

1.

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2 x Singular ≠ Plural

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It is commonly assumed that coordinated singular NPs have the same distribution as proper plural NPs, as illustrated by the following examples from German and English: Coordinated singular NPs, just like plural NPs, and unlike singular proper and singular collective nouns, trigger plural agreement, can occur with inherently collective predicates, and can antecede inherently plural anaphora:

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| (1) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | nahmen
took-PLURAL | die Verfolgung auf.
the pursuit on |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | were in pursuit. | |
| (2) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | wurde(n) getrennt.
was/were separated | |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | were/*was separated. | |
| (3) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | kannte(n) einander.
knew each other | |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | knew each other. | |

Many current theories thus agree that coordinated singular NPs and inherent plural NPs are of the same syntactic category and denote semantic objects of the same type.

It is therefore genuinely unexpected and, within the realm of such theories inexplicable, to find a construction in which one, but not the other, can occur. This, however, is the case in the *one of*, German *einer von*, construction. The complement of *one of* can be a plural NP, but not two coordinated singular NPs (it also can't be a singular NP, collective or not):

- | | | | |
|--------|----------------------|--|---|
| (4) a. | Einer von
One of | {
uns
den Kommissaren
} | fing den Bösewicht.
caught the villain |
| b. | One of | {
us
the detectives
} | caught the villain. |
| (5) a. | *Einer von
One of | {
dir und mir
Schimansky und Tanner
} | hat die Currywurst gegessen.
has the curry-sausage eaten |
| b. | *One of | {
you and me
Schimansky and Tanner
} | ate the curry spiced sausage. |

Two coordinated plural NPs in this position seem to be better. While I am not sure about the proper interpretation of the conjoined NPs, the disjoint NPs sound perfect:

- (6) a. Einer von den Kommissaren oder /[?]und den Streifenpolizisten bestellte ein Bier.
 b. One of the detectives or /[?]and the street cops ordered a beer.

The existence of this contrast appears to pose a genuine challenge to the idea that coordinated singular NPs are in all relevant respects identical to plural NPs. It also raises the question what about the *one of* construction sets it apart from contexts like (1)-(3), and whether there are other constructions where the coordinated singular/plural distinction yields grammaticality differences.