strategy; pitch national audiences and executive opportunities
- Lead national partnership with *American Ninja Warrior* alumni athletes
- Support organization-wide Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion efforts via selective DEI Network
- Member of cross-organizational Strategic Opportunities leadership team

ASPEN INSTITUTE *Project Director, Sports & Society Program* June 2014-March 2019

- First full-time hire for start-up public policy program using sport to serve the public interest
- Co-authored Physical Literacy report, underwritten by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and released with support from Surgeon General Vivek Murthy
- Provided editorial and strategic direction for seminal Project Play report, underwritten by Nike
- Founding, four-time director of flagship Project Play Summit: grew program to two days; annually featured 60+ speakers, 450+ guests, and 20+ sessions; developed strategy to elevate content to trend nationally; hosted Michelle Obama and interviewed Billie Jean King in 2016
- Launched, oversaw all community efforts across 8 geographies (hyperlocal to state-wide); first local initiative's successful management led to largest grant to-date; ran business development
- Designed and led partnership with Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to reimagine youth sports regionally, resulting in Wilson Foundation winning ESPY for Sport Philanthropist of the Year
- Developed first-of-its-kind online platform for communities to increase access to sport
- Piloted Institute-wide staff exchange to launch first international Project Play initiative (Mexico)
- Oversaw program administration, including yearly and monthly finances, across-team systems/processes during growth from two employees to nine; managed and mentored team of three full-time employees and intern, including directing hiring processes
- Prior Roles: Program Coord., Program Associate, Senior Program Associate, Program Manager

FRESNO GRIZZLIES (Minor League Baseball). Community Relations Coord. Jan 2013-June 2014

- Managed Junior Grizzlies baseball league for people with disabilities
- Founded farmer's market for corporate social responsibility and community development
- Developed partnerships with local businesses to achieve shared goals
- Represented team at Chamber of Commerce and community coalitions
- Hosted community theme-night for Heart Health, in partnership with Brandi Chastain

SELECT ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL ROLES

- **ESPNW, Women + Sports Summit Team Member** for production of industry convening (2013)
- **REACHUP! WITH BRANDI CHASTAIN**, *Assistant Event Producer/Social Media* for mixed-gender celebrity soccer challenge in partnership with Radio Disney (2012)
- **DUKE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**, *Co-Head Manager* for top-ranked Division I program, including ACC Regular Season and Tournament Championships and Elite Eight appearances (2008-12)
- **RAMAH IN THE ROCKIES**, *Founding Staff Member* for outdoor adventure camp (2009-12)
- **BLUE DEVILS UNITED**, *Blog Editor/Writer, Group Facilitator* overseeing staff of 20+ student and faculty writers while contributing content and hosting campus groups re: LGBTQ issues in sport for Duke's most-read blog; liaised between LGBTQ community and athletic department to create 'You Can Play' video, making Duke the first major Division I school to join the initiative to make sport safe for athletes of all genders and sexualities (2010-12)
- **ACTIV8**, *Sports Marketing Intern* for P.F. Chang's and Pat Tillman Foundation (2009)
- **PHOENIX MERCURY**, *Basketball Communications Game Night Assistant* conducting interviews, statistical analysis and research for defending champion WNBA team (2008)

Publications

- "Employers need to do more than the bare minimum for LGBTQ employees," *AdWeek*; [op-ed](#) on creating affirming workplaces in wake of SCOTUS Title VII ruling (2020)
- "How do we celebrate Kipchoge but turn blind eye to Semenya, para athletes?" *Global Sport Matters*; [op-ed](#) on double standard of technological advancement and competition (2019)
- "Fair Game," *Ideas Magazine*; reported [article](#) on co-ed sport for kids and elites (2019)
- "The Life-Altering Moment that Turned the Father of Title IX into a Champion for Women," *Quartz*; reported [article](#) on Senator Birch Bayh's legacy (2019)
- "Title IX and 'Tikkun Olam,'" *Jewish News Syndicate*; reported [op-ed](#) on untold story of Title IX's grandmother (2019)
- "Beyond a Level Playing Field," *Aspen Insight* podcast; [special episode](#) with Olympians Kristine Lilly, Elana Meyers Taylor and Joe Maloy about mixed-gender sport (2018)
- "Meet NBC's Mary Carillo, Emcee of the 2018 Project Play Summit," *Aspen Institute blog*; edited [interview](#) with Hall of Fame broadcaster on coed sport, youth sports culture (2018)
- "The State of Play for Local Youth Sports in Three Regions," *Aspen Institute blog*; [reporting](#) youth perspective on access to sport across 21 counties in Michigan and New York (2017)
- "Put Me in Coach Mom, I'm Ready to Play," *Raising Arizona Kids Magazine*; [article](#) in print and online, on need for and promise of women coaches (2015)

- *Generation W*, monthly contributor to women's leadership site founded by former WNBA President Donna Orender (2013)
- "The Importance of Determination," *Huffington Post*, [article](#) ghost written for soccer legend Brandi Chastain (2012)
- "An Everyday Athlete is Still an Athlete," *espnW*; [essay](#) on female athlete identity (2012)
- "Opening Historic Trails: Accidental Heroes Stomp Sports Inequity," *On the Issues Magazine*; [adapted excerpt](#) from original research of Title IX's history (2012)
- "Flex for Me," *All of the Above* women's monologue show; original monologue about women's muscles chosen for performance via competitive selection process (2012)
- *Develle Dish (blog)*, Contributed regularly to student-run feminist blog (2011-12)
- "Honorable Degree for Dishonorable Actions?," [Op-ed](#) in *Duke Chronicle* (2012)
- "Ethical Deliberations of a Nike Enthusiast," *Encompass Ethics Magazine*, co-authored [article](#) exploring corporate social responsibility initiatives and employment practices (2011)

Invited Talks

- "Say Her Name: Prominent Trends in Reporting Women's Professional Sports;" A Call to Action Research Fair, University of Massachusetts Amherst, presenter, virtual (2020)
- "Bridges of Belonging," Inclusion Incorporated, panelist, virtual (2020)
- "Sports as Voice and Tool for Social Progress," U.S. Department of State Sports Diplomacy, panelist, virtual (2020)
- "Beyond CSR: Sport for Good. For Real.;" Sports Biz Camps, curator and moderator, virtual (2020)
- "Sports and Sexuality: The Intersection of Sports and Sexuality Identity;" University of Pennsylvania Sports Law Symposium, panelist, Philadelphia, PA (2019)
- "I'm an Athlete, Not a Princess: The Double Bind of Women in Sports;" Duke University Feminist-Womanist Month, guest speaker and program facilitator, Durham, NC (2019)
- "Building Athletes for Life: What's the Model?" and "The Human Movement Experience: Time for an Upgrade;" American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting, presenter and panelist, Washington, DC (2019)
- "Revitalize In-Town Leagues: The Promise of Mixed-Gender Play;" Aspen Institute Project Play Summit, moderator, Washington, DC (2018)
- "The Power of Sports and Diplomacy;" Young Diplomats Reception, American Jewish Committee, panelist, Washington, DC (2018)
- Program II 50th Anniversary Luncheon; Duke University Trinity College of Arts & Science, panelist, Durham, NC (2018)
- Sports for Social Change; B'nai B'rith Youth Organization International Convention, featured speaker and program facilitator, Dallas, TX (2017)
- "To Optimally Use and Build on the Compelling Science;" Surgeon General's Innovation Summit, panelist, Washington, DC (2016)
- "State of Play;" New Orleans Youth Sports Summit, presenter, New Orleans, LA (2016)
- "Youth Sports: How to Give Kids What They Want and Need;" Aspen Institute Ethics in Sports Forum, moderator, Aspen, CO (2016)
- "Featuring Billie Jean King: Building a Social Movement for Access to Sport;" Aspen Institute Project Play Summit, Washington, DC (2016)

- “The Key to Population Health? Physical Literacy;” Aspen Ideas Festival: Health, presenter, Aspen, CO (2015)
- “Tech + Youth Sports = Universal Access;” SXSW Sports, panelist and facilitator, Austin, TX (2015)
- “Physical Literacy: A Model, Strategy Plan, and Call to Action;” International Physical Literacy Conference, presenter, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada (2015)
- “Sports Plenary;” PrevCon 2015 by SafeKids WorldWide, panelist, Oxon Hill, MD (2015)

Select Media Hits

- [Podcast Guest](#): “Risa Isard,” *ShePlays* (2019)
- [Live Radio Interview](#): “Why Participation in Youth Sports is Declining,” *Wisc. NPR* (2018)
- [Quoted](#): “Eight Barriers that Stop Girls from Playing Sports – and an Olympian’s Advice on How to Break Through;” LeagueApps blog (2018)
- [Podcast Guest](#): “Risa Isard;” *GW Business of Sports Podcast* with Mark Hyman (2018)
- [Quoted](#): “The Field Where Men Still Call the Shots,” by Linda Flanagan, *The Atlantic* (2017)
- [Quoted](#): “Team Sports Fall Out of Reach for Many Kids,” by Alan Gottlieb, *Colo. Trust* (2017)
- [Quoted](#): “How the Recession Left Low-Income Children Out of Shape and Out of Options,” *Pacific Standard Magazine* (2016)

Service + Leadership + Personal Achievements

- **Women’s Sports Foundation Expert Review Panel**; invited to advise on forthcoming *Teen Sport in America: Girls* (2020)
- **Women’s Sports Foundation Expert Review Panel**; invited to advise on *Communities at the Forefront: Elevating Girls’ Sports Through Local Programs* (2020)
- **Women’s Sports Foundation Expert Review Panel**; invited to advise on *Keeping Girls in the Game: Factors that Influence Sport Participation* (2019-2020)
- **REALITY Sports Fellowship Facilitator**; via Schusterman Foundation, invited to co-lead 10-day trip through Israel to explore intersection of sport and social issues and build values-based community among influential sports industry executives (2019)
- **REALITY Sports Fellowship Participant**; selected from competitive applicant pool of industry influencers to explore intersection of sport and culture via professional development, personal growth exercises, and networking in 10-day Israel trip (2018)
- **Board of Directors, Ramah in the Rockies**; invited and elected to serve three-year term providing leadership and oversight to nonprofit outdoor adventure camp (2018-present)
- **Jewish Sports Feminist of the Week**, [profiled](#) by Washington, DC-area nonprofit (2019)
- **Co-Chair, Duke Alumni WNBA All-Star Game Weekend**, bringing graduates from across the country to celebrate women in sport (2018)
- **Community Builder, Moishe House Without Walls**; recipient of \$2500 to develop and lead programming (2016-19)
- **Lay Leader, At The Well**; create community among local Jewish women through monthly traditions, rituals, and creative programming (2016-present)
- **Marathon finisher**: Chicago (2015), Marine Corps (DC, 2016), Grandma’s (Duluth, 2018)