

The downside of incremental publications

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Nowadays, at the science-oriented (*a bit*) social media (*e.g.*, LinkedIn) we happened to frequently and rightfully complaining about various forms of fraud and corruption that arise in some publications (which face the correct destiny of being retracted at the end of rather long editorial processing times) especially in publications originating from less developed countries, while overlooking another form of an unethical behavior seen in what is called as “salami slicing” (*a.k.a.*, incremental publications) that may also come from the labs/offices of highly decorated (with medals, awards, *etc.*) researchers of developed countries.

The purpose of such “salami slicing” is to increase the number of publications to result from a single body (could, for instance, be a graduate thesis/dissertation), that could have been published as a single article.

We recently came across a live example of this practice which resulted in the publication of 4 separate papers in 4 different Journals (one in late 2021 and the remaining three in 2022), of course, the “day of submission-day of acceptance” windows for these 4 papers were quite short, thanks to the highly-decorated authors appearing just under the title of a given article.

- 1.) *RSC (Royal Society of Chemistry) Energy & Environmental Science*: IF (journal impact factor) 30.8, 14 (2021) [6595](#) submitted on Aug 24, 2021 → accepted on Nov 18, 2021
- 2.) *RSC Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics*: IF 2.9, 24 (2022) [16125](#) submitted on Mar 25, 2022 → accepted on May 4, 2022
- 3.) *ACS (American Chemical Society) Sustainable Chemistry & Engineering*: IF 7.3, 10 (2022) [11913](#) submitted on May 18, 2022 → accepted on Aug 26, 2022
- 4.) *RSC Advances*: IF 4.6, 12 (2022) [32070](#) submitted on Sep 15, 2022 → accepted on Oct 13, 2022

I am sure careful readers noticed (simply by looking at the submission and acceptance dates) from the above that our authors were waiting for one article to be accepted before submitting the next one, but in between the article submissions there was not enough time to do the experiments and collect/interpret the data, essentially since the [Ph.D. thesis](#) that is the mother of all of 4 papers was completed on May 13, 2022 at the University of Sheffield, UK.

It would be perfectly O.K. if the different sections of a given Ph.D. dissertation (or M.Sc. thesis) consisted of “distinctly separate” (*i.e.*, *two or more elements that are clearly, undeniably, and unmistakably divided, standing apart with no ambiguity or*

connection between them) compartments in stark opposition to what was seen in this example, and as a better practice (of the 20th century) such compartments can be published as Part-1, Part-2, Part-3 (appearing in their titles), *etc.* all in a single Journal.

Moreover, all 4 published papers (resulting from simple, benchtop, stirred glass beaker experiments intended to convert the starting alkaline earth carbonate powders into their respective solid hydroxides in the presence of very high amounts of dissolved alkali hydroxides by leaving behind the produced free carbonate (CO_3^{2-}) ions in the reaction solution) were all pertinent to the “dedolomitization reaction of ACR” (alkali-carbonate reaction that occurs in concrete at special environmental conditions) which was first described in 1957 by E. G. Swenson of National Research Council of Canada and the chemical equation for dedolomitization is given by [Mr. Swenson](#) in p. 59 of [this](#) exemplary document, but none of the articles of our example (nor the Ph.D. thesis) mentioned the dedolomitization reaction of ACR or ACR even once.

The whole salami (the mother study) was cut into slices individually titled as “effect of residence and mixing time,” “effect of temperature,” “effect of impurities (*i.e.*, only the use of MgCO_3 instead of CaCO_3).” The experimental parameters such as the residence and mixing time in the glass beaker, effect of temperature inside the glass beaker and repeating what was once demonstrated in one slice/paper for CaCO_3 this time with MgCO_3 are all natural and integral parts of the single/mother study.

Don’t do this, what you practiced as salami slicing will always follow you throughout your career in any of your web-based publications list or [Web of Science](#) or [Google Scholar](#).

Moreover, you are setting a bad example for the aspiring junior researchers all across the globe, they will start thinking “if such prominent and decorated people do it, I shall start doing it, too.” You perhaps don’t realize this, but you are, through salami slicing, actually “seeding” unethical behaviors among your potential followers in many continents.

Publish a large study only once, that will enhance the impact of your study. If you slice it into 4 articles published in 4 different Journals, the follow-up researchers would not be able to reach all 4 of those at once. You would never want such an end result, right?