# FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA UNIVERZITY KARLOVY V PRAZE

Ústav anglického jazyka a didaktiky

**Subject – verb concord and pronominal reference after collective nouns in British and American English**

Shoda a odkazovací prostředky po kolektivech v britské a americké angličtině

# BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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vedoucí práce:

Praha, Srpen 2013          Prof. PhDr. Libuše Dušková, DrSc.

Děkuji své vedoucí práce, prof. PhDr. Libuši Duškové, DrSc. za čas, který věnovala mé práci, za její cenné rady a za ochotu s jakou reagovala na mé podměty.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně, že jsem řádně citovala všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

I declare that the following BA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned and that this thesis has not been used in the course of other university studies or in order to acquire the same or another type of diploma.

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# Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá shodou podmětu a přísudku po kolektivech v britské a americké angličtině. Co se týče shody, je zkoumána jak shoda se slovesem, tak i shoda s odkazovacími prostředky. První teoretická část práce popisuje shodu po kolektivech s přihlédnutím k rozdílům mezi dvěma hlavními variantami angličtiny. Druhá část práce popisuje metodu vzorkování, při které byly vyjmuty celkem 4 vzorky z korpusů British National Corpus (reprezentující britskou angličtinu) a Corpus of Contemporary American English (reprezentující americkou angličtinu). Z korpusu BNC byl vyňat vzorek č. 1 s 25 výskyty kolektiva FAMILY a vzorek č. 2 s 25 výskyty kolektiva STAFF. Dle stejného postupu byl z korpusu COCA vyňat vzorek č. 3 s 25 výskyty kolektiva FAMILY a vzorek č. 4 s 25 výskyty kolektiva STAFF. Analytická část zahrnuje popis a analýzu jednotlivých vzorků. Ze vzorků britské angličtiny se dá říci, že kolektivum FAMILY se používá jako singulár i jako plurál podle toho, zda převládá představa jedince, nebo celé skupiny. Naopak tomu bylo u kolektiva STAFF, které se častěji vyskytovalo plurálových konstrukcích. V americké angličtině převládal u obou vzorků singulár, přesto se objevilo značné množství plurálové shody, především u kolektiva STAFF.

# Abstract

This thesis is concerned with subject-verb agreement with collective nouns in British and American English. The thesis deals with verbal as well as with pronominal agreement. The first part of the thesis gives theoretical background of concord with collective nouns with respect to differences between the two major varieties of English. The second part of the thesis describes the sampling method by which 4 samples have been excerpted from British National Corpus (representing British English) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (representing American English).  Sample 1. containing 25 instances of the collective noun FAMILY and sample 2. containing 25 instances of the collective noun STAFF have been excerpted from BNC.  Following the same method, two samples have been excerpted from COCA - sample 3. containing 25 instances of the collective noun FAMILY and sample 4.

containing 25 instances of the collective noun STAFF. The analytical part includes description and analysis of individual samples. The samples of British English have shown that the collective noun FAMILY is used in the singular or in the plural depending on whether individual members or the whole group is regarded. On the contrary, the collective noun STAFF occurred more frequently in plural constructions. In American English the singular agreement dominated the two samples although there were many cases of plural agreement, especially with the collective noun STAFF.

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**List of abbreviations**

BNC             British National Corpus

COCA             Corpus of Contemporary American English

pers. pron.     personal pronoun

possess. pron.  possessive pronoun

rel. pron.     relative pronoun

v.             verb

sg.             singular

pl.             plural

# 1  Introduction

The thesis is concerned with verbal and pronominal concord with collective nouns. It is generally acknowledged that the use of collective nouns differs fundamentally in the two major varieties of English, British English and American English. American English is known for its strong inclination towards grammatical concord so when collective noun takes the position of a subject, a singular number is used.  In British English notional concord occurs more frequently. When notional concord is applied, the singular noun may be used even in a plural construction when the author intends to regard members of the group individually. The first theoretical part of the thesis elaborates on this subject in further detail.

The second part of the thesis outlines the sampling method which has been applied on two distinct corpora, The British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English. To represent the distinct use of collective nouns in British and American English, 2 samples containing a total of 50 instances have been excerpted from BNC and 2 samples with another 50 instances have been obtained from COCA. This part also includes description of the method that has been applied to assort the data retrieved from corpora.

The third part of the thesis reveals the statistical data and carries out the analysis. Firstly, the analysis focuses on verbal agreement with collective nouns and the various factors that influence it. Secondly, it describes the referring expressions forming pronominal concord with collective nouns and thirdly, it is concerned with the regional differences.

# 2  Theoretical background

## 2.1  Terminology

To achieve a thorough understanding of constructions with collective nouns, basic terms will be outlined at the beginning.

### 2.1.1  Collective noun

Collective nouns as they are defined by Dušková et al. (2006: 44) are specific for their function within subject-verb agreement as they can be used in both singular and plural constructions based on whether they refer to an indivisible unit or to a group of individuals. The variable function of collective nouns can be illustrated by these two examples:

*There **was** a large **audience** in the theatre.* (Dušková et al., 2006: 44) In this sentence the noun *audience* is used in a singular construction marked by the third person singular in preterite. The agreement of the collective noun with a singular verb suggests that a unified group is being referred to therefore the contextual meaning may be that many people attended the play and therefore perhaps the earnings were higher.

*The **audience were** clapping their hands and cheering.* (Dušková et al., 2006: 44) The second sentence displays the noun used in a plural construction in which it denotes a group of individuals pointing to every single person in the theatre who was clapping his or her hands.

This fundamental concept is then reflected in further division of collective nouns. Dušková et al. (2006: 44) determines two groups of collective nouns according to their semantic reference:

*Group collective nouns* like *family*, *committee*, *company* refer to a group of individuals.

*Generic collective nouns* like *bourgeoisie*, *clergy*, *the public* refer to a whole class.

The second division concerning the form of collective nouns states that most collective nouns describing a group of animate individuals can take the same plural forms as other English nouns denoting more than one such as *armies, classes, governments*. However, some of them occur solely in the singular form with a definite article such as *the gentry, the church, the bourgeoisie* (Quirk et al., 1985: 316). Other examples of nouns that occur only in the singular (despite their semantic reference to a group) are inanimate nouns such as *china, linen, pottery* (Dušková et al., 2006: 45). In addition, Quirk at al. also distinguishe one specific category of collective nouns that includes proper names such as *Parliament, the Vatican, the United States* (Quirk et al., 1985: 317). Some collective nouns, namely *police, cattle, vermin, folk,* may be considered exceptions due to their restricted occurrence in grammatical constructions because they always require a plural verb. The noun *people* requires a plural verb as well, however, it can be used in the singular when referring to a nation 'a people - the peoples of Africa' (Dušková et al., 2006: 45).

## 2.1.2  Concord with collective nouns

The subject-verb concord in English 'can be defined as the relationship between two grammatical units such that one of them displays particular feature (eg plurality) that accords with a displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other.' (Quirk et al., 1985: 755) To support the definition both Dušková et al. and Quirk et al. provide us with the most common example of an explicit subject-verb agreement - the concord of 3rd person singular subject with a verb in the simple present with an ending –(e)s added:

*My **daughter watches** television after supper.* (Quirk et al., 1985: 755) A single subject requires a singular verb. The concord is displayed in the ending of the verbal predicate.

*My **daughters watch** television after supper.* (Quirk et al., 1985: 755) A plural subject requires a plural verb.

### 2.1.2.1 Grammatical concord

Grammatical concord is a grammatical relationship between two syntactic constituents of a sentence where the subject must agree with the verb thus (as it has been illustrated by the examples above) A singular subject occurs with a singular verb, plural subject occurs with a plural verb. (Quirk et al., 1985: 755)

### 2.1.2.2 Notional concord

The term notional concord is comparable with the Latin term *constructio ad sensum* which refers to a grammatical relationship between the subject and the verbal predicate where the number of the verb does not necessarily agree with the number of the subject but is used in accordance with the notion of the subject. (Dušková et al., 2006: 44) Notional concord can be detected in these examples:

*The **government have broken** all their promises.* (Quirk et al., 1985: 758) Despite a singular noun a plural verb is used indicating the notion of plurality in the subject.

*Fifteen **years represents** a long period of life*. (Quirk et al., 1985: 758) Despite the plural noun, the noun phrase is perceived as one unit. The notion of singularity prevails and is reflected in the verb.

### 2.1.2.3 Principle of proximity

When the sentence contains two or more subjects, the principle of proximity decides that the noun phrase functioning as a subject closer to the verb determines the number.

(Quirk et al., 1985: 757) The verb agrees with the nearest subject as in the following example:

*No one* except his own *supporters agree* with him. (Quirk et al., 1985: 757) The sentence illustrates how two noun phrases function as a subject. The one that is closer to the predicate shows grammatical agreement (both the subject and the verb are plural).

## 2.1.3  Number

To determine whether a collective noun takes a singular or plural form we must first define the grammatical category of number and provide a basic division of the cases in which number is displayed by various means.

Broadly speaking, the category of number in English is constituted by two opposite terms – singular and plural. 'The English number system constitutes a two-term contrast: SINGULAR, which denotes 'one', and PLURAL, which denotes 'more than one' '. (Quirk et al., 1985: 297) Number is then consequently displayed either in the verb or in the means of reference. Both of these subgroups will be outlined in further detail using various examples as it represents the core terminology needed for the analysis of the subject-verb agreement with collective nouns.

### 2.1.3.1  Number displayed in the verb

The singular or plural number can be determined in the following tenses and types of verbal predicates:

present simple: The number of the verb is marked by the presence of the –(e)s ending for 3rd person singular. For other persons a base form of the verb is used.

*The Bourequat family **goes** back 14 centuries.* (BNC, CFH 370) The number here is displayed in the 3rd person singular verb that regards the family as one unit.

present simple and preterite of the verb BE: The verb BE distinguishes the 1st and 3rd person singular *am/is* in the present and *was* in the preterite. Other persons take the form *are* in the present and *were* in the preterite.

*Black youth **were** more likely to be prosecuted and less likely to be cautioned than white youth.*(BNC, G1J 296) An example of notional concord where the number is considered to be used rather semantically is marked here by the past form of 3rd person plural.

Subject-verb concord with the verb BE is also expressed in the present and past progressive tense where it functions as an auxiliary verb.

*The Iraqi army **is trying** to crush the rebellion.* (BNC, ABK 1266) The singular can be identified by the form of the auxiliary verb *is.* Using the singular thus refers to the army as one whole group.

present perfect: The number is displayed in the auxiliary verb HAVE. The singular form is *has been,* the plural form is *have been*. The same rule also applies to the progressive form of present perfect.

*Local folk **have been picking** here for generations and always made sure that the beds were not overfished.* (BNC, K3K 1578) The plural used is indicated by the auxiliary verb *have* which regards the subject *folk* as a group of individuals therefore is classified as notional concord.

### 2.1.3.2  Number displayed in the means of reference

The number displayed in the concord can be also expressed by pronominal means of reference. These are personal pronouns, possessive pronouns, relative pronouns and reflexive pronouns. Dušková et al. (2006: 44) state that: 'The referring expressions for singular constructions are *it, its, which* and for plural constructions *they, them, their, who.*'[1] In his work *Concord with collective nouns revisited* Levin refers to another specific feature  of concord displayed in the following pronouns: 'Pronominal agreement differs from verbal agreement in that the connection between the pronoun and its antecedent is weaker than between the subject and the verb, which means that pronouns are more easily influenced by the semantic context.' (Levin, 1998: 21)

The following examples illustrate pronominal concord with collective nouns:

personal pronouns: *The Tyrone family fight* **themselves** *rather than the world but this is to destroy* **them** *too.* (BNC, HD8 415) The plural number in this sentence is signified not only by a personal pronoun in the objective form *them* but also by a reflexive pronoun *themselves*, both of them function as a referring expression.

possessive pronouns: *The small audience had begun to fidget on* **their** *rickety folded chairs.* (BNC, A0D 785) This typical example of notional concord points to the use of plural indicated by the plural possessive pronoun *their*.

relative pronouns: *Again, he was interrupted repeatedly with applause, but this was a crowd* **which** *does not cheer.*(BNC, A5M 50) The nonpersonal relative pronoun *which* indicates the singular, the personal relative pronoun *who* indicates the plural. The subject *crowd* denotes an indivisible set of people therefore *which* is used.

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[1] translation by Tereza Outratová

### 2.1.3.3 Special cases of concord with collective nouns

Despite the described tendency of collective nouns to occur with the personal *who* when perceived as a group of individuals and nonpersonal *which* when perceived as an indivisible unit, Quirk et al. (1985: 771) argue that exceptions of hybrid constructions can be found even though they are generally thought of as rare and odd:

?the government, *who is* cutting *its/their* losses

?the government, *which are* cutting *its/their* losses

### 2.1.3.4 Constructions with an indistinct form of number

From the first preliminary search of corpora for collective nouns it is clear that some constructions show neither concord in the verb nor in the means of reference and therefore cannot be analyzed as their number is indeterminable.

 In these particular constructions the number is restricted:

modal verbs: *A large extended family* **may** *have a few dozen members.* (BNC, G3F 1003) Because of the presence of the modal verb *may* the concord does not display the number. Quirk et al. (1985: 756) comment: 'Modal verbs make no number distinction.'

past tense: Cattle **wore** collars of rowan wood to protect them from spells and curses. (BNC, A0G 1069) With the exception of the verb BE the past tense forms remain the same for all persons.

Based on Quirk's assumptions it is also important to note that: 'Number concord is displayed only in the indicative. Non-finite verbs, imperatives, and subjunctives make no number distinction.' (Quirk et al., 1985: 756)

To determine the number of verbal agreement with collective nouns, it is necessary that the particular collective noun functions as a subject of the clause and moreover that the noun is also the head noun of the subject. The problematic constructions in the corpora, where the collective noun was assigned a different function than the head noun of the subject, were frequent:

premodification - conversion of nouns into adjectives: *The **family house** itself assumes a special prominence which is unique to this class*. (BNC, AP7 942) The noun *family* in this construction has undergone a process of conversion from a noun to an adjective thus functions as a premodification of the head noun.

postmodification: *If possible, two **members of staff** should place the patient on the pan.* (BNC, B32 1246) A very common position of the collective nouns was the one of postmodification of the head noun. The noun *staff* follows the head noun as a postmodifier and therefore cannot be taken into account in the analysis.

## 2.2 Concord with collective nouns in British and American English

So far the concord with collective nouns has been described from the point of grammar and semantics, the treatment of subject – verb concord with collective nouns with respect to regional differences has been left out. Therefore the following section focuses on the two major varieties of English – British English and American English in regard to the aim of the work. This point is described on the basis of the representative grammars of English.

To sum up the essential information which concerns concord with collective nouns, the various resources agree on the fact that British English uses notional concord that means either singular or plural constructions according to the contextual meaning (the number is used semantically) whereas American English shows a clear tendency to use the singular

number (plural constructions can be found in American English but are rather rare). (Quirk et al. , 1985: 758)  Dušková et al. (2006: 45) state that: 'Except for *cattle, people, police* and *vermin,* collective nouns in American English are generally constructed as singular.'[2]

This rule of singular construction as predominant in American English is confirmed by Quirk's observation who stresses the dominance of notional concord in British English. In the sentence *The audience were enjoying every minute of it.* the plural number is used because 'attention is directed at individual reactions of members of the audience.' (Quirk et al. , 1985: 758) Yet if we change the sentence to *The audience was enormous*. the singular number of the predicate is more likely to occur as the *audience* is perceived as one single unit. Contrary to British English, American English tends to use singular constructions especially when denoting government or sports teams. There are, however, some exceptions like the noun *couple* which tends to take the plural form when denoting two persons and singular form when being referred to as a unit. Plural form of a collective noun always concords with a plural verb. The two varieties of English do not differ in this respect. (Quirk et al., 1985: 758)

Algeo in his publication *British or American literature? A handbook of word and grammar patterns* comments on the issue, mentioning pronominal concord as well:  'In accord with the British tendency to treat collective nouns as animate plurals that take plural verb concord (cf. § 14), British also is more likely than American to use *who* as a relative with collective nouns.' (Algeo, 2006: 112) He elaborates on the semantics of collective nouns and divides them into categories according to their tendencies to occur with singular or plural verbs and most importantly defines categories in which collective nouns in British English are

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[2] translation by Tereza Outratová

more likely to take plural forms. The categories he defines are listed bellow with representative examples:

- sports organizations (*club, Hockey Association, Leeds*)

- business organizations (*airline, head office, Citroen*)

- governmental and political organizations (*council, Department of Environment, Labour*)

- military organizations (*military, squadron, Air Force*)

- educational, scholarly, artistic, entertainment, cultural, and religious organizations (*choir,staff, Covent Garden)*

- media and publishing organizations (*press*, *BBC*, *Merriam)*

- public service organizations (*fire brigade, hospital, London Weather Centre*)

- general and miscellaneous human groups (*committee, crowd, family*)

  (Algeo, 2006: 280-285)

## 2.2.1 Concord with collective nouns in prescriptive grammars of English

As I have outlined above, the grammatical rules for using collective nouns in singular or plural constructions are somewhat complicated as they show a different tendency in the two varieties.  Due to this particular reason, concord with collective nouns appears to be problematic especially for speakers of English as a foreign language and therefore can be found in many advanced guides to English usage. *Advanced Grammar in Use*  concludes that:  'We use a singular verb if we see the institution or organisation as a whole unit, and a plural verb if we see it as a collection of individuals. Often you can use either with very little difference in meaning, although in formal writing (such as academic writing) it is more common to use a singular verb.' (Hewings, 1999: unit 33)

Commenting on the preferences of British English Quirk et al. claim that plural is more common in speech and singular in writing therefore it is 'safer to use the singular verb where there is a doubt, in obedience to grammatical concord.' (Quirk et al., 1985: 758) Moreover, there is a common uncertainty in using the three principles of agreement with collective nouns so sometimes a conflict between grammatical concord and notional concord arises. Yet in this case, as Quirk argues, grammatical concord should not be necessarily used because notional concord 'tends to prevail over it.' (Quirk et al., 1985: 757) To avoid mistakes, neither the notional nor the grammatical principle of the concord should be excluded when the principle of proximity is applied.

## 2.3  Corpora

A corpus as it is defined by the Oxford Dictionary is a ' a collection of written or spoken material in machine-readable form, assembled for the purpose of linguistic research.' Corpus linguistics for which a language corpus is the central analytical device 'is the study of language on a large scale – the computer aided analysis of very extensive collections of transcribed utterances or written texts.' (Hardie, McEnery, 2012: introduction) It is precisely the extensive amount of annotated texts that make linguistic corpus a very useful tool for a linguistic research.

To excerpt and analyze the two varieties of English I have chosen the two well-established corpora of each variety. The British National Corpus will serve as a base material for the analysis of British English and the Corpus of Contemporary American English will be used in comparison, containing samples of American English. Both of these corpora provide a broad range of texts which suits well an analysis based on general usage of the language. The following section will describe each corpus in further detail.

### 2.3.1  British National Corpus (BNC)

Consisting of more than 100 million words the British National Corpus may be considered the largest monolingual collection of textual evidence of the British dialect of English. Not only does the corpus provide a wide variety of texts but is also well known for the rather extensive evidence of the spoken word. The latest publicly accessible version released is the 2007 BNC XML Edition although the collected texts and transcriptions have been made between 1980s-1993 thus the corpus can be labelled as synchronic.

The written part of the corpus represents 90% of the material and consists of 'extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals for all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, school and university essays, among many other kinds of text.'(http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml)

The remaining 10% is the material of the spoken part which includes 'orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) and spoken language collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins.' (http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml)

### 2.3.2  Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

The second corpus used for sampling was the Corpus of Contemporary American English which is a 450 million word corpus created between 1990-2012 by Mark Davies. Being even more than four times larger than the BNC, COCA  represents a well-balanced source of American English texts and transcripts.  As opposed to the BNC, COCA is more recent and allows us to search for diachronic changes in English over the past twelve years.

The difference is, however, not immense and COCA can easily serve as an equal tool to the BNC for spotting the differences between British and American English.

Coca contains 85 million words of the spoken part and the remaining part of the corpus is text 'equally divided among, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. '(http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/) As well as the BNC, COCA allows various types of filtration of the text. The text can be restricted to the spoken or written, according to genres, and also can be limited to certain years or periods.

# 3 Material and method

## 3.1 Corpora search

The primary objective of the corpora search was to excerpt a sample of 50 instances of collective nouns used in British English and 50 instances of collective nouns used in American English.  The overall number of 100 instances can thus serve as a representative sample of both varieties and be further analyzed. Secondly, the aim was to measure the frequency of singular or plural concord occurring after a collective noun in British and American English. Apart from verb concord I have also attempted to focus on constructions in which number is implied by means of referring expressions. The above listed aims are presented in charts and analysis following the research.

To search the corpora for specific results two collective nouns have been chosen on the basis of their frequency of occurrence in British National Corpus and Corpus of Contemporary American English.  Amongst the other tested collective nouns the substantives FAMILY and STAFF have shown one of the highest frequencies in both corpora and therefore have been chosen as most suitable for the research.  For FAMILY the frequency of instances per million words has been 342.71 in BNC and 476.83 in COCA. For STAFF the frequency has been 228.6 in BNC and 128.94 in COCA.  Both of the collective nouns have been searched for in BNC as well as in COCA in order to obtain a sample that could be subjected to comparison and further analysis.

For the purpose of relevance of the samples there has been an attempt to search specifically for a head noun in a sentence as for example a collective noun converted into an adjective would be irrelevant in the research. Even though both corpora are capable of assigning a word class to a word, they are not capable of syntactical analysis. Moreover it is

necessary to mention that the function of tagging has not yet been fully developed and frequently misidentifies the word class. Despite these inaccuracies the queries have been written to search for FAMILY and STAFF occurring as nouns and the other word classes have been eliminated consequently. Due to the varying search engines and syntactical differences of queries between the corpora I have used one query which, however, has a different form for COCA and for BNC. The query for BNC uses CQP syntax. These are the queries used:

family, BNC    [word="family"%c] [pos!="N.*"]

staff, BNC     [word="staff"%c] [pos!="N.*"]

family, COCA  family -[nn*]

staff, COCA    staff -[nn*]

To excerpt a statistically representative sample the function 'random' has been used for BNC. Due to its non-existence in COCA at the time of research I have searched for material from all genres which substituted the function to a certain extent.

## 3.2  The sampling method

The primary searches of corpora have also revealed a common corpus-related problem which amongst others Hunston points out in her publication *Corpora in Applied Linguistics: '*One of the problems brought about by the increasing size of corpora is that searches for frequent words will yield too much data to be interpretable in the form of concordance lines.' (Hunston, 2002: 52) Both of the collective nouns chosen FAMILY and STAFF may be considered common words as their frequency rank is greatly above average and it has been precisely for this reason, the excessive amount of data, that the method of sampling has been applied.

The method itself is to be found and further described in *Out of Corpora: Studies in honour of Stig Johansson: '*... first a single screenful of 25-30 lines is selected from the hundreds of thousands instances using the 'every nth' convention, meaning that if there are 250,000 instances of 'way', and they are picked out in running text sequence, numbers 1, 10,001, 20,001, 30,001 and so on up to 24,001 are chosen to make 25 instances. These are examined and provisionally classified,...' (Hasselgärd, Oksefjell, eds.,1999: 166) Following the basic methodological frame I have excerpted 182 instances which included the noun FAMILY and 138 instances including the noun STAFF. These instances have been excerpted from BNC and have been restricted only by the query which attempted to search for FAMILY/STAFF occurring as substantives. They have been consequently reduced to two samples containing 25 relevant instances. Following the same system in COCA I have excerpted 115 instances including the noun FAMILY and 280 instances including the noun STAFF to retrieve two samples of 25 relevant instances representing the use of collective nouns in American English. The system by which I have reduced the original number of instances to a sample of 25 will be described below.

## 3.3 Assortment of data

It has been previously mentioned that the overall number of instances containing the noun FAMILY or STAFF was sufficiently high in both corpora yet containing a high number of irrelevant constructions as well. These constructions had to be eliminated so that the sample would consist only of material relevant to the research. The general procedure was an elimination of constructions in which

1) FAMILY/STAFF did not function as the subject of the clause

   *Did women , do women , have power **in the family*** ? (BNC, CM5 1509)

The main objective of the thesis is an analysis of a subject-verb concord with collective nouns therefore sentences where the nouns FAMILY or STAFF had a different function than that of a subject have been excluded with an exception of those where pronominal agreement was applied:

[...] *a small support group was set up in advance of the assessment to advise* ***staff*** *on what would be required of **them***. (BNC, HBM 2012)

2) FAMILY/STAFF did not function as the head noun of the subject

*The **family 's** economic need is particularly pressing at a time of inflation.* (BNC, EEK 695)

The sentences where one of the two collective nouns was part of the subject but did not function as the head noun have been excluded as they most frequently served as a determiner or modifier of the head noun. It is also interesting to note that in this particular step there have been differences between the noun FAMILY and STAFF. FAMILY most often appeared as a determiner or as a modifier as has been illustrated by the sentence above whereas STAFF usually functioned as a postmodifier of the head noun:

[...] *with no formal **chief of staff** standing between top aides and the president.* (COCA, PerspPolSci 2003)

3) FAMILY/STAFF was in coordination with another noun or pronoun

[...] *a nightmare in which **I and all my** **family** were taken down into a cellar and shot.* (BNC, AEO 2898)

A very common construction occurring in the original number of instances was a coordination of the collective noun with another noun or pronoun. Verbal agreement following the subject is then a result of the coordination and not the one collective noun by itself therefore these constructions have been excluded. Especially for the noun FAMILY there was a high number of coordination with the noun FRIEND in plural such as in:

*My **family and friends** , who are around the house , are too preoccupied to help.* (BNC, EDU 1884)

4)  FAMILY/ STAFF was followed by a verb form of an indeterminate number

*Bookshop **staff went** round handing out sweets* [...] (BNC, G39 1309)

All verbal agreements containing a verb of an indefinable number have been eliminated as the work focuses primarily on the number of the verb following a collective noun. The indefinable construction most commonly found was with verb in past simple as in the sentence above.

# 4  Analysis

The analytical part focuses on statistical data obtained from the samples and their analysis. Tables number 1., 5., 12., 16. present the whole sample that has been sorted by individual clauses or instances so that the overall number of 25 reflects the number of instances in each sample. Tables number 2. - 4., 6. - 11., 13. - 15., 17. – 22. show the number of expressions that indicated the number of the agreement. Therefore the overall number in these tables may reach over 25 even if the table contains data obtained from one sample. The reason is that these tables present individual means that indicated the number and there might be more in one sentence.

## 4.1  Results from BNC

In regard to the previous chapter I have obtained 2 samples from BNC, each of them containing 25 instances, one of them with the collective noun FAMILY  and the second with the collective noun STAFF. These two samples have served as a representative sample of subject-verb agreement with collective nouns concerning the British variety of English and will be consequently analyzed from the point of view of verbal and pronominal agreement with respect to individual cases.

Looking at the two samples excerpted from BNC, it is clear that the very general idea that in British English the singular as well as the plural number is used after collective nouns has been confirmed by the research. From the 25 instances of the noun FAMILY there has been an overall count of 14 constructions in which a singular verb was used, 1 construction with a singular referring expression, 5 constructions with a plural verb, 2 constructions with a plural reference, 1 construction in which a singular verb and a singular referring expression, 1 construction in which a singular verb and a plural reference was used and 1

construction in which a plural verb and a plural reference was used. These results are illustrated by the basic graph bellow. For the purpose of the graph the constructions where more than one word indicated the number, the ones consistent in number have been counted accordingly among the singular vs. plural distinction whereas constructions inconsistent in number, that means the ones where both numbers were expressed, have been marked as 'sg. and pl. expression used'.
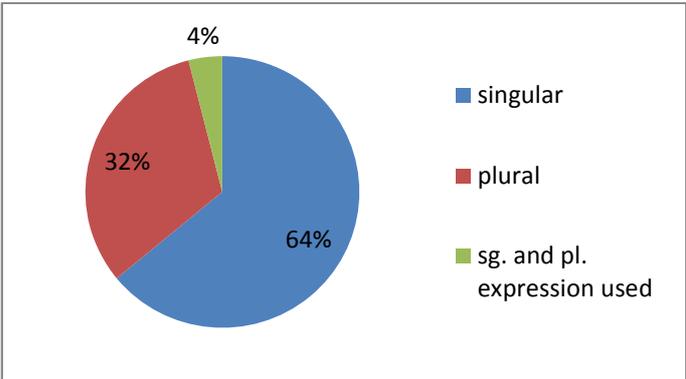


*Graph 1 – Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for sample 1.*
*FAMILY (BNC)*

Out of 25 instances of the noun STAFF there have been in total 2 constructions containing only a singular verb, 15 constructions containing a plural verb, 2 constructions with a plural reference and 6 constructions including a plural verb and a plural reference. The graph, assorted by the same system as graph 1., points to the predominance of plural agreement in the sample.
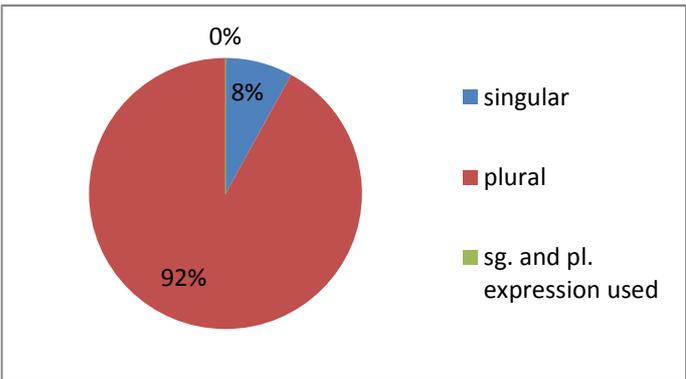


*Graph 2 - Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for sample 2.*
*STAFF (BNC)*

The following graph presents the overall result from both of the samples, that means a total of 50 instances of the two collective nouns.
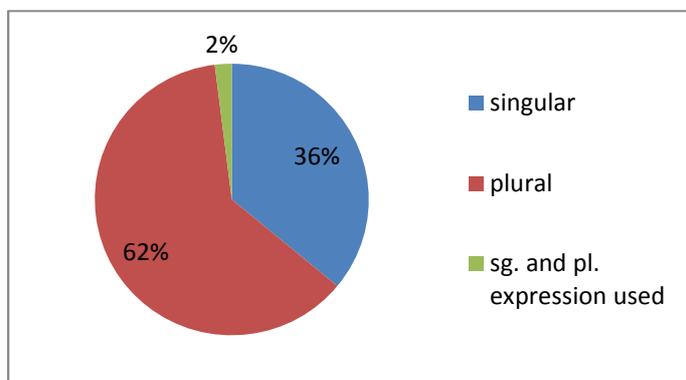


*Graph 3 - Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for both samples from BNC*

The two nouns show a different tendency – the noun FAMILY shows a higher number of the singular used whereas the noun STAFF shows a clear predominance of the plural which influences the overall result. The different tendency of each substantive suggests a semantic problem which will be addressed in the next section. In regard to the charts we can thus generally claim that in British English both numbers, the singular and the plural, are used.

## 4.2  The semantic difference between FAMILY and STAFF

As has been pointed out, the two substantives chosen for the research have shown quite opposite tendencies in the corpora. Concord of the collective noun FAMILY with a verb or a referring expression was in 64% singular and in 32% plural whereas for STAFF the sample consisted of 92% plural constructions and only of 8% singular. This considerable contrast might point to the different semantics of each substantive or rather we can say that the semantic point of view differs for each word. The problem becomes more transparent

when these words are searched for in the major dictionaries of English. For instance, Oxford English Dictionary defines FAMILY as 'a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit'. STAFF is defined as 'all the people employed by a particular organization'. A very similar description is offered by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English where FAMILY is defined as 'a group of people who are related to each other, especially a mother, a father, and their children' and staff as 'the people who work for an organization'. Focusing on the dictionary entries for each word we discover that the noun FAMILY is in both cases described as 'a group' which suggests that, considering the notional concord, FAMILY is rather perceived as a whole unit as in the following example from BNC:

*How's your family ?* (BNC, AL3 171)

A singular verb is used therefore the notion of *family* being one indivisible unit prevails.

On the other hand, the sample of the other noun, STAFF, has revealed that this particular substantive inclines more to the plural. That is also reflected in both dictionaries where STAFF is defined by the word 'people', moreover, a plural is used. The following example from BNC illustrates the very common use of plural agreement with the noun STAFF:

*The dining-room staff were getting impatient.* (BNC, CKO 1188)

A plural verb is used as the noun refers to each member of the group.

## 4.3  Sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)

The general frequency of the plural and the singular number in the sample has already been commented on and statistically indicated by graph number 1. but the following table reveal the exact data.

**FAMILY (BNC)**

| 1 expression of number | | | more expressions of a consistent number | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 expression | | | 2 expressions | | | 3 expressions | | |
| verb | pers. pron. | posses. pron. | v. + posses. pron. | v + pers. pron. | v. + rel. pron | rel. pron.+ v. + pers. pron. | v. + pers. pron. + posses.pron. | |
| 14 | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | | SG |
| 5 | 2 | | | | | | | PL |
| 19 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | Total |

| More expressions of an inconsistent number | |
|---|---|
| v. sg. + pl. pers. pron. | 1 |
| | |
| | |

| Total | 25 |
|---|---|

*Table 1 – Complete data of sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)*

## 4.3.1  Verbal agreement

In the sample there have been in total 19 cases of verbal agreement with the collective noun FAMILY that means constructions in which the number has been indicated only by the verb form.

| | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. verb | 14 |
| pl. verb | 5 |
| total | 19 |

*Table 2- Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)*

The 14 instances of the singular verbal concord were:

1. (example 1) *The **family** of Arthur Thompson , sen [sic], **has had** to face up to many tragedies.*

2. (example 5) *Middlesbrough **family is** now complete and settling into a new house* [...]

3. (example 6) *The royal **family** persistently **talks** in the [ common good ] language of the fifties [...]*

4. (example 10) *How '**s** your **family** ?*

5. (example 11) *But our **family was** too young to me in the war like me brother [sic].*

6. (example 12) *The **family was** an illegitimate branch of the Yorkshire Hoptons* [...]

7. (example 15) *[...] nuclear family : once the Jones have children , the **family becomes** a " nuclear " one.*

8. (example 17) *The **family** in the song **is** the circle of friends* [...]

9. (example 19) *Our **family has caught** dolphins since 1919 and we want to preserve the tradition .*

10. (example 20) *The extended school **family includes**: parents , the PTA , former parents , former pupils* [...]

11. + 12. (example 21) *There 's the discipline for one thing : our **family wasn't** too bad compared to others I know , but , generally , the West Indian **family is** very , very strict .*

13. (example 22) *By this time the **family was** based at Fortitude Valley , Brisbane* [...]

14. (example 24) *[...] at the age of thirteen he was offered a place at Oxford University which the **family was** unable to take up .*

The verb forms indicating the number have been: the present simple in examples 3(6), 7(15), 10(20) ; the preterite or present form of the verb BE in examples 2(5), 4(10), 5(11), 6(12), 11(21), 12(21), 13(22), 14(24) ; the present perfect tense in examples 1(1), 9(19). The fact that the singular number prevailed the plural in the sample is to a certain extent a result of the contextual viewpoint or the notional perception of the word. We can see that in examples 3(6) (*The royal **family** persistently **talks**...),* 10(20) (*The extended school **family includes**: parents...*) the collective noun denotes a united whole but moreover in their semantic meaning an institution is referred to. By *the extended school family* the author means a group consisting of other institutions which are listed (...*parents , the PTA , former parents...*) and the *the royal family* has generally shown a tendency to occur only in the singular which may suggest that rather than a reference to individual members of the group, the royal family is thought of as an institution as well. What also plays a significant role is the animacy of the noun. In some constructions FAMILY has a non-generic reference and is further concretized by a determiner or a modifier of the head noun such as in 2(5) (*Middlesbrough **family**...*), 12(21) (...*the West Indian **family**...*), 1(1) (*The **family** of Arthur Thompson...*). We can thus say that the presence of the proper name tends to introduce a singular construction as the *family* is conceived as a unit. Another factor which influenced the number specifically in examples   8(17) (*The **family** in the song **is** the circle of friends...*) and 6(12) (*The **family was** an illegitimate branch of the Yorkshire Hoptons...*) was the presence of a copula with a substantival complementation in the singular. It can be claimed that a copular verb generally agrees with the subject, there are, however, cases that show a tendency to concord in number between the subject noun and the subject complement noun. In these two sentences both complements, *the circle of friends* and *an illegitimate branch of the Yorkshire Hoptons*, are singular and thereby influence the copula.

The 5 instances of the plural verb were:

1. (example 2) *The **family** of a woman who died after washing her husband 's asbestos-contaminated clothes , **have issued** a write for damages from his former employer.*

2. (example 3) *His **family were enjoying** wonderful home-grown vegetables.*

3. (example 7) *[ And all the **family live** there ? ] she breathed happily.*

4. (example 8) *Not surprisingly, her main aim is to move back to the area where her **family live** [...]*

5. (example 16) *The Ferretti **family have** a reputation for providing good food and friendly service.*

The plural is indicated by the following tense forms: the present simple in examples 3(7), 4(8), 5(16) ; the present perfect in example 1(2) and the past progressive in example 2(3). These examples show the opposite form of notional agreement -a reference to each individual of a certain group as in example 2(3) (*His **family were** enjoying wonderful home-grown vegetables).* What the plural form of the verb suggests is that each member of the family was enjoying the vegetables. *His family* is then perceived as an animate organism. The reference to each member of the group is also apparent in other examples, example 5(16) (*The Ferretti **family have...***) contrasts directly with the previous examples of singular verb used with FAMILY premodified by a concrete family name. In Example 3(7) the predeterminer *all* is used which induces the plural number.

## 4.3.2  Pronominal agreement

In the first sample there have been 3 constructions in which pronominal agreement was applied, that means the number was implied by a pronominal reference.

|                    | number of expressions |
|--------------------|----------------------:|
| sg. pers. pron.    |                       |
| sg. possess. pron. |                     1 |
| pl. pers. pron.    |                     2 |
| pl. possess pron.  |                       |
| total              |                     3 |

*Table 3 - Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)*

These were:

1. (example 13) [...] *the medical cause of the death was perfectly well known to the **family** -- indeed I had sent **them** a copy of the pathologist's report.*

2. (example 14) *After a positive test result the family practitioner and health visitor are contacted when the baby is about six weeks old to develop a social profile of the **family** and decide how best to approach **them** to offer a venous blood test* [...]

3. (example 18) [...] *an advocate closely connected to the Montrose **family** and **its** interests* [...]

Examples 1(13) and 2(14) show agreement of the collective noun with a plural personal pronoun *them.* In both cases the personal pronoun separately regards all members of a certain family so if, a singular *it* were used, the reference to *family* would be rather ambiguous. On the other hand, the singular personal pronoun in example 3(18) shows a depersonalization of the noun *family.*

### 4.3.3 Constructions with two or more means expressing number

There were in total 3 constructions which included more means expressing the number. The following combinations of means expressing the number were found, numbers in parentheses indicate the number of certain type of constructions in the sample:

sg. v. + pl. pers. pron. + pl. verb (1)

sg. v. + sg. rel. pron. + sg. possess. pron. (1)

pl. v. +  pl. possess. pron. (1)

|  | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
|  | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | 3 | 1 |
| pl. | 2 | 2 |
| total | 5 | 3 |

*Table 4 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)*

1.  (example 4) *Steven's **family**, I 'm afraid , **has** no Silver at all , but **they are** very practical.*

2. (example 11) *I 'm not er a great fan of the monarchy, although that I would say that I come from a **family which is**, devoted a large portion of **its** life in service and work to the royal family.*

3. (example 23) *The fish are thriving in their stable, controlled environment and the Emery **family are** able to view **their** fish all year round.*

Example 1(4) was the only instance of the sample where 3 means of different number were used – the singular verb *has*, the plural personal pronoun *they* and the plural verb *are*. Overall we can find 2 consistent means indicating the animate treatment of *family*

– the plural personal pronoun *they* and the plural verb *are* although it is important to note that the plural verb is rather a consequence of its agreement with the plural personal pronoun rather than with *family* itself. The singular verb in the first part might mean that the family is perceived as a kind of institution. The second example 2(11) is somewhat complicated as it is an instance of colloquial speech. That is also apparent in the structure of the unfinished sentence – an anacoluthon.  In total 3 consistent means of reference are used – the relative pronoun *which* followed by the singular verb *is* and a singular possessive pronoun *its*. The singular verb agrees with the relative pronoun *which* known for its tendency to occur with verbs in the singular (Levin, 1998: 22).

## 4.4  Sample 2. STAFF (BNC)

As has been mentioned previously, the plural number dominated the sample with the collective noun STAFF. The following table reveals detailed information.

### STAFF (BNC)

| 1 expression of number | | | more expressions of a consistent number | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 expression | | | 2 expressions | | | 3 expressions | | |
| verb | pers. pron. | posses. pron. | v. + posses. pron. | v + pers. pron. | v. + rel. pron | rel. pron.+ v. + pers. pron. | v. + pers. pron. + posses.pron. | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | SG |
| 15 | 2 | | | 5 | 1 | | | PL |
| 17 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | Total |

| More expressions of an inconsistent number | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

| Total | 25 |
|---|---|

*Table 5 - Complete data of STAFF (BNC)*

### 4.4.1  Verbal agreement

In the sample there have been 17 cases of sentences in which the verb form indicated the number.

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. verb | 2 |
| pl. verb | 15 |
| total | 17 |

*Table 6 - Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in sample 2. STAFF (BNC)*

There were only 2 instances of singular concord:

1.  (example 11) *The **staff that plays** together*[...]

2.   (example 22) [...]  *if the **staff produces** a comment are they going to sign that*[...]

In both cases the singular number is expressed by the third person singular form of the simple present.  What is apparent from the sample is that the singular with the substantive STAFF is rather rare. Despite its neutral nature regarding the personal vs. non personal antecedent, it can be argued that the relative pronoun *that* in the first example 1(11) plays a role as it has only occurred with singular verbs in the research.  The use of the singular in the second example 2(22) could be related contextually as the person speaking mentions two separate groups, the staff and the parents. Then we could say *staff* is perceived as a united group.

There were 15 instances of the plural verb used:

1. (example 1) [...] *they hold ideas about discipline and order that are markedly more [ traditional ] than those they believe the **staff hold**.*

2. (example 2) *When we push our trolleys round the store, the **staff sing** Strangers In The Night .*

3. (example 3) *Security **staff are** available 24 hours a day in the Richmond Building Reception and can be contacted* [...]

4. + 5. (example 4) *BGS **staff carry out** some of these programmes; others are cooperative projects between university groups and BGS , or in which BGS **staff supervise** research students.*

6. (example 6) [...] *there 's a specific training grant that you now get to ensure that your training staff , your , your residential **staff get trained** .*

7. (example 9) [...] *Supermarket **staff plan** a marathon bowling bash at Megabowl* [...]

8. (example 12) ***Staff** at Cornell College **were** astounded by the generosity of the unexpected bequest.*

9. (example 14) *You 've got to establish the trust that **staff are** delivering what matters and what the public wants .*

10. (example 15) [...] *in the small library where not many **staff are** available to take part in library user education .*

11. (example 16) *The dining-room **staff were** getting impatient .*

12. (example 17) [...] *different **staff use** different techniques* [...]

13. (example 19) *The **staff** of the bank **have** stayed in two-star hotels* [...]

14. (example 21) *Increasingly, the teaching **staff participate** fully* [...]

15. (example 23) [...] *but **staff fear** more jobs could be lost .*

As in the previous sample the following tenses expressed the plural number: the simple present in examples 1(1), 2(2), 4(4), 5(4), 6(6), 7(9), 12(17), 14(21), 15(23) ; the present or preterite form of the verb BE in examples 3(3), 8(12), 10(15) ; the present progressive form in example 9(14) ;  the past progressive form in example 11(16) ;  the present perfect tense in example 13(19). In most cases the choice of the plural number can be traced to the semantic meaning of the word which I have already pointed out. The idea that the semantic meaning of the substantive STAFF regards individuals rather than a unified group is also supported by Algeo's classification of collective nouns according to their semantics. He claims that educational, scholarly, artistic, entertainment, cultural, and religious organizations such as the substantive STAFF are prone to taking the animate plural. (Algeo, 2006: 283)  In example 10(15)(...*not many **staff are** available...*) the plural number is influenced by the quantifier *many.*

## 4.4.2  Pronominal agreement

In the sample there have been 2 constructions with pronominal concord of the collective noun with a pronoun.

|                    | number of expressions |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| sg. pers. pron.    |                       |
| sg. possess. pron. |                       |
| pl. pers. pron.    | 2                     |
| pl. possess pron.  |                       |
| total              | 2                     |

*Table 7- Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in sample 2. STAFF (BNC)*

1. (example 7) *The functional managers are responsible for choosing the right **staff**, for instructing **them** [...]*

2. (example 8) *[...] support group was set up in advance of the assessment to advise **staff** on what would be required of **them**.*

In both sentences the pronominal concord is shown by the plural personal pronoun *them* functioning as an object. From the semantic point of view, both uses of the substantive also refer to an organization or rather a part of an organization in which individuals are addressed, thus the plural is used.

### 4.4.3 Constructions with two or more means expressing number

There have been 6 constructions in which the number was expressed through more devices. The combinations were following:

pl. v. + pl. pers. pron. (5)

pl. v. + pl. rel.  pron. (1)

| | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
| | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | | |
| pl. | 14 | |
| total | 14 | |

*Table 8 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in sample 2. STAFF (BNC)*

1. (example 5) *If he took more **staff** on and **they were** say filling up provisions [...]*

2. (example 10) *[...] enthusiasm shown by our sales **staff who are** so vital to the success of Adkin .*

3. (example 13) *As for the **staff** , **they're** going on to new jobs .*

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4. (example 18) *Adam took his GCSEs four years early and **staff** at St Hugh 's College Oxford **were** so impressed by his brilliance that **they** offered him a place .*

5. (example 20) *A primary aim of regional organisation is that **staff develop** an intimate knowledge of the coast , countryside , historic houses and parks for which **they are** responsible .*

6. (example 24) *Several **staff have** expressed concern about the high level of workplace stress **they feel** exists in some sections of the Library.*

All the constructions showed a number of various referring expressions in combination with verbs, all of them express exclusively the plural number. In most cases the personal pronoun *they* replaced the collective noun in order to avoid a repetitive construction. The plural verb form following *they* in examples 1(5) (...*and **they were...**),* 3(13) (...***staff** ,* they're ***going**...),* 5(20)(***...they are** responsible...*), 6(24) (*...stress **they feel** exists...*) is agrees with the plural verb forms that follow. Similarly, example 2(10) shows concord of the plural relative pronoun *who* with the plural verb *are.* In example 6(24) (*Several **staff have** expressed...*) the quantifier *several* introduces the plural number.

## 4.5  Summary of results from BNC

In all 50 instances, there have been 63 words that indicated the number of the agreement.

There were 36 verbs indicating the number:

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. verb | 16 |
| pl. verb | 20 |
| total | 36 |

*Table 9 - Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in both samples from BNC*

There were 5 pronouns indicating the number:

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. pers. pron. |  |
| sg. possess. pron. | 1 |
| pl. pers. pron. | 4 |
| pl. possess pron. |  |
| total | 5 |

*Table 10 - Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in both samples from BNC*

There were in total 22 various expressions that indicated the number in clauses or sentences where more means of expression were used. These were either consistent (expressing the same number) or inconsistent (expressing the singular and the plural number).

|  | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
|  | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | 3 | 1 |
| pl. | 16 | 2 |
| total | 19 | 3 |

*Table 11 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in both samples from BNC*

The number of the agreement in the samples has been indicated by the verb form, a pronoun or a combination of both. The referring expressions constituted of personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and relative pronouns. There were no reflexive pronouns in the samples. Based on the statistical data, we can claim that in British English the singular and the plural can be equally used with collective nouns. Whether the agreement is singular or plural depends on the semantic perception, either the author intends to regard the whole group or separately individual members of the group. The collective noun STAFF showed a

significant number of plural constructions as opposed to the noun FAMILY which can be explained by semantic differences among collective nouns.

## 4.6  Results from COCA

To obtain a representative sample of the American variety of English, 5O instances have been excerpted from the corpora: 25 instances of the noun FAMILY and 25 instances of the noun STAFF. The two samples have been analyzed by the same system as the previous two samples representing the British variety. The tables and graphs have been created in accordance with the ones used for results from BNC.

If we consider the general hypothesis that American English tends to use the singular rather than the plural then the results are quite surprising. Out of the 25 instances of the noun FAMILY there have been: 12 constructions in which only a singular verb was used, 1 construction with a singular reference, 1 construction with a plural verb, 4 constructions with a plural reference used, 2 constructions with a plural verb and a plural reference, 4 constructions with a singular verb and a plural reference, 1 construction which included a singular verb, a plural verb and a plural reference. The overall percentage of the singular and the plural used is reflected in the graph bellow.
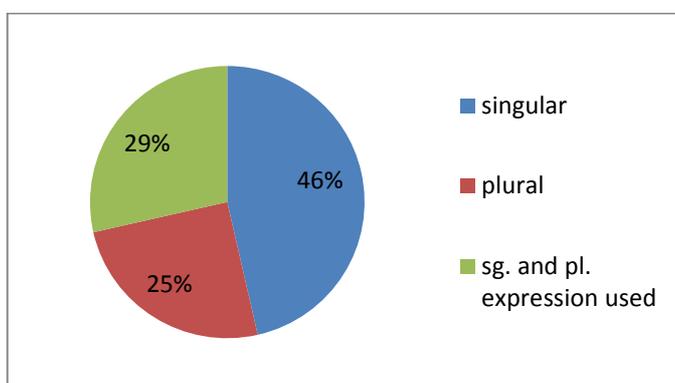


*Graph 4 - Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for sample 3. FAMILY (COCA)*

Out of 25 instances of the noun STAFF there have been: 12 constructions with a singular verb, 9 constructions with a plural verb, 1 construction with 1 plural reference, 2 constructions with a plural verb and a plural reference and 1 construction with a singular verb and a singular reference. The following graph illustrates the considerably high amount of plural constructions:
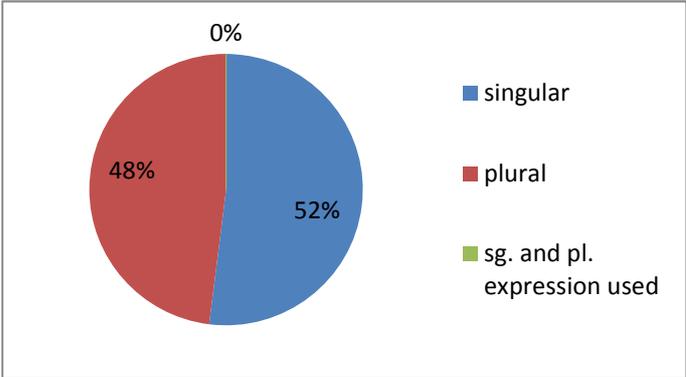


*Graph 5 - Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for sample 4.*
*STAFF (COCA)*

The final graph shows the overall outcome of the research:
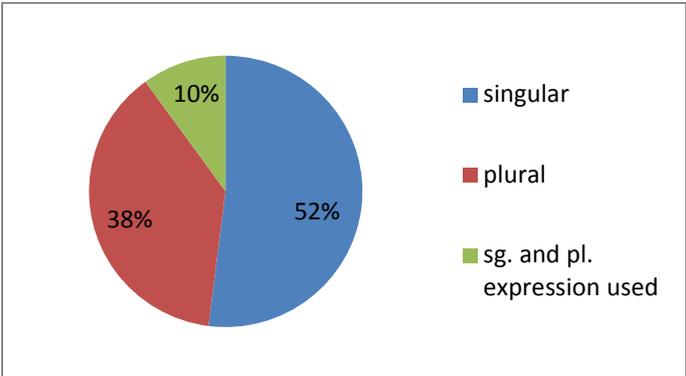


*Graph 6- Number of sg. and pl. agreement in percents for both*
*samples from COCA*

## 4.7  Sample 3.  FAMILY (COCA)

As previously mentioned, the statistical data revealed that besides the expected singular constructions, there were also plural constructions. The detailed table reveals more information.

**FAMILY (COCA)**

| 1 expression of number | | | more expressions of a consistent number | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 expression | | | 2 expressions | | | 3 expressions | | |
| verb | pers. pron. | posses. pron. | v. + posses. pron. | v + pers. pron. | v. + rel. pron | rel. pron.+ v. + pers. pron. | v. + pers. pron. + posses.pron. | |
| 12 | 1 | | | | | | | **SG** |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | | 2 | | | | **PL** |
| 13 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | **Total** |

| more expressions of an inconsistent number | |
|---|---|
| sg. v.+ pl. posses. pron. | 2 |
| sg. v.+ pl. rel. pron. | 2 |
| sg. V. + pl. pers. pron. + pl. V. | 1 |

| Total | 25 |
|---|---|

*Table 12 – Complete data of FAMILY (COCA)*

### 4.7.1  Verbal agreement

There have been in total 13 cases of verbal agreement.

| | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. verb | 13 |
| pl. verb | 1 |
| total | 14 |

*Table 13 - Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in sample 3. FAMILY (COCA)*

The 12 instances with of the singular verb were:

1.  (example 1) [...]  *the defense claims that this **family was** just out for money.*

2.  (example 2) *Now the police officer wasn't home, his **family was**.*

3. (example 3) [...] *story is about how a **family survives** after the young wife and mother dies of tuberculosis.*

4. (example 4) *It stands for power, something your **family knows** nothing about.*

5. (example 5) *The **family has** moved several times* [...]

6. (example 8) *You do it because it's important and because that's what **family's** for.*

7. (example 13) [...] *the origin of Tartit was in one family , but during the rebellion, the **family was** separated.*

8. (example 19) [...] *the nuclear **family is** disappearing from network prime time even faster than in real life.*

9. (example 25) *No **family** unknown to you **throws** bread crumbs for the ducks and **makes** you smile because of* [...]

10. (example 6) *You know the **family** that **gathers** round the hearth on Christmas Eve* [...]

11. (example 7) *The Amish cling to the belief that the **family** that **works** together **stays** together.*

12. (example 14) *The **family** that **cooks** together* [...]

The singular number has been indicated by: the simple present in examples 3(3), 4(4), 9(25), 10(6), 11(7), 12(24); the present or preterite of the verb BE in examples 1(1), 2(2), 7(13), the present progressive in example 8(19); the present perfect in example 5(5). In examples 10(6) (...**family** that **gathers**...), 11(7) (...**family** that **works**...), 12(14) (...family that **cooks**...) the indeterminate relative pronoun *that* was followed by a singular noun. Despite the instances of the plural number (expressed usually by means of reference), the singular number still dominated the sample with the percentage of 46%. As opposed to British English, the singular number that is used here does not reflect the notion of the collective

noun or its animacy. For instance, if the example 2(2) (*Now the police officer wasn't home, his **family was.***) has been used in British English, it could have the plural form (...his **family were**.) and it would regard individual members of the family, which, undoubtedly, does the singular here. The above examples with the noun FAMILY can be thus considered typical examples of how collective nouns in American English form a singular agreement according to the form of the subject.

The only instance of the plural verb was:

1. (example 10) *Mr-R-DAVIDSON: **Family don't** kill family.*

    In this case *family* has two syntactic functions, one of a subject and one of an object. Yet in this case the plural form is necessary as the contextual meaning would not allow a singular construction. *Family* is conceived as a group of individual members and using the singular verb, thereby rendering *family* inanimate, would significantly change the meaning. In other words, the construction could be best rephrased by *Members of family don't kill members of family*.

## 4.7.2 Pronominal agreement

There have been 5 instances of pronominal agreement.

| | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. pers. pron. | |
| sg. possess. pron. | 1 |
| pl. pers. pron. | 2 |
| pl. possess pron. | 2 |
| total | 5 |

*Table 14- Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in sample 3. FAMILY (COCA)*

1. (example 12) *Segrest's mom, Karen Segrest, said she didn't want her **family** to have to go through the stress of ducking police or trying to sell **their** Jonsboro home.*

2. (example 15) *Stories about Lefty in the early days grew to mythical proportions, even within their **family**. **They** heard about how he quit his $6,200-a-year job* [...]

3. (example 17) *Arriving in Arkhangelsk, I met my host **family**, the first of three families I stayed with. **Their** home is a simple four-room flat.*

4. (example 21) *When did **they** become exposed to this kind of attack, the **family**?*

5. (example 22) [...] *the French lettres de cachet system had allowed the royal **family** and **its** cliques to consign to prison* [...]

In examples 1(12) (...***their*** *Jonsboro home*.) and 3(17) (***Their*** *home*...) the plural possessive pronoun agrees with the substantive *family*. In examples 2(15) (***They*** *heard*...) and 4(21) (*When did **they** become*...) the plural personal pronoun forms the plural agreement. Despite the tendency of collective nouns to take the singular forms more frequently than the plural, the plural pronominal agreement can be found more commonly especially if the author intends to stress the individual nature of members of the group. Quirk et al. state that: 'But, as in BrE, plural nouns are often used in AmE to refer to singular collective nouns: The committee *has* not yet decided how *they* should react to the Governor's letter. ' (Quirk et al., 1985: 759) The only singular agreement with a pronoun can be found in example 5(22) where the possessive pronoun *its* is used, we might, however, argue that due its origins, the whole phrase, *the royal family,* relates closely to British English where it usually takes the singular form.

### 4.7.3 Constructions with two or more means expressing number

There have been 7 sentences in the sample in which more than one device indicated the number. The following combinations have been found:

sg. v. + pl. pers. pron. + pl. v. (1)

sg. v. + pl. possess. pron. (2)

sg. v. + pl. rel. pron. (2)

pl. v. + pl. pers. pron. (2)

| | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
| | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | | 5 |
| pl. | | 11 |
| total | | 16 |

*Table 15 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in sample 3. FAMILY (COCA)*

1. (example 11) *People think the **family runs** Coors with an iron fist, but **we don't*** […]

2. (example 6) *[…] I think my **family has** been a big influence. **Their** support has been awesome.*

3. (example 18) *Due to the unique work of an organization called Habitat for Humanity, the Hayes **family is** the most recent in a long line of families able to buy homes of **their** own.*

4. (example 23) *I have money, the best doctors in the world, and a **family who** absolutely **loves** me.*

5. (example 24) *In this exaggerated comedy, a precocious young girl constantly experiences frustration with her anti-intellectual **family who does** not appreciate her love of learning* [...]

6. (example 9) *You make a special point of keeping your awareness as you say goodbye to the **family** , giving hugs and kisses, making eye contact, letting **them** matter to you as much as **they** really **do.***

7. (example 20) [...] *and I quote, " America's family , the Bush **family,"** almost as if **they were** Windsors or Hapsburgs entitled to pass a throne by descent.*

As Quirk et al. and others point out, the constructions with collective nouns in American English frequently use a combination of a singular verb and a plural reference. This phenomenon can be seen in the first three examples. In example 1(11) (*...**family runs**...**we don't**...*) a singular verb is used in a combination with a plural personal pronoun *we* which agrees with the following verb form *don't.* It seems that the major reason for the speaker to use the plural in the second sentence is to emphasize the plurality, the animate nature of the family. The same type of construction is in examples 2(6) (*...**family** has been...**Their**...*) and 3(18) (*...Hayes **family is**...homes of **their** own...*). A very interesting case of how our perception or notion influences the sentential structure are examples 4(23)  (...a **family who** absolutely **loves** me.) and 5(24) (*...anti-intellectual **family who does not appreciate** her love...*). Given that in both examples a singular verb is used, we would presuppose that the relative pronoun which would be much more likely to occur in such construction. What is perhaps most relevant is the semantic nature of the verbs *love* and *appreciate* as, in their connotation, they are both associated with emotions and feelings and thus underline the personal perception of the antecedent *family. In example 7(20) (...the Bush **family,** almost as*

*if **they were** Windsors...)* we can see a construction in which the plural subject complement influences the copula.

## 4.8  Sample 4. STAFF (COCA)

What has been already mentioned is that the number of the plural constructions in this sample was rather unexpected. The following chart shows more detailed data:

**STAFF (COCA)**

| 1 expression of number | | | more expressions of a consistent number | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 expression | | | 2 expressions | | | 3 expressions | | |
| verb | pers. pron. | posses. pron. | v. + posses. pron. | v + pers. pron. | v. + rel. pron | rel. pron.+ v. + pers. pron. | v. + pers. pron. + posses.pron. | |
| 12 | | | 1 | | | | | SG |
| 9 | 1 | | | | 1 | | 1 | PL |
| 21 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Total |

| More expressions of an inconsistent number | |
|---|---|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

| Total | 25 |
|---|---|

*Table 16 – Complete data of STAFF (COCA)*

## 4.8.1  Verbal agreement

In the sample there have been 21 constructions in which verbal concord occurred.

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. verb | 12 |
| pl. verb | 9 |
| total | 21 |

*Table 17 - Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in sample 4. STAFF (COCA)*

1. (example 1) *HORNE: Most of the time you're doing whatever the **staff wants** you to do at the time.*

2. (example 3) *" At some yards, the **staff changes** every six months, "* [...]

3. (example 6) [...] *another center, where **staff is** not aware of the child's health status* [...]

4. (example 7) *On occasion, the **staff gripes** at the umpires, which rankles* [...]

5. (example 8) *So, as you know, ex-government hand, you know what **staff means**.*

6. (example 11) *And, B, their **staff is** really too small, and, C* [...]

7. (example 12) *The **staff** gripped by Vaishravana, celestial king of the north, **supports** the parasol of victory.*

8. (example 14) *His **staff is** heavy with Ph.D.s in mechanical engineering* [...]

9. (example 18) [...] *even though the commission's **staff wasn't** sure the utilities had saved as much energy as they claimed.*

10. (example 19) [...] *the Mariners' PR **staff has** issued more than 150 credentials to members of the Japanese media* [...]

11. (example 20) *Even in private, **staff is** still staff .*

12. (example 24) *The Close Up **staff** never **takes** positions on the issues.*

Out of these instances the singular number has been indicated by means of the simple present in examples 1(1), 2(3), 4(7), 5(8), 7(12), 12(24); the present or preterite of the verb BE in examples 3(6), 6(11), 8(14), 9(18), 11(20) and the present perfect tense in example 10(19). In these examples we can see the stereotypical use of the collective noun in American English as it has been described by English grammarians - the grammatical concord is applied and the number of the verb yields to the grammatical number of the

subject. On the contrary, the sample has revealed a significant number of plural constructions which means that the substantive STAFF could in some cases succumb to the notional agreement to a certain extent as well. It would be, however, very difficult to find a pattern of such behavior. In some cases the reference to a singular group is clear such as in example 6(11) (*And, B, their **staff is** really too small…*) but in example 8(14) (*His **staff is** heavy with Ph.D.s in mechanical engineering…*) the plural number would seem more logical if the notional concord had been applied. In example 11(20) (…***staff is** still staff.*) the noun *staff* functions not only as a subject but also as a subject complement, both of which result in a singular copula.

In the sample there have been 9 constructions with a plural verb:

1. (example 2) *Members come in and the **staff know** far more than any of the members* [...]

2. (example 10) [...] *director of Alcoholism Treatment Services in Nassau County, New York, surveyed his own **staff** and discovered that at least 80 to 85 percent **were** raised in alcoholic homes.*

3. (example 13) *Rather, he said, CDC **staff were** en route while requests were being formalized.*

4. (example 16) [...] *says Mike Shaw, curator of fishes at Sea World in San Diego, aquaria **staff have** learned that  sharks are a very diverse group of animals.*

5. (example 17) [...] *competition bleeding on the side of the road, he didn't enjoy watching his **staff cower**.*

6. (example 22) *Project nursing **staff were** educated on data collection* [...]

7. (example 23) *The Red Cross opened 100 shelters on Oahu and Kauai, and volunteer **staff were** being flown in from California.*

8. (example 25) *The **staff** of Lifeline Express **have** given Dur (ph) and Tseng (ph) a farewell gift.*

9. (example 15) *It is vital that all **staff see** beyond the label of' dementia' to work with patients and their families.*

The plural number of the constructions has been indicated by: the simple present in examples  1(2), 5(17), 9(15); the preterite of the verb BE in examples 2(10), 3(13), 6(22); the present perfect in example 8(25), 4(16), the past progressive in example 7(23). Considering the statistical data of the sample, where 48% percent formed plural constructions, it is important to note that this high frequency of the plural in American English has not been confirmed by any other study and therefore the research would have been more accurate if more samples were provided. Despite this fact, the number of the plural constructions has been considerably high and we can thus claim that the noun STAFF is more likely to take the plural number provided that the animate aspect of the noun is being stressed and the individuals are regarded separately such as in example 8(25) (*The **staff** of Lifeline Express **have given** Dur (ph) and Tseng (ph) a  farewell gift.*). In example 9(15) (…all staff see..) the plural number is introduced by the predeterminer *all*.

### 4.8.2 Pronominal agreement

There has been one example where one pronominal reference was used.

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. pers. pron. |  |
| sg. possess. pron. |  |
| pl. pers. pron. | 1 |
| pl. possess pron. |  |
| total | 1 |

*Table 18 - Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in sample 4. STAFF (COCA)*

1. (example 4) *The health district **staff** needed a decision-making tool that would enable **them** to quickly decide whether to order* [...]

In this example the noun *staff* agrees with the personal pronoun *them* which functions as an object of the clause.

### 4.8.3 Constructions with two or more means expressing number

There have been 3 sentences in which more than one expression indicated the number. the combinations were following:

pl. v. + pl. pers. pron. + pl. possess. pron. (1)

pl. v. + pl. rel. pron. (1)

sg. v. + sg. possess. pron. (1)

|  | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
|  | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | 2 |  |
| pl. | 7 |  |
| total | 9 |  |

*Table 19 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in sample 4. STAFF (COCA)*

1. (example 5) *A good resource for customer feedback is your **staff** . Through **their** daily interactions with customers, **they are** probably loaded with information **they've** gathered from talking with customers.*

2. (example 9) *The camera moves back to the **staff** , **who watch**, obviously influenced.*

3. (example 21) *The move requires a completely new or retrained **staff** that **is** willing to shift **its** energies to wooing customers* [...]

In example 1(5) the plural is expressed by a possessive pronoun *their*, and two plural personal pronouns which agree with the following verbs. Example 2(9) shows another example of the collective noun STAFF being regarded as an animate entity as the referring expression is a relative pronoun which singularly connects with personal antecedents. The plural number of the verb is then a result of the agreement with the relative pronoun. In example 3(21) *staff* takes the singular form which is expressed by the singular verb form *is* and the possessive pronoun *its* referring back to the noun.

## 4.9 Summary of results from COCA

In all 50 instances, there have been 66 words that indicated the number of the agreement.

There were 35 verbs indicating the number:

|          | number of expressions |
|----------|----------------------:|
| sg. verb | 25 |
| pl. verb | 10 |
| total    | 35 |

*Table 20- Number of expressions reflecting verbal agreement in both samples from COCA*

There were 6 pronouns indicating the number:

|  | number of expressions |
|---|---|
| sg. pers. pron. |  |
| sg. possess. pron. | 1 |
| pl. pers. pron. | 3 |
| pl. possess pron. | 2 |
| total | 6 |

*Table 21 - Number of expressions reflecting pronominal agreement in both samples from COCA*

There were in total 25 various expressions that indicated the number in clauses or sentences where more means of expression were used. These were either consistent (expressing the same number) or inconsistent (expressing the singular and the plural number).

|  | number of expressions | |
|---|---|---|
|  | consistent | inconsistent |
| sg. | 2 | 5 |
| pl. | 7 | 11 |
| total | 9 | 16 |

*Table 22 - Number of multiple consistent or multiple inconsistent means of expressing number in both samples from COCA*

The number of the agreement in the samples has been indicated by a verb form, a pronoun or a combination of both. The referring expressions constituted of personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and relative pronouns. There were no reflexive pronouns in the samples. Despite the original claim, that in American English the plural is used rarely, the samples have revealed a significant number of plural constructions.  As has been expected, in plural constructions pronominal concord occurred frequently. The singular prevailed the plural in both samples, the number of plural agreement was, however, unexpectedly high especially in sample with the noun STAFF. The high frequency of the plural could indicate that notional concord plays a role even in American English.
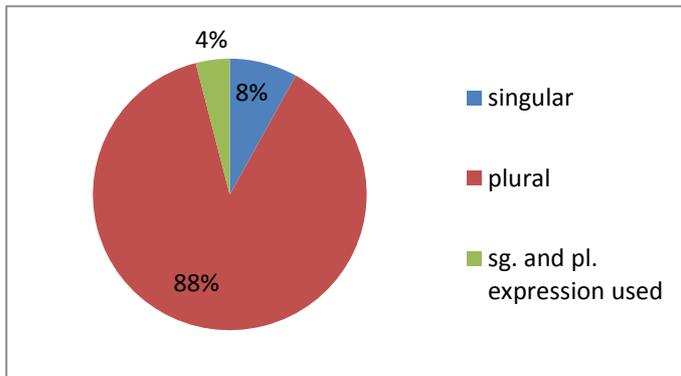
## 4.10 Control samples

It has been already noted and further discussed that the prevalence of plural constructions with the collective noun STAFF has been considerably significant in BNC as well as in COCA. This difference that has been noted between the two collective nouns chosen for research suggests that the collective noun STAFF is much more likely to agree with a plural verb or a plural pronoun not only in British English, where the notional concord is applied, but also in American English, where collective nouns usually take the singular form. I have also mentioned previously that to confirm such a hypothesis, a more extensive research would have to be done. There is, however, an easily accessible way of creating a control sample that could verify whether the statistical data indicating such a hypothesis are valid.

To create a control sample, we have decided to excerpt 4 samples by exactly the same method that has been described in chapter Material and Method, that means 2 samples with the collective nouns FAMILY and STAFF from BNC and 2 same samples from COCA. The only difference in the method is that we have searched only for the noun FAMILY/STAFF co-occurring with the verb *have* or its singular form *has*. The aim of the research was then to find out how many constructions will be singular or plural and whether the result will be at least partly identical with the previous research.

The results from BNC were following:



0%

singular

36%

64%

plural

sg. and pl.
expression used
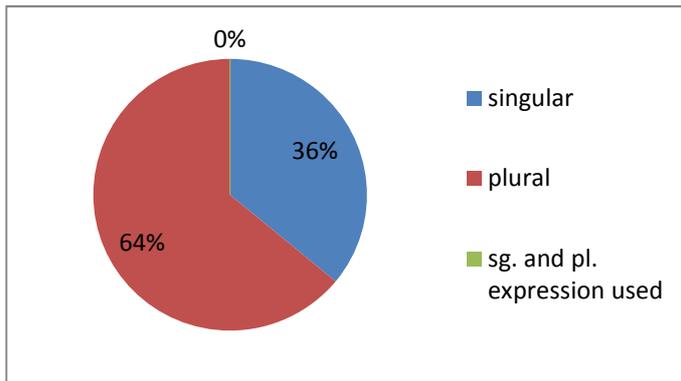
*Graph 7- Control sample 1. FAMILY (BNC) have vs. has*



4%

8%

singular

plural

88%

sg. and pl.
expression used

*Graph 8 - Control sample 2. STAFF (BNC) have vs. has*

The results from COCA were:



0%

singular

plural

100%

sg. and pl.
expression used
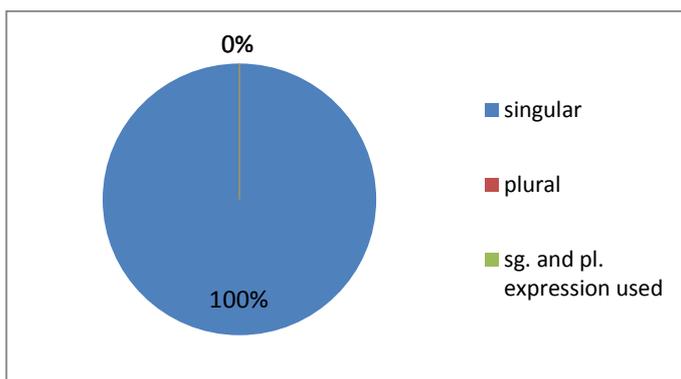
*Graph 9 -Control sample 3. FAMILY (COCA) have vs. has*
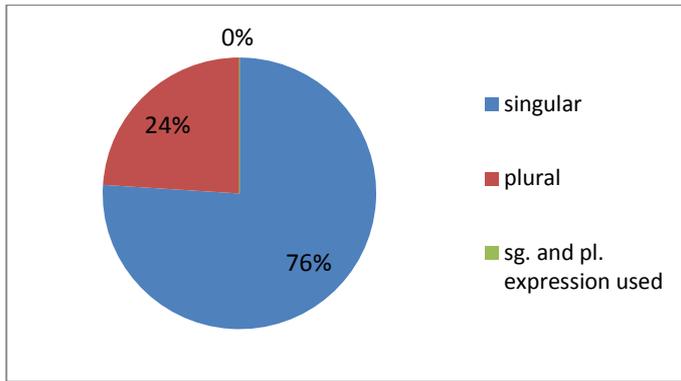
*Graph 10 - Control sample 4. STAFF (COCA) have vs. has*

The following table presents the comparison of the original two samples with the two control samples:

| | BNC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FAMILY | | STAFF | |
| | original sample | control sample | original sample | control sample |
| SINGULAR | 64% | 36% | 8% | 8% |
| PLURAL | 32% | 64% | 92% | 88% |
| INCONSISTENT NUMBER | 4% | 0% | 0% | 4% |

*Table 23- Comparison of control samples with original samples in BNC*

| COCA | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FAMILY | | STAFF | |
| | original sample | control sample | original sample | control sample |
| SINGULAR | 46% | 100% | 52% | 76% |
| PLURAL | 25% | 0% | 48% | 24% |
| INCONSISTENT NUMBER | 29% | 0% | 0% | 0% |

*Table 24 - Comparison of control samples with original samples in COCA*

What is obvious from the tables is that in British English the noun FAMILY can equally take the singular as well as the plural since the control sample has shown an opposite tendency. Despite the varying data for the noun FAMILY, the data revealed by the control sample for the noun STAFF have confirmed the evident tendency of STAFF to take the plural form.

In the control sample of American English the noun FAMILY was in found only in construction with the verb form *has* or a singular referring expression unlike in the original sample. The data for the noun STAFF have also shown differences between the original sample where STAFF was in 48% plural and the control sample where it was only 24%.

Overall, it has been confirmed that in British English there is a difference between the collective nouns FAMILLY and STAFF. FAMILY can take both singular and plural form whereas STAFF is more likely to take the plural form. In American English both collective nouns are more likely to take the singular form but can be also used in plural constructions. Whether the noun STAFF is more likely to occur in plural constructions than FAMILY would have to be verified by further research. The control sample with the noun FAMILY in COCA has been

also closer to the interpretation of English grammarians because no plural constructions

occurred.

# 5  Conclusion

The overall number of 50 instances excerpted from BNC has served as a representative sample of British English and the 50 instance excerpted from COCA as a sample of American English. The original hypothesis, that collective nouns tends to take the singular or the plural number on the basis of the notional concord, has been confirmed. The singular or the plural constructions occurred according to whether the noun was perceived as a unified group or whether individual members of the groups were addressed. The evidence of the data from BNC shows that in 36% cases the singular was used and in 62% the plural was used. This result is, however, also influenced by significant prevalence of the plural in the second sample which has been also confirmed by the control sample. In British English we can thus find various semantic differences among collective nouns and those are consequently reflected in the notional concord. Namely, the control sample has shown that the collective noun STAFF is more likely to occur in plural constructions than the noun FAMILY.

The sample of 50 instances excerpted from COCA included 52% of singular constructions and 38% of plural constructions. The original hypothesis, that in American English the collective nouns tend to succumb primarily to the grammatical concord, has not been confirmed due to the considerably high number of plural constructions. This particular problem may be, however, thought of as a result of the semantic difference between FAMILY and STAFF, more precisely the tendency of the noun STAFF to take plural, which has been also spotted in British English. The control sample has not shown such frequency of the plural used with the noun STAFF but has confirmed that plural construction is certainly

possible. Despite this issue, the singular concord prevailed in American English as has been expected.

The referring expressions which occurred in the samples were personal pronouns, possessive pronouns and relative pronouns *which* and *who*. Other possible referential device, a reflexive pronoun, has not been found in the material.  There have been no notable preferences of the two varieties regarding the referring expressions but in American English one type of construction has been more frequent, namely the singular verb with a plural reference.

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# 7  Resumé

Bakalářská práce se zabývá shodou a odkazovacími prostředky podmětu a přísudku po kolektivech v britské a americké angličtině. Kolektiva se definují jako podstatná jména, která se 'konstruují buď jako singulár, nebo jako plurál podle toho, zda se chápou jako celky nebo zda převládá představa jedinců, z nichž se tyto celky skládají. Singulárová konstrukce je gramatická (podle formy), kdežto plurálová je sémantická (podle významu: constructio ad sensum).'(Dušková et al. (2006: 44) A právě rozdíl v používání shody podle formy a shody podle významu v britské a americké angličtině je předmětem výzkumu. Na základě literatury se dá říci, že v americké angličtině je gramatická shoda značně používanější. To znamená, že podmět tvoří shodu s přísudkem na základě čísla podmětu, jako např. ve větě

*The family has moved several times* [...] (COCA, WashPost 2011). Podmět, tedy *family*, je v singuláru, stejně jako přísudek *has moved*. Naopak tomu může být v britské angličtině, pokud je kladen důraz na individuální charakter skupiny, např. ve větě *His family were enjoying wonderful home-grown vegetables.* (BNC, C9R 1559) Přesto, že je podmět v singuláru, je shoda se slovesem plurálová, protože touto konstrukcí autor docílí toho, že rodina je vnímána jako skupina členů, a ne jako jednotka. Shoda s kolektivy se může projevit dvojím způsobem. Buď shodou se slovesným tvarem, nebo shodou s odkazovacími prostředky, tedy zájmeny. Pokud se jedná o shodu s přísudkem, slovesné tvary, které vyjadřují číslo, jsou: prostý prézent, préterit i prézent slovesa *(to) be*  a perfektum. Jedná-li se o shodu s odkazovacími prostředky, mohou číslo udávat osobní zájmena, přivlastňovací zájmena, reflexiva a vztažná zájmena. Vztažná zájmena jsou pak specifická tím, že přímo odkazují k životnosti větného antecedentu, v tomto případě tedy kolektiva.

V druhé části práce byly použity dva korpusy. První - British National Corpus, ze kterého byly vyjmuty dva vzorky s doklady substantiv FAMILY a STAFF představující použití kolektiv v britské angličtině. Z druhého korpusu – COCA byly taktéž vyjmuty dva stejné vzorky reprezentující americkou angličtinu. Každý vzorek měl 25 dokladů, celkem bylo pro každou variantu angličtiny použito 50 dokladů, celkem pro obě varianty 100 dokladů. Metodu vzorkování lze nastínit v několika hlavních krocích. Nejprve byl zadán do korpusu dotaz, který záměrně vyhledával daná slova jako substantiva. Následně byly ze vzorku vyřazeny konstrukce, ve kterých nebylo kolektivum v podmětové funkci a také konstrukce, ve kterých nebylo znatelné číslo shody.

V třetí části práce byly vyhodnoceny a analyzovány výsledky ze vzorků. V prvních dvou vzorcích z BNC byly výsledky následující. V prvním vzorku se substantivem FAMILY se vyskytovalo 32% singulárových konstrukcí a 64% plurálových konstrukcí. V druhém vzorku se substantivem STAFF pak pouze 8% singulárových konstrukcí a 92% plurálových. Celkem se obě podstatná jména v BNC dohromady vyskytla  v 36% jako singulár a v 62% jako plurál. Ve vzorcích bylo, dle hypotézy, mnoho případů shody podle smyslu neboli shody plurálové sémantické. V některých případech byla shoda ovlivněna dalšími faktory, jakými může být přítomnost sponového slovesa, predeterminátoru, nebo premodifikátoru, např. v příkladu (example 7) *And all the family live there?* (BNC, H94 3761). V mnoha větách se vyskytovalo více prostředků shody, např. vztažné zájmeno se shodným slovesem, nebo osobní zájmeno se shodným slovesem. V těchto případech je důležité podotknout, že se jedná spíše o samotnou shodu odkazovacího zájmena a slovesného přísudku spíše než o shodu slovesa se samotným kolektivem. Jak už bylo naznačeno, ve vzorcích se objevila značná inklinace kolektiva STAFF k plurálovým konstrukcím. Ta může mít původ v jeho sémantickém významu

a kontextu, v jakém se používá. Rozhodně lze tvrdit, že kolektivum STAFF je vnímáno spíše životně, než neživotně.

V druhých dvou vzorcích z COCA byly výsledky neshodné s předpokládanou hypotézou, že v americké angličtině se bude vyskytovat plurálová shoda pouze zřídka. Ve třetím vzorku se substantivem FAMILY se vyskytlo 46% singulárových konstrukcí a 25% plurálových. Ve čtvrtém vzorku se substantivem STAFF se vyskytlo 48% singulárových konstrukcí a dokonce 52% plurálových. Celkem se obě kolektiva dohromady vyskytla v 52% jako singulár a v 38% jako plurál. Jak bylo předpokládáno, v americké angličtině se projevila tendence používat plurálové odkazovací prostředky. Ty podobně jako u shody podle smyslu, slouží ke zdůraznění individuality členů skupiny. Z tohoto důvodu byl ve vzorku i vysoký počet konstrukcí se slovesem v singuláru v kombinaci se zájmenem v plurálu.  Jak už bylo zmíněno, výrazný počet plurálových konstrukcí ve vzorku s kolektivem STAFF může mít sémantické opodstatnění, bylo by však třeba většího počtu vzorků a dalšího výzkumu.

# 8 Appendix

## 8.1 Sample 1. FAMILY (BNC)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | K5M | 1503 | The family of Arthur Thompson , sen , has had to face up to many tragedies . |
| 2 | K1C | 987 | The **family** of a woman who died after washing her husband 's asbestos-contaminated clothes , **have issued** a write for damages from his former employer . |
| 3 | C9R | 1559 | His **family were** enjoying wonderful home-grown vegetables . |
| 4 | FSN | 1155 | Steven 's **family** , I 'm afraid , **has** no Silver at all , but **they are** very practical . |
| 5 | K4V | 1685 | Middlesbrough **family is** now complete and settling into a new house after months of anxiety and fears for the health of newly arrived triplets . |
| 6 | ADB | 213 | The royal **family** persistently **talks** in the [ common good ] language of the fifties so unfashionable among those who held power throughout the eighties . |
| 7 | H94 | 3761 | [ And all the **family live** there ? ] she breathed happily . |
| 8 | EBR | 1527 | Not surprisingly , her main aim is to move back to the area where her **family live** -- preferably to buy a house there . |
| 9 | AL3 | 171 | How '**s** your **family** ? |
| 10 | HEC | 160 | But our **family was** too young to me in the war like me brother . |
| 11 | FLE | 97 | I 'm not er a great fan of the monarchy , although that I would say that I come from a family **which is** , devoted a large portion of **its** life in service and work to the royal family . |
| 12 | HWK | 776 | The family **was** an illegitimate branch of the Yorkshire Hoptons , being descended from Sir Robert Swillington by his mistress Joan Hopton . |
| 13 | FCT | 194 | [...] the medical cause of the death was perfectly well known to the **family** -- indeed I had sent **them** a copy of the pathologist 's report . |
| 14 | EA2 | 211 | [...] when the baby is about six weeks old to develop a social profile of the family and decide how best to approach **them** to offer a venous blood test [...] |
| 15 | G3F | 999 | c ) nuclear family : once the Jones have children , the family becomes a " nuclear " one . |
| 16 | ECF | 3277 | The Ferretti **family have** a reputation for providing good food and friendly service . |
| 17 | AB3 | 82 | The **family** in the song **is** the circle of friends , where it almost seemed [...] |
| 18 | CRR | 716 | The judge of the regality court of Lennox was James Graham , an advocate closely connected to the Montrose **family** and **its** interests [...] |
| 19 | ABC | 981 | Our **family has caught** dolphins since 1919 and we want to preserve the tradition . |
| 20 | AND | 1409 | The extended school **family includes**: parents , the PTA , former parents , former pupils , staff both teaching and non-teaching [...] |
| 21 | CL1 | 1324 | There 's the discipline for one thing : our **family wasn't** too bad compared to others I know , but , generally , the West Indian **family is** very , very strict . |
| 22 | H7E | 493 | By this time the **family was** based at Fortitude Valley , Brisbane [...] |
| 23 | C96 | 1364 | The fish are thriving in their stable , controlled environment and the Emery **family are** able to view **their** fish all year round . |
| 24 | GTH | 1004 | Tiltman was educated at Charterhouse School , where at the age of thirteen he was offered a place at Oxford University which the **family was** unable to take up . |

## 8.2 Sample 2. STAFF (BNC)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ECN | 992 | [...] they hold ideas about discipline and order that are markedly more [ traditional ] than those they believe the **staff hold**. |
| 2 | CH2 | 229 | When we push our trolleys round the store , the **staff sing** Strangers In The Night . |
| 3 | EC5 | 612 | Security **staff are** available 24 hours a day in the Richmond Building Reception [...] |
| 4 | CFW | 685 | BGS **staff carry out** some of these programmes ; others are cooperative projects between university groups and BGS , or in which BGS **staff supervise** research students . |
| 5 | K75 | 657 | If he took more **staff** on and **they were** say filling up provisions , putting the pies out every day is taking the department forward , it 's an everyday task . |
| 6 | J3P | 227 | [...] there 's a specific training grant that you now get to ensure that your training staff , your , your residential **staff get** trained . |
| 7 | FAH | 1806 | The functional managers are responsible for choosing the right **staff** , for instructing **them** and for the result with regard to quality , quantity and cost . |
| 8 | HBM | 2012 | At Wester Hailes a small support group was set up in advance of the assessment to advise **staff** on what would be required of **them** . |
| 9 | K97 | 17516 | Bowled over : Supermarket **staff plan** a marathon bowling bash at Megabowl on Sefton Retail Park , Netherton on November 15 . |
| 10 | AAY | 18 | Once the instruction is given , you will be impressed by the speed and enthusiasm shown by our sales **staff who are** so vital to the success of Adkin . |
| 11 | EDT | 107 | The **staff** that **plays** together [...] |
| 12 | K55 | 7369 | **Staff** at Cornell College **were** astounded by the generosity of the unexpected bequest . |
| 13 | KRM | 1016 | As for the **staff** , **they 're going** on to new jobs . |
| 14 | HC2 | 69 | You 've got to establish the trust that **staff are** delivering what matters and what the public wants . |
| 15 | B3D | 216 | Workbooks are also useful aids in the small library where not many **staff are** available to take part in library user education . |
| 16 | CK0 | 1188 | The dining-room **staff were** getting impatient . |
| 17 | JYN | 608 | [...] different **staff use** different techniques , some people ha have drawn on a whole variety of things [...] |
| 18 | K1D | 2563 | Adam took his GCSEs four years early and **staff** at St Hugh 's College Oxford **were** so impressed by his brilliance that **they** offered him a place . |
| 19 | AKU | 347 | [ The **staff** of the bank **have stayed** in two-star hotels , not as expensive as many in the town have used , ] insists Attali . |
| 20 | G2L | 21 | A primary aim of regional organisation is that **staff develop** an intimate knowledge of the coast , countryside , historic houses and parks for which **they are** responsible . |
| 21 | AM7 | 527 | Increasingly , the teaching **staff participate** fully , but the governors and senior management might consider broadening the process [...] |
| 22 | F7F | 1013 | [...] but if the **staff produces** a comment are they going to sign that and also sign the bottom or are we just gonna leave it that the parent will be able [...] |
| 23 | AAL | 1008 | Mr Fowler has conceded that about 100 higher executive officer posts are threatened , but **staff fear** more jobs could be lost . |
| 24 | GXE | 59 | Several **staff have expressed** concern about the high level of workplace stress **they feel** exists in some sections of the Library . |

## 8.3 Sample 3. FAMILY (COCA)

| 1 | SPOK | ABC_GMA | And finally, the defense claims that this **family was** just out for money. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | SPOK | CNN_LiveSun | Now the police officer wasn't home, his **family was**. |
| 3 | SPOK | NPR_FreshAir | Set in Appalachia in the 1930s, the story is about how a **family survives** after the young wife and mother dies of tuberculosis. |
| 4 | FIC | Scholastic | It stands for power, something your **family knows** nothing about. |
| 5 | NEWS | WashPost | The **family has** moved several times, twice because of complaints from neighbors [...] |
| 6 | MAG | NatlReview | You know the **family** that **gathers** round the hearth on Christmas Eve while Father re-reads [...] |
| 7 | MAG | America | The Amish cling to the belief that the **family that works** together **stays** together. |
| 8 | SPOK | NPR_TellMore | You do it because it's important and because that's what **family 's** for. |
| 9 | ACAD | ABAJournal | You make a special point of keeping your awareness as you say goodbye to the **family ,** giving hugs and kisses, making eye contact, letting **them** matter to you as much as **they** really do. |
| 10 | SPOK | CBS_48Hours | MAHER: What was her reaction? Mr-R-DAVIDSON: **Family don't** kill family. What was he thinking? |
| 11 | NEWS | Denver | People think the **family runs** Coors with an iron fist, but **we don't**, " said Bill. |
| 12 | NEWS | Atlanta | Segrest's mom, Karen Segrest, said she didn't want her **family to** have to go through the stress of ducking police or trying to sell **their** Jonsboro home. |
| 13 | ACAD | AnthropolQ | Fadimata also explained that the origin of Tartit was " in one family **,** but during the rebellion, the **family was** separated " |
| 14 | NEWS | Denver | The **family # that cooks** together # Old recipes have the power to bring a family together, even after the cook is long gone. |
| 15 | NEWS | Atlanta | Stories about Lefty in the early days grew to mythical proportions, even within their **family . # They** heard about how he quit his $6,200-a-year job at a Ford assembly plant[...] |
| 16 | ACAD | SportBehavior | As one participant stated, " I think my **family has** been a big influence. **Their** support has been awesome. |
| 17 | ACAD | PSAJournal | Arriving in Arkhangelsk, I met my host **family ,** the first of three families I stayed with. **Their** home is a simple four-room flat. |
| 18 | SPOK | CBS_Morning | Due to the unique work of an organization called Habitat for Humanity, the Hayes **family is** the most recent in a long line of families able to buy homes of **their** own. |
| 19 | NEWS | NYTimes | The organization reports that the nuclear **family is** disappearing from network prime time even faster than in real life. |
| 20 | SPOK | NPR_Morning | [...] and I quote, " America's **family ,** the Bush family, " almost as if **they** were Windsors or Hapsburgs entitled to pass a throne by descent. |
| 21 | SPOK | MSNBC_Matt | When was the security on the judges family dropped? When did **they** become exposed to this kind of attack, the **family ?** |
| 22 | ACAD | HistoryToday | [...] proof of royal despotism: the French lettres de cachet system had allowed the royal **family** and **its** cliques to consign to prison or (less commonly) to an asylum [...] |
| 23 | MAG | TownCountry | [...] I have money, the best doctors in the world, and a **family who** absolutely **loves** me. |
| 24 | ACAD | RoeperReview | In this exaggerated comedy, a precocious young girl constantly experiences frustration with her anti-intellectual **family who does** not appreciate her love of learning. |
| 25 | FIC | Bk:SumFortyTalesFrom | No **family unknown** to you **throws** bread crumbs for the ducks and makes you smile [...] |

## 8.4 Sample 4. STAFF (COCA)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1994 | CBS_Morning | HORNE: Most of the time you're doing whatever the **staff wants** you to do at the time. |
| 2 | 1995 | CBS_Morning | Members come in and the **staff know** far more than any of the members. |
| 3 | 1991 | USAToday | " At some yards, the **staff changes** every six months, " Jobson said. " Not at Eric's. |
| 4 | 1997 | EnvironHealth | The health district **staff** needed a decision-making tool that would enable **them** to quickly decide whether to order [...] |
| 5 | 2008 | Essence | A good resource for customer feedback is your **staff** . Through **their** daily interactions with customers, **they** are probably loaded with information they've gathered from talking with customers. |
| 6 | 2008 | EnvironHealth | [...] child is excluded from one DCC parents may send them to another center, where **staff is** not aware of the child's health status [...] |
| 7 | 2001 | Atlanta | On occasion, the **staff gripes** at the umpires, which rankles some opposing coaches [...] |
| 8 | 1990 | CNN_Crossfire | So, as you know, ex-government hand, you know what **staff means.** |
| 9 | 1991 | Mov:JFK | The camera moves back to the **staff , who watch**, obviously influenced. |
| 10 | 1997 | Humanist | [...] director of Alcoholism Treatment Services in Nassau County, New York, surveyed his own **staff** and discovered that at least 80 to 85 percent **were** raised in alcoholic homes. |
| 11 | 2001 | ABC_GMA | And, B, their **staff is** really too small, and, C, they have to submit these things. |
| 12 | 1998 | SkyTelescope | Left: The **staff** gripped by Vaishravana, celestial king of the north, **supports** the parasol of victory. |
| 13 | 2006 | Atlanta | Rather, he said, CDC **staff were** en route while requests were being formalized. |
| 14 | 2001 | MechanicalEng | His **staff is** heavy with Ph.D.s in mechanical engineering and lighter on electrical engineering doctorates. |
| 15 | 2010 | NursingOlderPeople | It is vital that all **staff see** beyond the label of' dementia' to work with patients and **their** families. |
| 16 | 1994 | Bioscience | [...] says Mike Shaw, curator of fishes at Sea World in San Diego, aquaria **staff have** learned that " sharks are a very diverse group of animals. |
| 17 | 2008 | Bk:SweetTrouble | [...] competition bleeding on the side of the road, he didn't enjoy watching his **staff cower**. |
| 18 | 2010 | SanFranChron | [...] commissioners started issuing rewards to the utilities, even though the commission's **staff wasn't** sure the utilities had saved as much energy as they claimed. |
| 19 | 2001 | Chicago | [...] the Mariners' PR **staff has** issued more than 150 credentials to members of the Japanese media since spring training [...] |
| 20 | 2007 | Atlantic | Even in private, **staff is** still staff . |
| 21 | 1996 | NYTimes | The move requires a completely new or retrained **staff** that **is** willing to shift **its** energies to wooing customers with detailed explanations [...] |
| 22 | 2007 | OrthoNursing | Project nursing **staff were** educated on data collection and study protocols and provided support. |
| 23 | 1992 | AssocPress | The Red Cross opened 100 shelters on Oahu and Kauai, and volunteer **staff were** being flown in from California. |
| 24 | 1993 | SocialStudies | The Close Up **staff** never **takes** positions on the issues. |
| 25 | 2003 | CNN_Global | The **staff** of Lifeline Express **have given** Dur (ph) and Tseng (ph) a a farewell gift. |