



Full name *Dr. Craig Roberston*

What subject did you study? *Sociology*

Year of Graduation *2014*

Current Job Title *Head of Research*

Current Employer/Organisation Name *Nordoff Robbins*

How did you become interested in the area that you work in?

I have always been interested in why people do the things that they do, so sociology was a natural fit, even though my background is purely musical. I became particularly focused on the sociology of music and conflict when I was working as a secondary school music teacher and I was becoming frustrated with the rationale given to us for teaching music to be part of the music industry, when my own music-making was more to connect with others. Then I discovered the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra started by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said consisting of Israeli and Palestinian musicians, and that is when I became interested in music and conflict/peacebuilding. This relationship between music and society also relates to wellbeing and hence the connection to music therapy.

How did you get to where you are today?

After I graduated from my BMus, I was a professional musician for a few years, supplementing my income by working in IT and web production. Then I qualified as a music teacher followed by completing a MMus which sparked the interest in music and conflict which in turn led to my PhD. I worked in temporary lecturing roles in music and communication studies for a few years while continuing my pro bono work in music, conflict and wellbeing until I landed my current job at Nordoff Robbins, a music therapy charity.

What does your current role involve, any skills and/or personal qualities needed?

The role involves coordinating research into music therapy, music and society as well as developing an evidence base for music therapy, developing strategies and policies based on solid research.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

Supporting the wonderful work of the music therapists as well as connecting the dots between music therapy, wellbeing, social research and conflict is endlessly fascinating.



What are the challenges in your role?

Working in research in the third sector is very different from the academic world and there are different challenges, including explaining to stakeholders just what research means and why it is important even if it doesn't prove $x+y=z$ at all times.

Has anything surprised you about your role?

The third sector has a lot of hyperbolic discourse around it that makes research more difficult in some ways, although it is easier to get the research approved and funded in the first place.

Did you engage in any additional activities or roles during your research degree (i.e. organising conference, being a PGR rep etc.), and how did these help prepare you for your role?

I did some teaching on undergraduate courses, which helped me to understand the higher education world better and it certainly helped me land my first lecturing jobs.

What top tips would you give to any students who might be considering entering a similar field today?

The work in this field is precarious and not always available, so you need to really love the topic in order to make this work for you. Be prepared for the long haul, as it may take quite some time to find your place that is financially and intellectually sustainable.