Codon Usage Patterns in Cytochrome Oxidase I Across Multiple Insect Orders

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Abstract. Synonymous codon usage bias is determined by a combination of mutational biases, selection at the level of translation, and genetic drift. In a study of mtDNA in insects, we analyzed patterns of codon usage across a phylogeny of 88 insect species spanning 12 orders. We employed a likelihood-based method for estimating levels of codon bias and determining major codon preference that removes the possible effects of genome nucleotide composition bias. Three questions are addressed: (1) How variable are codon bias levels across the phylogeny? (2) How variable are major codon preferences? and (3) Are there phylogenetic constraints on codon bias or preference? There is high variation in the level of codon bias values among the 88 taxa, but few readily apparent phylogenetic patterns. Bias level shifts within the lepidopteran genus *Papilio* are most likely a result of population size effects. Shifts in major codon preference occur across the tree in all of the amino acids in which there was bias of some level. The vast majority of changes involves double-preference models, however, and shifts between single preferred codons within orders occur only 11 times. These shifts among codons in double-preference models are phylogenetically conservative.

Key words: Cytochrome oxidase I — Codon bias — Phylogeny

Introduction

Codon bias is the unequal usage of synonymous codons within amino acid families. The pattern was first described by Grantham et al. (1981) and has been ascribed to several potential causes. First, codon usage can be influenced by genome compositional constraints and mutational biases, as seen in mammalian (D'Onofrio et al. 1991; Karlin and Mrazek 1996; but see Smith and Eyre-Walker 2001), protozoan (Musto et al. 1999), and endosymbiotic bacterial (Wernegreen and Moran 1999) genomes. Second, selection among synonymous codons for either translational efficiency or translational accuracy can result in bias, as seen in bacterial, fungal, and insect genes (Ikemura 1982; Sharpe and Cowe 1991; Powell and Moriyama 1997). This selection is a result of the relationship between local tRNA abundance and major codon preference, in which a particular codon of an amino acid family pairs most optimally with the most abundant tRNA (Bulmer 1988; Ikemura 1992). Such optimal pairing of codons and tRNAs will increase translation speed (translational efficiency) and decrease amino acid misincorporation (translational accuracy) (Akashi 1994). Third, codon usage can be determined by a combination of mutational biases, selection, and genetic drift (Bulmer 1991; Sharp and Li 1986), in what is known as the mutation–selection–drift theory of codon bias.

Comparing codon usage patterns among species and among genes, including bias levels and major codon preferences, can help in clarifying the causes underlying observed codon bias. While bias levels are believed to be generally conserved across closely

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related taxa (Powell and Moriyama 1997), exceptions have been noted in *Drosophila* and related to population size differences among species (Akashi 1995). As the mutation–selection–drift theory of bias posits that genetic drift and selection pressure on major codons will be determinants of bias levels (Akashi 1997, Bulmer 1991), population size differences among species may result in variation in bias. As well, differences in mutational biases among species may result in variation in levels of bias. In comparing bias levels among taxa, then, care must be taken not to accredit all noticeable variation to selective differences. Major codon preferences are seen to be conserved across related taxa (Kreitman and Antezana 1999) but do shift across distantly related lineages (e.g., Sharp 1989). Whether variation in codon preferences across taxa is due primarily to selection or mutational biases is also unclear. This question can be resolved with polymorphism and divergence data for preferred and unpreferred mutations (Akashi 1995), but such an analysis is not undertaken here with cytochrome oxidase I (COI).

While studies of codon bias are numerous, most studies examine multiple genes or genomes with limited phylogenetic sampling, involving instead only pairwise or several taxon comparisons (e.g., Akashi 1995; Duret and Mouchiroud 1999; Morton 1998). One aim of the present work is to examine the codon usage patterns in a single gene across a broad phylogeny of 88 insect species from 12 orders. This approach allows us to ask the following questions, among others: (1) How variable are codon bias levels across a phylogeny? (2) How variable are major codon preferences across a phylogeny? and (3) Are there phylogenetic constraints on codon bias or codon preference? Based on predictions from the mutation–selection–drift theory of bias, single-gene codon bias levels may vary little across all taxa, assuming relatively limited effects of drift and similar selection pressures on the homologous genes, while codon preferences may vary among distantly related orders but should be conserved in closely related species (Powell and Moriyama 1997).

COI is a mitochondrial gene approximately 1.5 kb in length, encoding a polypeptide subunit of cytochrome *c* oxidase, the terminal enzyme in the respiratory chain. COI is widely used in insect phylogenetics, as its rate of nucleotide evolution allows it to resolve evolutionary histories at the family, genus, and species levels (Caterino et al. 2000). Popular though COI may be for specific phylogenetic questions, however, its nucleotide characteristics and evolutionary dynamics have been only cursorily examined across broader evolutionary levels (Lunt et al. 1996). A study of particular aspects of COI's evolution, such as codon usage, may prove beneficial to the phylogenetic community, if increased knowledge of COI leads to more

informed use of COI sequences in phylogenetic analyses. As well, the large existing database of COI sequences spanning a wide evolutionary range of taxa is an ideal resource for studies of molecular evolution.

The present study of codon usage employs a measure of codon bias that removes the effects of genome nucleotide composition on estimated values of codon bias. Removing the effects of composition bias is an attempt to isolate the variation among taxa to that which must necessarily have either drift- or selection-based explanations. Variations in mutational biases among species, beyond those reflected in the background compositional biases, may exist, however, and this possibility is also considered.

Methods

Insect Phylogeny

The phylogeny used in this study includes 88 taxa from 12 insect orders (Table 1). We chose taxa for inclusion in the phylogeny and subsequent sequence analysis based on two criteria: (1) they increased the breadth of taxonomic sampling, and (2) there was a COI sequence of at least 700 bp (the full COI sequence is 1.53 kb) available in GenBank. Of the 88 sequences included in this study, three are under 1 kb, seven are between 1 and 1.5 kb, and 78 are the full 1.53 kb. The phylogeny is a composite tree based on hypothesized insect evolutionary relationships described in the following publications: Diptera, McAlpine and Wood (1989); Lepidoptera, Caterino and Sperling (1999) and Kristensen (1997); Hymenoptera, Downton et al. (1994); Coleoptera, Kukalova-Peck and Lawrence (1993); and insect orders, Whiting et al. (1997).

The phylogeny contains two disparate levels of evolutionary divergence. The greater level of divergence is represented by the broad scope of the full phylogeny, including orders from Odonata to Diptera. The lesser level of divergence is represented by extensive sampling in the Lepidoptera, including 23 taxa from one species group, *Papilio*. This allows us to study relative variation in codon bias and preference at different divergence levels.

Codon Usage

When measuring bias in synonymous codon usage, it is important to account for variation in background nucleotide composition among taxa. None of the commonly used codon bias measures, such as “effective number of codons” (ENC), CAI, and FOP, control for nucleotide composition. There is the scaled χ^2 (Shields et al. 1988), as well as its modifications (Akashi and Schaeffer 1997; Wernegreen and Moran 1999), and our method is a likelihood-based extension of those methods that also allows for the determination of separate codon preference models. Two methods, MCB (Urrutia and Hurst 2001) and ENC' (Novembre 2002), do control for background nucleotide composition but do not include a likelihood-based identification of codon preference.

To accomplish this we generated a null distribution of codon usage for each taxon that is based on nucleotide composition. Background nucleotide composition is at best a rough estimate of the diverse set of mutational biases ongoing across a genome and within a gene. While our method explicitly accounts for only background nucleotide content, in our analyses and interpretation we use nucleotide composition as an approximation for mutational biases. Given the phylogenetic scale of this study it was unfeasible to include, for each taxon, parameters of mutational biases such as

Table 1. Taxa included in this study, with corresponding total bias, ENC, GC content, and GenBank accession number

Taxon	Total bias	ENC	GC%	Accession No.
Odonata				
<i>Lybella cyanea</i>	2.132	32.102	0.33878	AF195739
Orthoptera				
<i>Gryllus ovipos</i>	3.119	29.950	0.31096	U88333
<i>Gryllus pennsylvanicus</i>	3.069	29.918	0.31011	U88332
<i>Locusta migratoria</i>	4.015	29.675	0.30915	NC_001712
<i>Chorthippus parallelus</i>	3.726	31.140	0.30458	X95574
Dictyoptera				
<i>Blatella germanica</i>	3.132	35.714	0.31238	S72627
Phasmatodea				
<i>Anisomorpha buprestoidea</i>	2.050	26.949	0.28550	AF005347
<i>Timema bartmani</i>	1.910	39.430	0.34091	AF005331
Hemiptera				
<i>Triatoma sordida</i>	2.668	39.714	0.39987	AF021213
<i>Panstrongylus megistus</i>	2.279	34.000	0.33333	AF021182
<i>Limnopus rufoscutellatus</i>	3.726	29.874	0.29304	LRU83338
Phthiraptera				
<i>Heterodoxus macropus</i>	2.088	33.931	0.26900	NC_002651
Coleoptera				
<i>Tetraopes sublaevis</i>	3.362	30.815	0.27495	AF267482
<i>Phaea mirabilis</i>	3.572	29.418	0.28346	AF267468
<i>Xylosandrus manicus</i>	2.879	35.477	0.34749	AF187143
<i>Neochlamisus platani</i>	1.365	45.783	0.38365	AF093367
<i>Aleochara heeri</i>	2.825	32.774	0.30433	13169439
<i>Drusilla canaliculata</i>	3.059	31.834	0.29809	13161778
Hymenoptera				
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	2.214	28.183	0.24575	NC_001566
<i>Wiebesia punctatae</i>	2.242	30.054	0.24587	AF200414
<i>Formica exsecta</i>	1.242	32.589	0.28337	AB010927
<i>Formica fusca</i>	1.432	32.506	0.28029	AB010925
<i>Apanteles nephopteris</i>	1.219	31.503	0.24606	AF102720
<i>Pholotesor bedellidae</i>	1.913	28.255	0.23696	AF102715
Trichoptera				
<i>Hesperophylax designatus</i>	1.387	41.483	0.33333	AF375614
<i>Lepidostoma ojanum</i>	2.316	35.403	0.31336	AF375612
Lepidoptera				
<i>Feltia herilis</i>	2.636	27.714	0.27071	U60991
<i>Lambdina fiscellaria</i>	2.808	31.857	0.28366	AF064521
<i>Choristoneura fumiferana</i>	3.280	28.851	0.28463	LI9098
<i>Choristoneura rosaceana</i>	3.355	30.632	0.27291	LI9099
<i>Ostrinia nubilalis</i>	3.064	28.941	0.28432	AF170853
<i>Bombyx mori</i>	3.779	26.954	0.27240	AF149768
<i>Hemileuca electra</i>	2.385	32.029	0.29117	AF170856
<i>Macrosoma</i> sp.	2.745	30.399	0.27273	AF170854
<i>Coenonympha tullia</i>	2.552	33.197	0.29739	AF170860
<i>Boloria epithone</i>	2.629	30.446	0.27898	AF170862
<i>Colias eurytheme</i>	2.428	32.837	0.27974	AF044024
<i>Pieris napi</i>	2.315	30.394	0.28431	AF170861
<i>Pyrgus communis</i>	3.428	28.228	0.26536	AF170857
<i>Erynnis tristis</i>	3.131	29.810	0.28308	AF170858
<i>Euphilotes bernardino</i>	2.669	29.723	0.27321	AF170864
<i>Apodemia mormo</i>	3.060	29.327	0.26732	AF170863
<i>Baronia brevicornis</i>	3.832	26.649	0.26993	AF170865
<i>Eurytides marcellus</i>	2.671	30.371	0.26667	AF044022
<i>Troides helena</i>	3.257	30.833	0.28431	AF170878
<i>Iphiclydes podalirius</i>	3.258	29.301	0.26144	AF170873
<i>Allanacastria cerisvi</i>	3.591	28.471	0.27974	AF170869
<i>Parnassius clodius</i>	3.334	28.584	0.26470	AF170871
<i>Battus philenor</i>	2.976	29.639	0.28693	AF170875
<i>Sericanus montela</i>	3.641	28.352	0.27255	AF170868
<i>Pachliopta neptunus</i>	3.287	29.587	0.27516	AF044023
<i>Parides alcinous</i>	3.406	29.922	0.28040	AF170876
<i>Papilio constantinus</i>	3.115	31.008	0.28366	AF044002
<i>P. cresphontes</i>	3.282	30.365	0.28628	AF044004

Table 1. Continued

Taxon	Total bias	ENC	GC%	Accession No.
<i>P. glaucus</i>	2.875	29.123	0.27516	AF044013
<i>P. hospiton</i>	3.440	29.393	0.26340	AF044009
<i>P. indra</i>	2.895	30.091	0.26862	AF044011
<i>P. xuthus</i>	1.964	32.542	0.28300	AF043999
<i>P. zelicaon</i>	2.615	29.778	0.27059	AF044008
<i>P. polyxenes</i>	2.726	30.231	0.27516	AF044010
<i>P. canadensis</i>	2.281	28.569	0.27190	AF044014
<i>P. garamus</i>	2.234	32.559	0.29281	AF044021
<i>P. oregonius</i>	2.638	30.255	0.27320	AF044007
<i>P. multicaudatus</i>	3.500	28.564	0.27124	AF044016
<i>P. rutulus</i>	2.513	32.557	0.27648	AF044015
<i>P. dardanus</i>	2.279	32.747	0.29608	AF044003
<i>P. palamedes</i>	3.462	31.116	0.29608	AF044018
<i>P. scamander</i>	2.760	31.116	0.29020	AF044020
<i>P. anchisiades</i>	2.867	28.161	0.27909	AF044005
<i>P. demoleus</i>	3.460	29.583	0.27517	AF044000
<i>P. troilus</i>	2.570	30.096	0.29216	AF044017
<i>P. phorcas</i>	2.665	33.216	0.30000	AF044001
<i>P. alexanor</i>	2.173	32.985	0.28627	AF044012
<i>P. machaon</i>	2.626	30.341	0.27320	AF044007
<i>P. pilumnus</i>	2.742	32.518	0.30065	AF044019
Mecoptera				
<i>Panorpa vulgaris</i>	1.768	28.656	0.26826	AF180105
<i>Panorpides paradoxus</i>	2.616	26.997	0.27932	AF180100
Diptera				
<i>Chrysomya chlorpyga</i>	5.384	28.876	0.31111	AF295554
<i>Cochliomyia macellaria</i>	5.497	29.379	0.31438	AF295555
<i>Anopheles gambiae</i>	4.195	31.350	0.31360	NC_002084
<i>Drosophila melanogaster</i>	4.142	28.351	0.29100	NC_001709
<i>Drosophila yakuba</i>	3.819	29.672	0.30131	X03240
<i>Drosophila simulans</i>	3.181	29.121	0.30248	AF200854
<i>Apocephalus paraponerae</i>	2.607	28.893	0.28482	AF217481
<i>Ceratitis capitata</i>	4.416	31.312	0.30653	AJ242872
<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i>	4.570	27.719	0.28954	AF104625
<i>Oestrus ovis</i>	2.182	32.607	0.30648	AF257118
<i>Gastrophilus intestinalis</i>	2.018	40.960	0.35782	AF257117

transition/transversion bias or dinucleotide biases, alongside the contingent background nucleotide content, in the likelihood-based estimation of codon bias levels. The removal of background nucleotide content to isolate codon bias possibly due to selection has been attempted (Urrutia and Hurst 2001), but it is important to state that codon bias values estimated using these types of methods cannot automatically be interpreted as adaptive bias. There may be alternate explanations, including complex mutational dynamics and genetic drift, that can explain codon bias variation. Yet these methods are substantial steps in the study of codon bias variation, and, in this study particularly, the study of codon bias variation in a single gene across a broad phylogeny. The popular measure of codon bias ENC (Wright 1990) does not account for mutational bias and, therefore, is not suitable for comparing bias levels among species.

A null distribution based on nucleotide composition can be used as the basis for χ^2 tests. In addition, extensions of the null model can be made that incorporate parameters describing the amount of bias for each codon. Maximum likelihood estimates (MLEs) of the bias parameters can be obtained for each model, and the models can be compared using likelihood-ratio tests. A similar approach that uses GC content to generate the null distribution is described by Slatkin and Novembre, (2003). The method in this analysis is a slight modification, as it includes relative percentages of all four nucleotides rather than solely GC and AT.

The null distribution is generated by considering what nucleotides make up the codon sequences of a synonymous codon family.

For a k -fold ($k = 2, 3, 4, 6, 8$) degenerate amino acid, we have an expected proportion e_i ($i = 1, \dots, k$) for each codon in a synonymous codon family. We label the four nucleotide compositions (expressed as a proportion) f_A, f_C, f_G , and f_T . For a codon i that has the sequence XYZ, the corresponding expected frequency $e_i = f_X f_Y f_Z / C$, where C is a renormalization constant that ensures that the sum of the e_i for an amino acid equals one.

Expected numbers for each codon are obtained by multiplying each e_i by the total number of observed codons n . These can be compared to the observed numbers of each codon, n_i , using a standard χ^2 test with $k - 1$ degrees of freedom and a 5% significance level. If the null model is not rejected, the number of overrepresented codons for the amino acid in question is set to zero. If it is rejected, more elaborate models are explored to estimate the number of overrepresented codons.

The first model, the *single-preference model*, augments the expected frequency of the overrepresented codon by a parameter b and subtracts $b/(k - 1)$ from the remaining e_i . This corresponds to having one codon being overrepresented while all others are under represented relative to their expected proportions. The overrepresented codon is chosen to be the one with the highest value of $(n_i/n) - e_i$ (i.e., the one that is most overrepresented). By assuming that the data are drawn from a multinomial sample of size n with expected proportions e_i , the likelihood of the data can be obtained for all of the models considered here. Under the single-preference model, the likeli-

Table 2. Tests for equal variances and means, for total bias and ENC between the 49 lepidopteran taxa and the 39 other insect taxa

	Lepidoptera	All other taxa
Total bias		
Mean	2.922	2.855
Variance	0.212	1.216
<i>N</i>	49	39
<i>F</i> test for variances		
<i>F</i>	5.740	
<i>p</i> ($F \leq f$), one-tail	1.643 E-08	
<i>F</i> critical, one-tail	1.652	
Reject null of equal variances for total bias		
<i>t</i> test assuming unequal variances		
<i>t</i> -stat	-0.359	
<i>p</i> ($T \leq t$), one-tail	0.361	
<i>t</i> critical, one-tail	1.677	
<i>p</i> ($T \leq t$), two-tail	0.722	
<i>t</i> critical, two-tail	2.010	
Do not reject null of equal means for total bias		
	ENC	
Mean	30.203	32.112
Variance	2.723	18.825
<i>N</i>	49	39
<i>F</i> test for variances		
<i>F</i>	6.913	
<i>p</i> ($F \leq f$), one-tail	6.788 E-10	
<i>F</i> critical, one-tail	1.652	
Reject null of equal variances for ENC		
<i>t</i> test assuming unequal variances		
<i>t</i> -stat	-0.359	
<i>p</i> ($T \leq t$), one-tail	0.361	
<i>t</i> critical, one-tail	1.677	
<i>p</i> ($T \leq t$), two-tail	0.722	
<i>t</i> critical, two-tail	2.010	
Reject null of equal means for ENC		

hood of the data under this model is a function of b and a MLE of b is obtained by maximizing the likelihood function with a grid search.

The second model, the *double-preference model*, is applied only to amino acids that are greater than twofold redundant ($k > 2$). The two codons with the largest value of $(n_i/n) - e_i$ are identified and given the expected proportions $e_i + b_1$ and $e_j + b_2$, while the remaining codons are assigned proportions $e_i - ((b_1 + b_2)/2)$. MLE estimates of b_1 and b_2 are found using the same methods as for the single-preference model.

Likelihood-ratio tests are then used to determine which model fits the data best. The likelihood of the null L_0 is tested against the maximum likelihood of the single-preference model, L_1 , and the double-preference model, L_2 . The likelihood-ratio test statistic $R = -2\ln(L_m/L_n)$ was assumed to be χ^2 distributed, with degrees of freedom equal to the difference in the number of free parameters between model m and model n ($m = 1, 2; n = 0, 1$). If L_2 was found to be significantly greater than L_1 or L_0 , then the double-preference model was accepted. If L_2 was not significantly greater than L_1 , and L_1 was significantly greater than L_0 , then the single-preference model was accepted. If neither the single- nor the double-preference model had a significantly higher likelihood than the null model, the null model was accepted. Finally, in cases where the double-preference model was accepted, but the b_1 value was 10 times greater than the b_2 value, we chose the single-preference model to describe the data.

For each amino acid, this analysis yields a description of the preference model, overrepresented codons, and bias parameters. A summary statistic describing the overall amount of codon bias for each taxon (hereafter labeled “total bias” [TB]) can be constructed

by summing the bias parameters for each amino acid’s chosen preference model over all amino acids.

In our use of the method we have assumed that the nucleotide composition of each COI sequence in question is closely related to the overall nucleotide composition of each respective mitochondrial genome. Until more fully sequenced mitochondrial genomes are available, this method is forced to use the nucleotide composition of single genes as a proxy for the genome composition (which, in turn, is a best approximation for mutational biases, as described above). We believe that this use of COI nucleotide frequencies as an approximation of genome nucleotide frequencies is reliable. For 11 taxa (*Hetrodoxus*, *Locusta*, *Bombyx*, *Apis*, *Drosophila melanogaster*, *Drosophila simulans*, *Ceratitis*, *Cochliomyia*, *Chrysomya*, *Triatoma*, and *Anopheles*), fully sequenced mitochondrial genomes were available in GenBank. For these taxa we compared genomic GC frequencies to COI GC frequencies and found a high correlation ($p = 0.85$, $p = 0.0013$) between the two estimates.

The methods described here are implemented in a program entitled *biasml* that is available upon request from the authors.

Comparative Analyses

Qualitative patterns of codon bias and major codon preference were studied in the insect phylogeny using MacClade version 3.06 (Maddison and Maddison 1996). To distinguish objectively among low, medium, and high levels of TB across all taxa, we used the following criteria: *low bias*, $<(\text{mean TB} - 1 \text{ SD})$; *high bias*, $>(\text{mean TB} + 1 \text{ SD})$; and *medium bias*, all remaining values. This

Fig. 1. Insect composite phylogeny, with relative total bias levels mapped on. The phylogeny is based on hypothesized insect relationships culled from the following papers: for Diptera, McAlpine and Wood (1989); for Lepidoptera, Caterino and Sperling (1999)

and Kristensen (1997); for Hymenoptera, Dowton and Austin (1994); for Coleoptera, Kukalova-Peck and Lawrence (1993); and for the insect orders, Whiting et al. (1997).

method of defining bias values was necessary, as a predicted distribution of TB values among gene sequences of varying bias levels is unknown. As well as TB, we estimated levels of codon bias in COI using ENC (Wright 1990) and ENC' (Novembre 2002).

Lineage-specific synonymous substitution rates, d_s , were calculated across the phylogeny using the program *codeml* in the PAML software package (Yang 2000). Correlations among TB, ENC, ENC', and d_s were calculated.

Results

Codon Bias

There is high variation in the level of codon bias values among the 88 taxa. The mean TB value is 2.892, with a standard deviation of 0.806. The values

Fig. 2. Correlation of GC% with total bias.

range from a low of 1.219, in the hymenopteran species *Apanteles*, to a high of 5.497, seen in the dipteran species *Cochliomyia*. For comparison, ENC values range from 26.65 in the lepidopteran *Baronia* to 45.78 in the coleopteran *Neochlamisus*, with a mean of 31.05 and a standard deviation of 3.26. ENC' is less variable than ENC, ranging from 37.61 in the dipteran *Chrysomya* to 40.96 in *Gastrophilus*, with a mean of 45.22.

The mean TB in the 49 lepidopteran taxa is 2.922, with a standard deviation of 0.460. The values range from 1.964 in *Papilio xuthus* to 3.832 in *Baronia*. ENC values range from the aforementioned 26.65 in *Baronia* to 33.22 in *Phorcas*, with a mean of 30.20 and a standard deviation of 1.65. Variances of TB and ENC are significantly different between the 49 Lepidoptera and the 39 other taxa; mean TB values are not significantly different between the Lepidoptera and the other taxa, while means of ENC are different (Table 2).

Mapping the three levels of codon bias onto the composite insect phylogeny reveals few apparent large-scale patterns (Fig. 1). However, two orders contain *low* bias values: the Phasmatidae, *Anisomorpha* and *Timemaj* and four of the six Hymenoptera. Three clades contain *high* bias values: the reduviid Hemiptera, *Triatoma* and *Panstrongylus*; the acridid Orthoptera, *Chorthippus* and *Locusta*; and six of the nine sampled Diptera.

The TB values show no correlation with the GC frequencies in the respective COI sequences ($\rho = 0.08$, $p = 0.44$) (Fig. 2). There is a significant correlation between ENC and GC content ($\rho = 0.66$, $p = 0.001$) (Fig. 3), supporting our decision to use our developed likelihood-based estimation, as comparisons among taxa using ENC will be affected by variations in contingent nucleotide composition.

Across the phylogeny, TB was not correlated with d_S ($\rho = 0.05$, $p = 0.05$). ENC was correlated only slightly with d_S ($\rho = 0.17$, $p = 0.0002$).

Fig. 3. Correlation of GC% with ENC (Wright 1990).

Major Codon Preference

On average, only 3% (0.03 ± 0.005) of a species' overrepresented codons in this data set are G/C ending. The vast majority of overrepresented codons present, then, is A/T ending. In the three *Drosophila* species included, *melanogaster*, *yakuba*, and *simulans*, all overrepresented codons are A/T ending (Table 3). The A/T-ending overrepresented codons in COI of *Drosophila* correspond exactly to the tRNA anticodons for the respective amino acids, as described for the mitochondrial genome of *D. yakuba* (Clary and Wolstenholme 1985), in only 10 of the 19 amino acids with measurable bias in the *Drosophila* taxa. However, when wobble is considered, 17 of 19 amino acids correspond to the anticodon. The two amino acids not corresponding are methionine, the start codon, and lysine.

Shifts in major codon preference occur across the tree in all of the amino acids in which there was bias of some level. However, when looking only at preference changes *within* orders rather than *among* orders, the vast majority of changes involves a double-preference model. These include single- to double-preference, double-preference to double-preference, and double- to single-preference. All shifts are conservative; shifts from one to two codons always retain the previous single codon, shifts between double-preference models always retain one of the previous codons, and shifts from two to one major codon always retain one of the original codon pair.

Shifts between single overrepresented codons, within single orders, occur only 11 times across the phylogeny. We are defining shifts in this case as any difference between single-preference models within a single order. Sampling within orders is admittedly limited, including sister-species relationships only in the *Papilio*, and determining the exact point of major codons *shifts* is impossible; hence for

Table 3. Selected codon usage for the three *Drosophila* species used in this study, with corresponding total bias and ENC^a

	<i>D. melanogaster</i>	<i>D. simulans</i>	<i>D. yakuba</i>	<i>yakuba</i> mtDNA tRNA anticodon ^b
Total bias	4.14	3.18	3.82	
ENC	28.35	29.12	29.67	
Glycine				
(GGA)	40	33	35	UUC
GGC	0	0	0	
GGG	1	6	3	
GGT	6	8	9	
Leucine				
(CTA)	7	3	2	UAG
CTC	0	0	0	
CTG	0	0	0	
CTT	4	3	7	
(TTA)	53	56	54	UAA
TTG	1	0	2	
Tryptophan				
(TGA)	15	15	13	UCA
TGG	0	0	2	
Proline				
CCA	9	8	9	
CCC	1	1	2	
CCG	1	1	1	
(CCT)	14	14	13	UGG
Phenylalanine				
TTC	3	5	7	GAA
(TTT)	36	33	31	
Histidine				
CAC	2	4	3	GUG
(CAT)	16	12	14	

^a Major codons, as determined by the method described in this paper, are in parentheses.
^b tRNA anticodons present in the mitochondrial genome of *D. yakuba*, as described by Clary and Wolstenholme (1985).

our purposes simple *differences* within orders are treated as equivalent to shifts. These shifts are often accompanied by extremes of bias, low or high, in the lineage in which the preference shift has occurred.

The majority of preference/model changes is homoplastic, although preference changes seen in select amino acids are correlated with the phylogeny. An example is the fourfold amino acid proline (Fig. 4). Codon usage in proline is not biased in any of the taxa examined. When bias does exist, the type of codon preference model (one or two codons over-represented) varies across all levels of the phylogeny—as both models, as well as *no* bias, are seen within the Lepidoptera and the genus *Papilio*. Comparing preference *models* to major codon *preference* in proline reveals the following phylogenetic pattern: when *one* codon is overrepresented, that codon is CCT in Lepidoptera and Mecoptera and CCA in Coleoptera, Diptera, and Orthoptera; when *two* codons are overrepresented, they are CCC and CCT in Lepidoptera and CCA and CCT in Diptera and Dictyoptera. In the Hymenoptera there is a shift between single-preference models, and the genera *Apis* and *Wiebesia* have extremely low bias levels.

Conclusions

We conducted comparative analyses of codon usage across 12 insect orders, with both broad and focused sampling. The maximum likelihood bias estimation procedure we used removes effects of background nucleotide bias on estimates of codon bias and appears to be a useful measure. Because this procedure is new, we are still exploring its properties. Results here are suggestive of patterns in codon usage evolution that deserve more exploration.

Codon Bias

The extensive variation in codon bias levels seen across the insect orders is expected, given the known relative rates of COI evolution and probable distribution of variation in effects of genetic drift across such a broad expanse of insect taxa. Mapped onto the phylogeny, TB is not conserved or phylogenetically informative. The only obvious patterns of shared bias levels include the Diptera, with high bias, and the Hymenoptera, with low bias. Variation in bias is not as extensive within the Lepidoptera or within the genus *Papilio*. This is not

Fig. 4. Example of codon preference model evolution, using the fourfold amino acid proline.

surprising, as one would expect bias levels to be fairly uniform at this divergence level (Powell and Moriyama 1997). Following predictions of the mutation–selection–drift theory of bias, then, we predict that the variation seen within Lepidoptera, and *Papilio* specifically, will be due to variation in effects of either genetic drift or strength of selection on codon bias. We assume that selection intensity on COI should not vary significantly at the genus level. While population sizes of *Papilio* butterflies are not believed to vary drastically

(F. Sperling, personal communication), genetic drift may be initiated by any factors changing the effective population size in recent history. Lacking a clear understanding of *Papilio* populations, and following predictions of the mutation–selection–drift theory, we propose that the variation in codon bias within the genus is most likely a result of historical changes in effective population size rather than variation in selection on COI among *Papilio* species, while substantial changes in taxon-specific mutational biases may also play a role.

Codon Preference

As well as variation in bias levels, there are shifts in codon overrepresentation across the insect phylogeny and within the Lepidoptera. The preference shifts within Lepidoptera are unexpected, given the supposedly constrained nature of overrepresented codons (Kreitman and Antezana 1999). Designating the *type* of codon preference shift is important, however, and preference shifts within lineages appear less dramatic when these are considered. Most shifts involve the double-preference model, and these shifts may be likened to general conservation of particular single major codons, with toggling of second major codons. Shifts among single-preference models within orders are extremely rare, occurring only 11 times across the 88-taxon phylogeny.

Accompanying these shifts among single-preference models are extremes of bias. As predicted by the mutation–selection–drift theory, genetic drift can impair the ability of selection to maintain a particular codon bias level; comparatively low codon bias may be explained by the action of genetic drift. Also predicted, and detailed by Kreitman and Antezana (1999), are the possible causes for codon preference shifts: preference shifts are either *allowed* by the inability of selection to maintain codon preference in the face of genetic drift or *caused* by high levels of selection for the novel preferred codon.

Looking at the preference shifts among insects, all shifts accompanied by *high* levels of bias can be attributed to selection. But preference shifts accompanied by *low* levels of bias cannot be automatically attributed to genetic drift (Kreitman and Antezana 1999). However, if the low bias is a result of genetic drift, the probability of major codon shifts within that lineage should increase, since drift should affect all amino acids. Within this insect phylogeny, the only preference shifts accompanied by high bias are seen in the Diptera, where *Chocliomyia* and *Chrysomya* have high bias and show preference shifts in three amino acids, histidine, phenylalanine, and threonine. The coleopteran *Neochlamisus* has very low bias and shows preference shifts in alanine, histidine, and phenylalanine. These three taxa are the only taxa with more than one preference shift. We may conclude that *Chocliomyia* and *Chrysomya* have selection-induced shifts, while *Neochlamisus* has drift-induced shifts. Other taxa have only single shifts, and with only one observed shift our ability to differentiate between selection and drift is limited. At this point we can only corroborate the expected rarity of preference shifts within (relatively) closely related species (Kreitman and Antezana 1999) and present the tendency for shifts to be accompanied by extreme—high or low—bias levels.

Preferred codons in the three *Drosophila* taxa are A/T ending, in direct contrast to the greater abundance of G/C-ending preferred codons in *Drosophila* nuclear genes (Moriyama and Hartl 1993; Shields et al. 1988). The overall correspondence of the *Drosophila* preferred codons to the tRNA anticodons, when considering wobble, supports the selection–mutation–drift theory of codon bias, and in fact the level of correspondence seen in COI is greater than that seen in *Drosophila* nuclear genes (Powell and Moriyama 1997), as would be predicted given mtDNA's higher level of conservation.

We present a method for estimating codon bias that controls for background nucleotide composition, as well as identifying codon families with multiple overrepresented codons. Our hope was to limit plausible explanations of bias differences among taxa to selection or genetic drift and to gain insight into possible mutational dynamics or drift effects by studying codon preference. The method is used to analyze codon usage patterns in COI across a broad insect phylogeny. Given the extensive variation in codon bias levels and codon preference seen in COI, future studies attempting to isolate causes for shifts in bias and preference across closely related taxa may be feasible.

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