

CRISis in Academia?

BEWARE!

The Ivory Tower is guarded by the Higher Education Monster. A Hydra, it bears many ominous heads, spitting out its toxic brew:

Careerism. Conformity. Competition.
Academic Toxicity.

Something must change.

To feed the Monster, we, the Citizens, are sliced into inspiring teachers, engaging public speakers, social media influencers, respected leaders, diligent administrators, prolific writers, meticulous editors, and hyper-productive researchers expected to rake in top-tier journal articles, citations, and grant monies, all whilst trying to change the world.

We've helped feed this insatiable beast, now it's time to end its reign. But how can we slay it? Have WE become the monster?

Showing Humanity

We toil tirelessly for this Monster, but as academics focused on Consumer Research with Impact for Society how can we show humanity and care for ourselves and others?

The narrow path of righteous academia often elevates rankings over societal impact and wellbeing. Successful academics must 'play the game', 'man-up', and be thick-skinned.

But what do we do when the battle ground is rigged and uneven? Rampant imposter syndrome permeates around us along with the fear of breaking down.

Our personal lives are further fractured by these demands: we juggle the roles of friend, caregiver, partner, (grand)parent, child, daughter, son, sibling. A life beyond work - health, sleep... or is that merely a distant dream?

We can prioritise showing humanity and care to our students.

We can prioritise showing humanity and care to each other.

We can prioritise showing humanity and care to ourselves.

We can do academia differently. And it will still be okay.

Being Collaborative

We can harness the power of collaboration and fight this Monster together.

What would it mean to challenge toxic individualism? What would it mean to replace competition with co-operation?

Let us unite! In bringing together our skills and resources and acting as supporters and allies for each other, we will see how being part of a collective will achieve impacts impossible for the lone academic. Collaboration is a way of doing academia that will better tackle complex, pressing societal issues.

We can collaborate to unearth new ideas and cast off the shackles of requisite individualism.

We can collaborate to level the academic hierarchy and embed mentoring.

We can collaborate to benefit both individual and societal well-being.

We can do academia differently. And it will still be okay.

Broadening Horizons

In serving the Monster, are we doing justice to consumer stories of unfamiliar lives and experiences?

How can we ensure that we are not simply extracting from consumers' lived experiences, but instead listen and work with them in ways that are respectful and give voice? How do we involve marginalized and hard to reach groups as partners in our research?

We can broaden horizons by seeing things from multiple vantage points.

We can broaden horizons by conducting ethical, rigorous, and impactful research.

We can broaden horizons by understanding and caring about others.

We can do academia differently. And it will still be okay.

Re-shaping academic ambitions

Those who fail to satisfy the Monster's enormous and insatiable appetite are made to feel a failure. Many struggle to secure employment or become frozen on the academic ladder.

The Ivory Tower's unforgiving gaze can make us feel lonely and diminished. Vulnerable Citizens often shy away from acknowledging the obstacles they encounter, yet the outpouring of attention surrounding Haushofer's [CV of Failures](#) demonstrates the significance of open disclosure. How can we shift the focus from research that prioritises top-ranked publications and large grants to fully include research that fosters meaningful collaboration, supports researchers and communities, and ultimately benefits society?

We can re-shape academic ambitions by questioning what it means to be an academic.

We can re-shape academic ambitions by questioning what we value as excellence.

We can re-shape academic ambitions by questioning academic status quo and biases.

We must do academia differently. It will still be okay.

Citizens RISE UP!

Let's step back, unplug, and reshape the remits of academic success. Let's slay this Monster!

About this Agenda for Change

This visual manifesto originates from the CRIS Collective's¹ workshop at the 2022 Academy of Marketing Conference. Our objective was to collectively develop a cohesive set of priorities to support the advancement of the field of CRIS. We encouraged participants to consider one or two areas of academia that hold the potential for transformation. Our discussions centred on fleshing out what our collaborative vision for change looked like, and the individual, structural and cultural transformations required to make it happen.

As a SIG, we are keen to embrace creative approaches to dissemination, which led us to collaborate with a professional illustrator, [Jack Brougham](#), who helped us create a visual representation of our manifesto. While the manifesto is not intended to be prescriptive, it may give people pause for thought and encourage others to embrace the change needed for different approaches to doing academia.

We hope you engage with our manifesto, and it sparks more collaborative and kinder approaches to reshaping and improving academic expectations and culture. We do not see our manifesto as complete, it is merely the beginning, and we look forward to hearing how you, our colleagues, take up our call to action....

¹ In 2019, Consumer Research with Impact for Society (CRIS) was established as a special interest group (SIG) within the Academy of Marketing. This [evolving group](#) operates without a fixed membership list. Instead, individuals interested in CRIS-focused research, collaborate through workshops and events, actively participating in various projects and activities. The "Collective" moniker is used to capture the fluid and flexible membership of this group, enabling us to symbolise its evolving nature without names being reduced to an '*et al.*' in publications and other outputs.

For this piece of work, the CRIS Collective was as follows:

Chairs/organisers (A-Z): Emma Banister, Kathy Hamilton, Maria Piacentini.

Other members of the collective (A-Z): Helen Bruce, Wendy Hein, Paul Hewer, Leighanne Higgins, Chihling Liu, Chloe Steadman.