Paucity: where is the upper bound?  
(joint work with Paul Marty, ZAS)  

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Paucals have been treated as a number category alongside singular-dual-plural (e.g. Corbett 2001, Harbour 2014), but one whose exact properties are still poorly understood – they rarely show bona-fide agreement on verbs/adjectives, and they seem to involve the notion of an 'upper bound' (e.g. 6 or Miller's magical number seven), even though no other natural language number category involves an upper bound. Rather than postulating yet another feature to handle paucals, we raise the possibility of a distinction between morphosemantics and morphopragmatics, and propose that the upper-bound readings of paucals come from pragmatics, but that their semantics is 'at least two'. In order to show how this can be plausible we present a case study of the English quantifier a couple, and demonstrate experimentally that it patterns differently from expressions like between two and six, and that in such experiments, speakers allow it to felicitously refer to quantities as high as twelve (similar possibilities are likely for German ein paar). This opens the possibility for an analysis of paucals quite generally as lacking a semantically defined upper-bound, and in turn invites a re-examination of the role of pragmatics in the contributing to the use and meaning of inflectional categories – acknowledging, importantly, that there remains a great deal to be done.