The convergent evolution of eusociality is based on a shared reproductive groundplan plus lineage-specific sets of plastic genes

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Abstract

Eusociality, characterized by caste-based division of labor, has convergently evolved multiple times. However, the genomic basis of caste and degree to which independent origins of eusociality have utilized common genes remains largely unknown. To elucidate these issues, we characterized caste-specific transcriptomic profiles across development and adult body segments from pharaoh ants (*Monomorium pharaonis*) and honey bees (*Apis mellifera*), representing two independent origins of eusociality. We identified a large shared core of genes upregulated in the abdomens of queen ants and honey bees that is also upregulated in female flies. Outside of this shared core, few genes are differentially expressed in common. Instead, the majority of the thousands of genes underlying the expression of the caste system are plastically-expressed, rapidly evolving, and relatively evolutionary young. Altogether our results show that the convergent evolution of eusociality involves the recruitment of a core reproductive groundplan along with lineage-specific sets of plastic genes.

Introduction

The degree to which convergent phenotypic evolution involves the same sets of genes or pathways is a major unanswered question (1, 2). Comparative genomic studies indicate that parallel adaptive genetic changes in the protein-coding sequences of the same genes are frequently associated with the evolution of convergent phenotypes in closely related populations and species (3, 4), but convergent adaptive changes have been implicated only in small subsets of genes across distantly related species (5, 6, see 7, 8). Decades of research in evolutionary developmental biology also emphasize that changes in the expression of a relatively small "toolkit" of deeply conserved genes are often associated with convergently evolved phenotypes in distantly related species (9, 10), as exemplified by the important role the transcription factor *Pax6* plays in eye development in molluscs, vertebrates, and insects, which each evolved eyes independently (11, 12). Alternatively, convergent phenotypic evolution between lineages could involve distinct subsets of genes in each lineage. Taxonomically-restricted genes, genes which are only found in certain lineages (13) have been shown to be important for lineage-specific evolutionary novelties such as cnidarian nematocysts (14, 15), but their relative contribution to the evolution of convergent phenotypes is unknown.

The evolution of eusociality in several insect lineages (e.g., ants, honey bees, vespid wasps, termites) provides a striking example of convergent phenotypic innovation (16). These eusocial societies are founded upon a novel caste polyphenism, in which reproductive queen and non-reproductive worker female castes develop from the same genome, depending mainly on socially-regulated nutritional inputs (17, 18). Within the worker caste, further specialization occurs as individuals age and progress through a series of tasks, including nursing and foraging

(19, 20). Polyphenic traits are often thought to evolve from pre-existing developmental plasticity

(21), and leading hypotheses for the evolution of caste-based division of labor in social insects

also stress the use and modification of highly conserved developmental and physiological

mechanisms (22–26). The ovarian groundplan hypothesis (22, 27), subsequently elaborated as

the reproductive groundplan hypothesis (24, 28) states that the derived caste-based division of

labor in eusocial lineages is constructed from ancient reproductive physiological machinery, such

that the reproductive and non-reproductive phases of the ancestral life cycle have been decoupled

to produce separate reproductive and non-reproductive castes. Similarly, the genetic toolkit

hypothesis proposes that the convergent evolution of novel social behavior is driven by changing

the regulation of a core "toolkit" of genes underlying highly conserved physiological processes

such as metabolism (25, 26).

Studies focused on candidate genes underlying the genetic basis of caste-based division

of labor within individual eusocial species have often found support for the importance of highly

conserved genes and pathways associated with reproduction and metabolism. For example,

worker division of labor in honey bees is regulated by interactions between juvenile hormone,

vitellogenin, and insulin/TOR signaling pathways (24, 28–30), and similar pathways also play

key roles in regulating division of labor between queen and worker castes in both honey bees and

ants (31–36). While comparative genomic and transcriptomic studies have often similarly

emphasized common general functions such as metabolism, such studies have thus far only

identified very small sets of specific genes associated with the convergent evolution of caste,

worker behavior, or eusociality in independent lineages (26, 37–42). Alternatively, many

transcriptomic studies have argued for the importance of taxonomically-restricted genes for the

evolution of caste-based division of labor, for example genes lacking orthologs in separate

eusocial lineages (43–49). However, it is unclear if the lack of common specific genes is due to

biological differences between the species or methodological details because studies in each

species were not designed, conducted, or analyzed in parallel.

Previous studies have focused mainly on identifying whether there is significant overlap

of genes or gene pathways associated with caste-based division of labor between independent

lineages (38, 41, 42), but there has been little effort to quantify the relative importance of shared

versus unshared genes to the convergent evolution of caste-based division of labor. Most of these

studies have either focused on brain or whole body samples (26, 34, 37–39, 49–51), although

expression bias between queens and workers has been shown to vary strongly, depending on

developmental stage and tissue type (44, 52–54). Surprisingly, only two studies (44, 55), each in

a single species, compared gene expression in queen and worker abdomens, the location of

reproductive organs, where transcriptomic signatures of differences in reproductive physiology

are the strongest (44). As such, while empirical studies in honey bees support the role of a

reproductive groundplan in regulating worker division of labor (24, 28), empirical studies have

not yet addressed the role of a reproductive groundplan in the convergent evolution of

reproductive caste.

Here, we present to date the most comprehensive developmental transcriptomic dataset

investigating gene expression associated with reproductive caste and worker age-based division

of labor in the honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) and the pharaoh ant (*Monomorium pharaonis*), species

which represent two independent origins and elaborations of eusociality (56). We performed all

sampling, sequencing, and analysis for the two species in parallel to maximize compatibility

between the data sets. We leverage the separate origins of eusociality to quantify in an unbiased

manner the relative contribution of differential expression at shared genes versus distinct genes

to the convergent evolution of reproductive caste and worker division of labor, and we also

assess the relative importance of highly conserved versus taxonomically-restricted genes at each

life stage and tissue to the expression of these traits. In support of the reproductive groundplan

hypothesis, we identify a large core set of reproduction-related genes upregulated in ant and

honey bee queen abdomens, which is derived from a set of ancient sex-biased genes. However,

this shared core comprises only one third of total abdominal differential expression, and outside

the abdomen, distinct sets of genes predominate, where young, loosely connected, and plastically

expressed genes tend to underlie division of labor.

Results

We constructed two large, parallel transcriptomic datasets in honey bees and pharaoh ants

spanning caste development as well as adult tissues separated by behavior, reproductive caste,

and sex. In total we sequenced 177 RNA-sequencing libraries across 28 distinct sample types

(Table S1).

Differential expression between queens and workers

To identify genes associated with caste development and adult caste dimorphism, we performed

differential expression analysis between queens and workers at each developmental stage and

adult body segment, separately for each species. The number of differentially expressed genes

(DEGs) between queens and workers at a given developmental stage or tissue varied between

245 in honey bee pupae and 5352 in honey bee abdomens (Table S2) and generally increased

throughout development, peaking in the adult abdomen (Fig. 1A). In all tissues and stages, the

majority of caste-associated DEGs in one species were not differentially expressed in the other

species (Fig. 1A). Similarly, the magnitude of gene-wise caste bias (as measured by $\log_2$ fold-

change between queen and worker samples) was weakly positively correlated between ant and

honey bee orthologs in all three adult tissues, with the strongest correlation in the abdomen, but

uncorrelated or negatively correlated in all larval and pupal stages (Fig. S1; $r_{head} = 0.089$; $r_{thorax} =$

0.161; $r_{abdomen} = 0.275$; N = 7640 1:1 orthologs; N = 7460 1:1 orthologs; $P < 0.001$ in all cases).

The top enriched Gene Ontology (GO) terms for caste-associated DEGs were dominated by

metabolism, signaling and developmental processes (Table S3 and S4).

Differential expression between nurses and foragers

To identify genes associated with age-based worker division of labor, we performed differential

expression analysis between nurses and foragers in each adult tissue, separately for each species.

The number of behavioral (i.e. between nurses and foragers) DEGs for a given tissue varied from

405 in ant heads to 2519 in honey bee thoraces (Table S5). There were more behavioral DEGs in

honey bees than in ants for all three adult tissues. In general there were very few behavioral

DEGs in common in the two species (Fig. 1B). Gene-wise $\log_2$ fold-change between nurses and

foragers was significantly but weakly correlated across ant and honey bee orthologs (Fig. S2;

$r_{head} = 0.070$, $P_{head} < 0.001$; $r_{thorax} = 0.031$, $P_{thorax} = 0.008$; $r_{abdomen} = 0.051$, $P_{abdomen} < 0.001$; N =

7460 1:1 orthologs). The top enriched GO terms for behavioral DEGs were dominated by

metabolism and developmental processes (Table S6 and S7).

Shared abdominal caste-bias in ancient genes

For the most part our results indicate distinct genes are associated with caste and worker division

of labor in honey bees and ants. However, approximately one third of abdominal caste-associated

DEGs were common to both species (Fig. 1*A*; 1545 shared DEGs, comprising 35% [1545/4395]

of ant DEGs, and 29% [1545/5352] of honey bee DEGs). Most shared abdominal differential

expression was the result of shared queen-bias: 56% (858/1545 genes) of shared abdominal

caste-associated DEGs were upregulated in queen abdomens in both species, compared to 22%

(338/1545) that were worker-upregulated and 23% (349/1545) that reversed direction (i.e. were

queen-biased in one species and worker-biased in the other). Shared abdominal caste-associated

DEGs were more likely to be identified as evolutionarily ancient in comparison to non-biased

genes (Fig. 1*C*; Fisher Test; F = 3.41, P < 0.001). Furthermore, abdominal DEGs with shared

queen bias were more likely to be identified as ancient than DEGs with shared worker bias (Fig.

1*C*; Fisher Test; F = 2.51, P < 0.001), though the estimated evolutionary age of genes was not

consistently associated with queen or worker bias across all tissues and stages (Fig. S3).

We next tried to put the seemingly large amount of overlap between our species for

abdominal caste-associated DEGs (1545 shared DEGs, ~⅓ of total DEGs) into context, since it is

unclear how much overlap to expect based on the fact that pharaoh ants and honey bees share

developmental and physiological pathways due to common descent (the last common ancestor

existed ~160 million years ago) (57). We first calculated the genome-wide proportion of genes

which had 1:1 orthologs in each species and were expressed at functionally-relevant levels. This

serves as a null expectation for the proportion of genes that are common by descent and might be

used for convergent phenotypic evolution, if these genes were recruited at random from the

genome. Out of genes with counts per million (CPM) greater than one in at least one sample

type, 69% (7460/10804) of genes in ants and 63% (7460/11775) of genes in honey bees had a

corresponding 1:1 ortholog in the other species. These proportions correspond roughly with the

proportion of caste-associated DEGs that have 1:1 orthologs overall (Fig. 1 *A* and *B*), suggesting

that the transcriptomic architecture of caste has a similar proportion of shared genes (i.e.

common by descent) as the rest of the genome. Next, we identified genes that were differentially

expressed across larval development to compare the overall make-up of developmental DEGs to

caste-associated DEGs, given that the molecular mechanisms of development are thought to be

highly conserved (58). We identified 6089 developmental DEGs in ants and 6225 developmental

DEGs in honey bees (Fig. S4). 68% (4133/6089) and 70% (4327/6225) of these developmental

DEGs in ants and honey bees, respectively, had 1:1 orthologs, and 2544 developmental DEGs

were shared between species, representing 42% (2544/6089) and 41% (2544/6255) of the total

developmental DEGs in each species (Fig. S4). While a smaller proportion of caste-associated

DEGs (35% for ants and 29% for honey bees) were shared between species, it is notable that

these proportions are nearly as high as those we observe for development.

Core queen-biased abdominal genes are associated with reproduction

To identify core genes associated with queen abdominal expression, we performed gene co-

expression analysis, separately for each species. We focused on identifying a group of genes (i.e.

module) which exhibited correlated expression patterns specifically across queen abdominal

samples (see Methods). We identified a queen abdominal module of 1006 genes in ants and a

module of 1174 genes in honey bees. We calculated the connectivity of each gene within these

identified abdominal modules (i.e. intra-modular connectivity), where genes with higher

connectivity values are central to the module, i.e. they exhibit highly correlated expression

patterns with many other genes in the module. There was a positive correlation between intra-

modular connectivity and $\log_2$ fold-change between queen and worker abdomens (Fig. 2 *A* and

B; ants: rho = 0.536, P < 0.001, N = 1006; honey bees: rho = 0.617, P < 0.001, N = 1174), as

well a positive correlation between intra-modular connectivity and the significance (-$\log_{10}$ of P-

value) of queen/worker abdominal differential expression (Spearman correlation; ants: rho =

0.485, P < 0.001, N = 1006; honey bees: rho = 0.555, P < 0.001, N = 1174), indicating that the

most tightly connected genes within these modules show strong queen-biased expression. We

identified 183 genes which were present in the queen abdominal module of both species, and

these genes were overwhelmingly queen-biased (78.7% [144/183] upregulated in queens of both

species), and had higher intra-module connectivity than genes found in only one species-specific

module (Fig. 2 *C* and *D*).

A major strength of gene co-expression analysis is its power to identify hub genes for

traits, i.e. genes which are centrally connected and strongly associated with a trait (59). We

identified hub genes in both species (see Methods), many of which are clearly associated with

reproduction and maternal effects (Table S8 and S9; Fig. 2 *A* and *B*). Included in this list are

genes with previous known roles in caste and reproduction such as vitellogenin (*Vg receptor* was

identified in each species) (31, 60) and *vasa* (61), while others are important maternal proteins

such as *Smaug* (62) and *ovo* (63).

Caste bias is in part derived from ancestral sex bias

Given that our co-expression analysis indicated that many of the most important queen-

upregulated genes are clearly associated with female reproduction, we reasoned that caste-biased

expression may be derived from sex-biased expression. Indeed, there was a positive correlation

between gene-wise $\log_2$ fold change between queen and worker abdomens and gene-wise $\log_2$

fold-change between queen and male abdomens in both honey bees and pharaoh ants (Fig. 3 *A*

and *B*). Additionally, sex bias itself was correlated between species (Fig. 3*C*). The correlation of

caste bias and sex bias was not restricted to the abdomen, as there was similar highly significant

effect when comparing heads and thoraces, albeit with weaker effect sizes (Fig. S5).

Given the link between shared caste bias and sex bias within ants and honey bees, we

hypothesized that caste bias is derived from ancient pathways underlying sexual dimorphism. To

test this hypothesis, we estimated the whole-body sex-bias of orthologs in the fruit fly

Drosophila melanogaster using available data (58). Shared queen-biased abdominal DEGs

tended to be upregulated in females in *D. melanogaster* (Fig. 3*D*; one-sided Binomial Test for

likelihood of queen conserved having $\log_2$ fold-change > 0; P < 0.001; N $= 566$ shared queen

DEGs), while shared worker-biased abdominal DEGs tended to be upregulated in males (P $<$

0.001; N $= 160$ shared worker DEGs).

Expression plasticity across development, caste, and tissue is correlated between species

While we have emphasized the conservation of abdominal differential expression between

queens and workers in pharaoh ants and honey bees, roughly two-thirds of abdominal caste-

biased genes were not shared between species, and differential expression based on reproductive

caste or worker division of labor was largely not shared (Fig. 1 *A* and *B*). Furthermore, genes

were often differentially expressed across many stages and tissues and sometimes in opposite

directions (Fig. S6; e.g., upregulated in queen heads but downregulated in queen abdomens). To

quantify the degree to which genes exhibited biased expression according to reproductive caste

across all developmental stages and tissues we calculated the Euclidean distance of $\log_2$ fold-

change across all queen/worker comparisons separately for each species, and we labeled this

quantity "overall caste bias". This approach is analogous to previous work on expression

plasticity in ants across alternative morphs (64). Similarly, we defined "overall behavior bias" as

the Euclidean distance of $\log_2$ fold-change across all nurse/forager comparisons, separately for

each species.

Interestingly, both overall caste and overall behavior bias were correlated among

orthologs between species (Fig. S7; i.e. overall caste bias measured in ants was correlated with

overall caste bias measured in honey bees across 1:1 orthologs). Within species, overall caste and

behavior bias were also correlated to each other (Fig. S8). This indicates that plasticity in gene

expression is correlated across contexts (caste versus behavior) and species. GO terms associated

with high caste bias were largely linked to metabolism, while those associated with high

behavior bias were largely linked to developmental processes (Table S10).

Characteristics of genes associated with caste and behavior

We compared overall caste bias and overall behavior bias to gene age, evolutionary rate, network

connectivity, and tissue-specificity to understand the general features of genes commonly

associated with caste (queen versus worker) or behavior (nursing versus foraging). Genes with

younger estimated evolutionary ages tended to exhibit higher overall caste bias (Fig. 4 *A* and *B*)

and behavior bias (Fig. S9 *A* and *B*) compared in particular to ancient genes (Gamma GLM; ant

caste bias: $\chi^2 = 900.19$, honey bee caste bias: $\chi^2 = 1412.80$, ant behavior bias: $\chi^2 = 316.36$, honey

bee behavior bias: $\chi^2 = 877.43$; P < 0.001 for all cases; N = 10520 in ant, N = 10011 in honey

bees). Genes that were loosely connected in co-expression networks constructed across all

samples tended to exhibit more caste and behavior bias in comparison to highly connected genes

(Fig. 4 *C* and *D*; Fig. S9 *C* and *D*). Genes with low connectivity are peripheral network elements,

while genes with high connectivity are central to regular networks and often highly pleiotropic

(59). Similarly, genes with high tissue-specificity across 12 honey bee tissues tended to exhibit

higher values caste and behavior bias in comparison to more pleiotropic, ubiquitously expressed

genes (Fig. S10), where tissue specificity was calculated using available data (46). Finally, genes

that were rapidly evolving (i.e. with high values of dN/dS) tended to exhibit higher levels of

caste and behavior bias, (Fig. 4 *E* and *F*; Fig. S9 *E* and *F*), with dN/dS estimated between each

focal species (*A. mellifera* and *M. pharaonis*) and a closely-related outgroup (*A. cerana* and *S.*

invicta, respectively).

We also detected strong negative correlations between gene-wise expression and overall

caste or behavior bias, (correlation of expression and ant caste bias: rho = -0.640; expression and

honey bee caste bias: rho = -0.676; expression and ant behavior bias: rho = -0.504; expression

and honey bee behavior bias: rho = -0.569; P < 0.001 for all; N = 10520 in ants , N = 10011 in

honey bees), where expression was averaged across the relevant comparisons, analogous to our

calculation of overall caste or behavior bias. However, our results are not solely driven by

expression levels. We performed partial correlation analysis accounting for expression to test for

the conditional effect of evolutionary age, connectivity, tissue specificity, and evolutionary rate

on caste or behavior bias. The relationship between caste/behavior bias and evolutionary age,

evolutionary rate, connectivity, and tissue-specificity generally all remained significant and in

the same direction when expression was accounted for (Table S11). The two exceptions were the

relationship between ant behavior bias and evolutionary age and honey bee caste bias and

connectivity (Table S11). However, when we removed the abdominal contribution to caste bias

and expression, the relationship between honey bee connectivity and caste bias remained

significant and negative (Table S11), revealing that the relationship between connectivity and

caste bias was universal except in the case of highly connected abdominally caste-biased genes,

as were present in our gene co-expression analysis (Fig. 2*B*). Together, these results indicate that

each gene's likelihood of recruitment to regulatory networks underlying caste or worker division

of labor is positively influenced by expression plasticity and position in overall regulatory

networks as well as the rate of coding sequence evolution and how recently such genes evolved.

Discussion

In this study we present the most comprehensive transcriptomic dataset to date of caste-

based division of labor for species from lineages representing two independent origins of

eusociality. We find generally low overlap between honey bees and pharaoh ants in the

thousands of genes that are differentially expressed between queen and worker larvae, pupae,

and adult tissues (Fig. 1*A*) as well as between nurses and foragers within the worker caste (Fig.

1*B*). This indicates that the independent evolution of these plastic phenotypes in honey bees and

ants has largely involved different genes. The one notable exception is in the abdomen, where we

find that about a third (~1500/4500) of all genes differentially expressed between queens and

workers in honey bees and ants have shared caste-biased expression in both species. This

proportion is nearly as high as the proportion of genes with shared expression bias across

development, which is considered to have deeply conserved molecular mechanisms (58, 65). We

find that genes that are upregulated in queens in both ants and honey bees also tend to be female-

biased in *D. melanogaster* (58), indicating that this set of shared caste-biased genes is derived

from ancient plastically-expressed genes underlying sexual dimorphism (Fig. 3*D*). Outside of

this large shared core set of ancient genes associated with female reproduction, the majority of

genes associated with caste and worker division of labor showed plastic expression in multiple

contexts (e.g., between developmental stages, tissues, and castes) and were relatively young,

rapidly evolving, and loosely connected in regulatory networks.

In the long-extinct solitary ancestors of social insects, female behaviors such as egg-

laying and brood care are thought to have been physiologically linked within an ovarian cycle

such that brood care followed egg-laying (22, 27). The reproductive groundplan hypothesis

proposes that these pathways existed in the common ancestor of eusocial species, and that caste-

based division of labor in eusocial lineages is derived from this reproductive groundplan (22, 24,

27, 28). However, past studies have failed to find large sets of genes repeatedly used for eusocial

evolution that would represent these pathways, and these studies have emphasized overlap in the

inferred functional categories (e.g., metabolism) of genes (37, 38, 40–42). Importantly, no

previous comparative study investigated caste-biased expression in the abdomen, the location of

the reproductive machinery where putative signatures of the reproductive groundplan are

expected to be most apparent.

In strong support of the reproductive groundplan hypothesis, we identify a large set

(~1500) of genes with shared caste-biased abdominal expression, many of which have known

reproductive or maternal function, including the receptor for *vitellogenin* as well as *vasa, smaug,*

and *ovo* (Fig. 2 *A* and *B*, Tables S8 and S9). This large overlap for abdominal caste-associated

genes is notable because honey bees and ants last shared a common ancestor approximately 160

million years ago (57), and this overlap is nearly as much as we see for genes that were

differentially expressed across developmental stages. While shared developmental molecular

mechanisms are presumably due simply to shared ancestry and the deep conservation of

developmental mechanisms (58, 65), the similar level of overlap for caste-associated genes

points to the large-scale recruitment of pre-existing developmental and physiological machinery

underlying the ancestral reproductive groundplan during the independent evolution of caste-

based division of labor in ant and honey bee lineages.

While reproductive caste in complex eusocial societies such as ants and honey bees is

typically fixed in adulthood, the tasks performed by workers (specifically, nursing versus

foraging) change over the course of the worker's adult lifetime (29, 49). This plastic behavioral

change is known to be accompanied by a wide range of physiological changes and is regulated at

least in part by conserved physiological pathways, for example, those involving insulin

signaling, juvenile hormone, and vitellogenin (29, 36, 66). However, we identified few genes

that were commonly differentially expressed between nurses and foragers in honey bees and

pharaoh ants (Fig. 1*B*), and the proportion of shared genes was much lower in comparison to

genes underlying abdominal differences between queens and workers. Nonetheless, we identified

a number of enriched Gene Ontology categories associated with development as well as

metabolism in each species (Tables S6 and S7), which is consistent with the notion that the

transition from nurse to forager is essentially a developmental process, and that common

molecular pathways may provide the raw genetic material for social evolution (25, 38, 42, 67).

While conserved factors or pathways clearly play important roles in aspects of caste

development and function as well as the transition from nursing to foraging, our results and other

studies indicate that the majority of the full transcriptomic architecture associated with caste and

age polyethism is not shared between species (38, 45, 49–51). Part of this lineage-specific

architecture is derived from expression differences in conserved genes: about half the

differentially expressed genes we identified had an ortholog in both species but did not exhibit

shared expression bias (Fig. 1 *A* and *B*), and the degree of caste-biased expression at particular

tissues or stages was generally only weakly correlated among orthologs of honey bees and ants

(Fig. S1). However, about 40% of caste-associated genes lacked 1:1 orthologs (either due to

apparent duplications or complete lack of orthology), reflecting the importance of taxonomically-

restricted genes for the evolution of eusociality (19, 46, 47, 68, 69). Additionally, we found that

orthologs with shared abdominal worker bias between honey bees and pharaoh ants were on

average evolutionarily younger (i.e. more taxonomically-restricted) than those with shared queen

bias (Fig. 1*C*), in line with previous studies (43–45, 48). Altogether, the emerging result of

sociogenomics research is that the bulk of the genetic architecture underlying caste-based

division labor is made up of plastically expressed genes with non-conserved sequence or

expression pattern (55, 64, 70, 71).

Novel polyphenisms are often thought to evolve from pre-existing developmental

plasticity, essentially by the canalization of previously continuous plastic phenotypes (21, 55,

72). Furthermore, morph-associated expression plasticity may arise largely neutrally (70), as

expression plasticity between morphs is often correlated to expression plasticity within morphs

(64, 73–76). Our results indicate that expression plasticity, both in highly conserved and

taxonomically-restricted genes, is a key feature of the genetic architecture underlying caste and

worker division of labor. Overall caste bias across 1:1 orthologs was correlated between *A.*

mellifera and *M. pharaonis*, where overall caste bias represents the likelihood of a gene to

exhibit expression bias in any comparison between queens and workers (Fig. S7*A*). Similarly,

overall behavior bias (overall bias between nurses and foragers) was correlated between species

(Fig. S7*B*), caste and behavior bias were themselves correlated (Fig. S8), and caste and behavior

bias were correlated to tissue specificity (Fig. S10). These results indicate that genes with plastic

expression in multiple contexts (across tissues, development, behavior, and caste) tend to be

consistently associated with caste and behavior in both honey bees and ants.

Genes with morph-specific effects on fitness are expected to evolve relatively rapidly due

to relaxed selection (77, 78), a prediction that has been supported in a number of organisms (64,

79–83). Elevated evolutionary rates may also pre-date the evolution of specific morphs (71, 74),

in support of the role of ancestral plasticity for the evolution of polyphenisms (21). Furthermore,

genes that are peripheral elements of regulatory networks and exhibit tissue-specific expression

tend to evolve rapidly due to relaxed selective constraint because they are less pleiotropic than

centrally located, ubiquitously expressed genes (75, 84–86). Finally, across organisms genes

identified as taxonomically-restricted tend to evolve more rapidly than older genes (87–89), but

rapidly evolving genes can mistakenly be identified as taxonomically-restricted genes by

BLASTP due to the rapid divergence of their amino acid sequence (90). Our results support all

of these empirical relationships, and we argue that they represent a set of characteristics of genes

which may not be readily disentangled. Evolutionary developmental biology emphasizes the

action of a certain type of gene for the evolution of morphological novelty: highly connected

core elements of that are highly pleiotropic and slowly evolving (65, 91). However, the emerging

picture is that the evolution of other traits such as social innovation also involves a majority of

genes on the opposite end of the spectrum: genes with highly variable expression across contexts

that are peripheral elements of regulatory networks and exhibit high levels of divergence in

expression and sequence between species (46, 49).

Conclusions

Our study shows that the recruitment of a large core of conserved reproductive-associated

genes, which make up a reproductive groundplan, is fundamental to the convergent evolution of

caste-based division of labor in ants and honey bees. However, our study also reveals that the

bulk of the full genetic architecture underlying the expression of social insect caste-based

division of labor varies between lineages. This is reflected by the general biology of social

insects, in that independently evolved societies share reproductive division of labor, the main

defining feature of eusociality, but also display a wide diversity of lineage-specific adaptations

(16). It is likely that a relatively small number of core conserved genes exist as upstream hubs in

regulatory networks, and layered on top of this core is a myriad of taxonomically-restricted

genes as well as conserved genes with lineage-specific expression patterns (46, 49, 92, 93). This

is consistent with models for the evolution of hierarchical developmental gene regulatory

networks, whereby a relatively small number of highly conserved genes act upstream to initiate

gene cascades (e.g., to set up body-patterning), while batteries of downstream genes are much

more evolutionarily labile, and are largely responsible for lineage-specific features (94, 95).

Recent studies have made progress elucidating the function of several core candidate genes and

gene pathways that regulate caste-based division of labor by manipulating individual genes (34–

36, 96). A complementary goal of such candidate gene-based research is to use unbiased

approaches to identify the full suite of genes underlying caste-based division of labor in multiple

independent lineages and subsequently to ask what proportion of genes show conserved function

across lineages. Large-scale transcriptomic studies such as ours are an invaluable starting point

to achieve this goal. However, transcriptomic studies can only hint at the relative functional

importance of genes, and future studies will have to assess the functional importance of various

components of the transcriptomic architecture, including the relative importance of of shared

versus lineage-specific genetic mechanisms for the convergent evolution of eusociality.

Methods

Study Design

We collected parallel time series RNA-seq data of caste development in the pharaoh ant

Monomorium pharaonis and the honey bee *Apis mellifera,* including seven developmental stages

(egg, five larval stages, one pupal stage) plus each of three adult body segments in both species

(see Table S1 for list of all samples). We separated adults into the three main body segments

(head, mesosoma, and metosoma) upon sample collection and sequenced pools of each part

separately. For convenience, we refer to these segments as "head", "thorax", and "abdominal"

tissues throughout. We sequenced whole embryos and whole bodies of larvae and pupae. Each

sample represents a pool of ten individuals taken from the same colony, and replicate samples of

the same type represent pools of individuals taken from different colonies.

Ant collection

To collect samples of *M. pharaonis* across development, we created 27 replicate colonies of

~400 workers and ~400 total larvae from a large mixed genetic source. We removed queens from

each colony, which stimulates the production of new queens and males from existing eggs and

L1 larvae in *M. pharaonis* (97–99). We pre-assigned each colony to one of nine sample types,

ordered by developmental timing (egg, L1-L5 larvae, pupae, virgin queens/males,

nurses/foragers). We allowed the 27 colonies to grow for four weeks, and collected samples

progressively when the youngest individuals left in the colonies represented the assigned

developmental stage (note that *M. pharaonis* workers, lacking ovaries (100), do not begin to lay

eggs, so the brood progressively ages as no replacement eggs are laid).

We identified larval stage and caste as in (101), by hair and morphology (102). To

synchronize pupal developmental collection, we exclusively sampled pupae whose eyes had

darkened. We sampled males as soon as they had eclosed as adults from the pupal stage. We

distinguished between nurses and foragers based on behavioral observation. Specifically, we

observed nurses feeding larvae and we observed foragers collecting food. We sampled egg-

laying mature queens (3-4 months old) from the group of queens we initially removed to

stimulate reproduction to ensure that queens and workers came from the same genetic

background.

Honey bee collection

To collect samples of *A. mellifera* across development, we established experimental colonies in

which queens were allowed to lay directly onto empty comb for 24 hours to ensure control of

larval age and that larvae of a given replicate were from the same queen. We collected eggs after

this period directly from the comb. After three days, we grafted a subset of hatched larvae into

artificial queen cells in queenless portions of the hive. Starting at that day, we sampled the five

stages of larvae (L1-L5) on each consecutive day. We sampled pupae once their eyes had

darkened to synchronize developmental timing. We sampled males by placing "hair-roller" cages

on top of cells during pupation and waiting for individuals to emerge from pupation. We sampled

egg-laying mature queens from separate colonies and pooled them into replicate samples. We

paint-marked worker individuals upon emergence from the pupal stage and sampled nurses that

were less than 7 days old and foragers that were greater than 21 days old.

RNA extraction, sequencing, aligning to genomes

We isolated RNA using Trizol reagents. We performed cDNA synthesis and library preparation

were performed using a previously described protocol (Aird et al. 2017), with the only alteration

being that the input RNA was 50ng and the cycle number of cDNA amplification was increased

to sixteen. To compare sample quality across the experiment and test our ability to detect lowly-

expressed genes, we added ERCC92 (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.) spike-in mixes to total RNA

prior to amplification. We pooled libraries with an equal amount of cDNA and sequenced single-

end for 50 cycles in Illumina Hiseq 2500. We aligned reads to reference genomes using Bowtie2

(103). *A. mellifera* reads were aligned to NCBI gene models, genome version 4.5, and *M.*

pharaonis reads were aligned to NCBI gene models, genome version 2.0. We estimated read

count and transcripts per million (TPM) using RSEM (104).

Identification of orthologs

To identify orthologs between *A. mellifera* and *M. pharaonis*, we started with a curated

orthology map of *Aculeata* species from OrthoDB9 (Zdobnov et al 2016). We downloaded

amino acid sequences for each species from RefSeq (105). We associated transcripts with

OrthoDB9 protein names using BLASTp (E-value 10^{-10}) and identified the Aculeata ortholog

group matched by each gene based on the identified BLASTp hits. In this way, we identified 1:1,

one-to-many, and many-to-many orthologous groups between *A. mellifera* and *M. pharaonis*. For

direct comparison of the species, we restricted our analysis to 1:1 orthologs (i.e. genes for which

only one gene from each species matches the given OrthoDB9 ortholog group). We identified

three-way 1:1:1 orthologs between *A. mellifera*, *M. pharaonis*, and *Drosophila melanogaster*

using a similar procedure based on Endopterygota orthology groups from OrthoDB9.

Differential Expression Analysis

To identify caste-associated differentially-expressed genes (DEGs), we performed differential

expression analysis between queens and workers at each developmental stage and tissue,

separately for each species. We constructed GLM-like models including replicate and caste and

identified genes associated with caste (FDR < 0.1) at each stage or tissue using EdgeR (106).

Similarly, to identify behavioral DEGs we performed differential expression analysis between

nurses and foragers for each tissue. To identify developmental DEGs in each species, we

constructed models with all larval and egg samples and identified genes differentially expressed

between any developmental stage (FDR < 0.1), controlling for overall caste differences.

Gene co-expression analysis

In contrast to many network methods which assess gene-gene relationships across all samples,

biclustering seeks to identify a group of genes which are coexpressed (i.e. exhibit concerted

expression changes) across a subset of sample types (107). Given that our data contained a large

number of sample types, we reasoned that we could employ biclustering to identify groups of

genes particularly associated with a given sample type. We performed plaid clustering, one of the

top performing biclustering algorithms in a recent survey (108). We used the R package biclust

to implement clustering (109). Plaid clustering models expression level for each gene as a

function of bicluster weights, where only biclusters containing the gene contribute to predicted

expression level (110, 111). The algorithm iteratively constructs layers containing samples and

genes and retains layers that improve the model fit, where layers represent biclusters.

Plaid clustering is non-deterministic and individual biclusters are not found in every

iteration of clustering. To define a reasonable ensemble of biclusters, we performed clustering

1000 times separately for each species, using inverse hyperbolic sine transformed TPM

(transcripts per million) (112). While a large number of interesting bicluster definitions are

possible, we decided to identify biclusters that consistently contained all queen abdomen samples

to focus our investigation on the tissue that exhibited the strongest signature of caste bias.

Specifically, we extracted biclusters containing all three mature queen abdomen samples and no

more than three other samples total (note that honey bee queen abdomen samples clustered with

egg samples, while pharaoh ant queen samples did not cluster with egg samples).

Because the same genes were not always present in such a bicluster, we tabulated the

number of queen abdomen biclusters each gene was found in and retained genes present in a

higher proportion of biclusters than a given cut-off, determined by inspection of frequency

distributions of bicluster presence. In pharaoh ants, we found a large set of genes present in

greater than 90% of queen abdomen biclusters, and we retained these genes for further analysis

(N = 1039 genes; Fig. S11A, i.e. the same set of genes was repeatedly found). In contrast, honey

bee queen abdomen biclusters tended to contain one of two groups of genes, as the frequency of

presence in the bicluster peaks at 60% and 30% (Fig. S11B). Out of 1245 genes present in

greater than 60% of the identified biclusters, 877 were differentially expressed and upregulated

in queen abdomens relative to worker (also note that this set of genes exhibited much higher

expression in eggs than the latter set). In contrast, out of 1057 genes present in 25-35% of

biclusters, 611 out of were differentially expressed and upregulated in worker abdomens,

compared to 47 upregulated in queen abdomens. Therefore, it is clear that the more common

bicluster represents genes associated with queen abdomens, so we retained this set of genes for

further analysis (N = 1245 genes).

We proceeded with our analysis using these identified sets of genes, which we term

modules associated with queen abdominal expression. We calculated connectivity in the module

(i.e. intra-module connectivity) as the sum of pairwise Pearson correlations, where correlation

values are raised to the sixth power, the standard value for unsigned weighted gene co-

expression networks (113). A major goal of gene co-expression analysis is the identification of

hub genes, genes central to networks that are strongly associated to relevant traits (59). To this

end, we conservatively identified hub genes associated with queen abdominal expression as

genes with intra-module connectivity in at least the 90th percentile and abdominal $\log_2$ fold-

change values greater than 2 (representing a 4-fold increase in expression in queen relative to

worker abdomens).

Phylostratigraphy

We estimated the evolutionary age of each gene using phylostratigraphy. Phylostratigraphy

groups genes into hierarchical age categories based on identifiable orthology (using BLASTp)

(114, 115). For example, genes found in ants and honey bees but not in non-aculeate

hymenopterans would be labeled "Aculeata" genes, while genes shared between vertebrates and

insects would be labeled "Bilateria". For our purposes, we decided to focus on the difference

between "ancient" genes, which we defined as displaying orthology with non-insect animals, and

a number of hierarchical younger categories: "insect", "hymenopteran", "aculeate", "ant", "bee",

and "novel" (where "ant" refers to genes found in *M. pharaonis* and other ants but not in any

other species, "bee" refers to genes found in *A. mellifera* and other bees but not in other species,

and "novel" refers to a gene found only in *A. mellifera* or *M. pharaonis*).

A key component of phylostratigraphy is the creation of a BLAST database in which to

identify orthologs (114, 115). Because we largely planned to focus on younger age categories,

we constructed a protein database containing all annotated hymenopteran genomes (48 total). We

added to this group ten non-hymenopteran insect genomes and ten non-arthropod genomes (see

Table S12 for a full list of included genomes). Therefore, a gene labeled as "ancient" displayed a

significant BLASTp hit to one of the ten non-arthropod genomes. While phylostratigraphy

typically employs an extremely large database containing all available representative taxa, we

reasoned that for our study resolution between categories such as "Bilateria" and "Eukaryota"

was unnecessary. Furthermore, adding extraneous genomes effectively dilutes the database, such

that more similarity is needed to pass an E-value threshold. Because we included only a sample

of non-hymenopteran genomes, we were therefore able to stringently identify orthologs (E-value

10^{-10} in comparison to a typical value of 10^{-5} (116)) and accurately place them along the

hymenopteran phylogeny.

Comparison to Drosophila melanogaster

We downloaded available MODENCODE RNA-seq data on male and female whole bodies of *D.*

melanogaster (58). Male and female samples came from 5- and 30-day old flies (one replicate

for each sex). While much recent work has detailed tissue-specific (and even cell-specific)

expression in *D. melanogaster*, we reasoned that whole bodies (lacking the same body parts as

we used in this study) would give us reasonable overall levels of sex bias to compare our data to.

We aligned reads to the current release of the *D. melanogaster* genome available on NCBI

(*assembly release 6 plus ISO*) using the same pipeline as described for *A. mellifera* and *M.*

pharaonis, and we performed differential expression analysis between males and females as

described above.

Calculation of overall bias

Previous work estimated the overall degree to which genes exhibited morph bias in RNA-seq

data among four morphs by calculating the Euclidean distance of $\log_2$ fold-change between each

comparison (64). Following this reasoning, we calculated overall caste bias as the Euclidean

distance of $\log_2$ fold-change between queens and workers at each larval developmental stage

(L2-L5), pupae, and each adult tissue. Similarly, we calculated overall behavior bias as the

Euclidean distance of $\log_2$ fold-change between nurses and foragers in each tissue. To perform

partial correlations controlling for magnitude of gene expression with overall bias as the

dependent variable, we calculated expression analogously, as the Euclidean distance of $\log_{10}$

counts-per-million at each stage/tissue tested.

Estimation of tissue specificity

While comparing expression between castes across the entirety of development in many tissues

was unfeasible for this study, a previous study performed RNA-sequencing on twelve tissues in

A. mellifera in worker nurses and foragers (46). We downloaded the available data and aligned

reads to the current version of the *A. mellifera* genome, using the pipeline described above. To

classify genes by their tissue specificity, we calculated τ, a commonly used metric of expression

specificity (117). τ ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates genes are ubiquitously expressed and 1

indicates genes are exclusively expressed in one tissue.

Estimation of dN/dS

We estimated evolutionary rate using dN/dS, the ratio of non-synonymous to synonymous

nucleotide changes. We estimated pairwise dN/dS between each focal species and a second

closely related species. For *A. mellifera*, we compared protein-coding sequences to *A. cerana*.

For *M. pharaonis*, we compared protein-coding sequences to *Solenopsis invicta*. We identified

1:1 orthologs using OrthoDB9, as described above. For each 1:1 ortholog pair, we selected the

longest transcript associated with the gene for each pair of species. We aligned orthologous

protein sequences using ClustalW (118), derived nucleotide alignments from protein alignments

using pal2nal (119), and estimated pairwise dN/dS of nucleotide alignments using PAML,

package codeml (120).

Gene Ontology Analysis

We performed Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA) using the R package topGO (121). Rather

than relying on automatically annotated Gene Ontology (GO) terms, we utilized the well-curated

D. melanogaster gene ontology database, downloaded from FlyBase (122). We performed GSEA

analysis on genes with 1:1 orthologs identified previously, associating the *D. melanogaster* GO

terms to *A. mellifera* and *M. pharaonis* orthologs. We identified GO terms associated with caste-

biased or behavior-biased genes using the P-value of differential expression between queens and

workers or nurses and foragers. We identified GO terms associated with overall caste or behavior

bias using the value of overall caste bias or overall behavior bias as input. We identified enriched

terms with P-value < 0.05.

General statistical analyses

We performed all statistical analyses and constructed plots in R, version 3.4.0 (R Core Team

2017), aided by the packages "plyr" (123), "ggplot2" (124), "gridExtra", version 2.3 (125) and

"cowplot", version 0.9.3 (126). To test for the effect of phylostrata on caste or behavior bias, we

constructed a generalized linear model using the Gamma distribution and treating phylostrata as

an ordinal variable. To test for the effects of connectivity and evolutionary rate (dN/dS) on caste

or behavior bias while controlling for expression, we employed partial correlation analysis using

the package "ppcor" (127).

Data availability

All data and scripts required to generate figures, tables, and perform statistical analyses are

available on Github: https://github.com/oist/devnetwork. Raw reads are deposited at DNA Data

Bank of Japan.

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Fig. 1. Number of differentially expressed genes (FDR < 0.1) between A) queens and workers and B) nurses and foragers at each developmental stage or tissue in *M. pharaonis* (left) and *A. mellifera* (right). "Head", "thorax", and "abdomen" refer to body segments of adults, while pupa and larva refers to whole bodies. Genes are divided by color into categories based on gene-gene orthology between the two species. "No ortholog" refers to genes for which no 1:1 ortholog exists (either due to apparent duplication or complete lack or orthology), "not shared caste/task bias" refers to genes for which 1:1 orthologs can be identified but are only differentially expressed in one species, and "shared caste/task" bias refers to genes for which 1:1 orthologs are differentially expressed in both species. Insets show the proportion of each category of gene out of all differentially expressed genes at that stage or tissue. C) Across 1:1 orthologs, genes with shared queen bias (upregulated in queen abdomens of both species) are comprised of proportionally more ancient genes than those with shared worker bias or genes with inconsistent bias.

*: the category "larva" represents differential expression across larvae of all stages for which caste can be identified (second to fifth larval stage).

Fig. 2. Abdominal caste bias ($\log_2$ fold change queen versus worker) is correlated with connectivity within the queen-abdomen module in A) ants (rho = 0.536, P < 0.001) and B) honey bees (rho = 0.617, P < 0.001), indicating that centrally located genes in the module are highly queen-biased. Genes upregulated in queens are in red, while genes upregulated in workers are in blue. Connectivity is proportional to the most highly connected gene in the module. Furthermore, connectivity within the queen abdominal module is higher in genes found in the module for both species (shared) versus genes found in the module for only one species (not shared) in C) ants and D) honey bees. ***P < 0.001 (Wilcoxon test)

Fig. 3. Caste bias is derived from sex bias. Abdominal caste bias (queen vs worker $\log_2$ fold-change) is correlated to abdominal sex bias (queen vs male $\log_2$ fold-change) in A) *M. pharaonis* (rho = 0.715, P < 0.001) and B) *A. mellifera* (rho = 0.774, P < 0.001) and abdominal sex bias is correlated between the two species (rho = 0.280, P < 0.001) (C). Red indicates shared queen-biased abdominal DEGs, while blue indicates shared worker-biased abdominal DEGs. Grey indicates genes that did not exhibit shared expression patterns or were not differentially expressed. D) Shared queen-biased abdominal DEGs tend to be female-biased in *D. melanogaster* while shared worker-biased abdominal DEGs tend to be male-biased in *D. melanogaster* (likely reflecting down-regulation in females). Sex bias in *D. melanogaster* is calculated based on whole bodies.

Fig. 4. Genes that exhibit more caste bias across tissues and developmental stages have younger estimated evolutionary ages (A,B) and tend to be loosely connected (C,D; ant: rho = -0.159, P < 0.001; honey bee: rho = -0.090, P < 0.001) and rapidly evolving (E,F; ant: rho = 0.157, P < 0.001; honey bee: rho = 0.240, P < 0.001). "Overall caste bias" combines queen/worker $\log_2$ fold-change values across all development stages and adult body segments. Connectivity is calculated using all samples and genes and scaled proportionally to the highest value.

Fig. S1. Pearson correlation of log-fold change between queens and workers as measured at each stage or tissue in *M. pharaonis* and *A. mellifera* for each 1:1 ortholog (N = 7640). Error bars indicate Pearson correlation 95% confidence intervals. In (A), the category "larva*" represents differential expression across larval stages, while in (B) each larval stage (L2-L5) is plotted individually.

Fig. S2. Pearson correlation of log-fold change between nurses and foragers as measured in each tissue in *M. pharaonis* and *A. mellifera* for each 1:1 ortholog (N = 7640). Error bars indicate Pearson correlation 95% confidence intervals.

Fig. S3. Log$_2$ fold-change at each stage/tissue in each phylostrata category. Positive values indicating higher expression in queens compared to workers. Log$_2$ fold-change has been adjusted relative to the median value at that stage/tissue, in order to compare across tests. "Ancient" genes indicate any genes shared beyond insects (i.e. with vertebrates).

Fig. S4. Number of developmental differentially expressed genes in ants and in honey bees. "No ortholog" refers to genes for which no 1:1 ortholog exists (either due to apparent duplication or complete lack or orthology), "not shared developmental" refers to genes for which 1:1 orthologs can be identified but are only differentially expressed between developmental stages in one species, and "shared developmental" refers to genes for which 1:1 orthologs are differentially expressed between developmental stages in both species.

Fig. S5. Pearson correlation of caste (queen/worker) and sex (queen/male) expression bias in ants and honey bees. Error bars represent Pearson correlation 95% confidence intervals. Correlations are significant in all cases (P < 0.001), but abdominal correlations are strongest.

Fig. S6. Number of times each gene is upregulated in queen and workers across all comparisons (larva, pupa, and adult head, thorax, and abdomen). Color brightness is logarithmically proportional to the number of genes in each cell. N = 10804 genes for ants, N = 11775 genes for honey bees.

Fig. S7. Overall caste bias (A) and overall behavior bias (B) is correlated between ants and honey bees. "Overall" bias refers to the Euclidean distance of all log$_2$ fold-change values (queens/worker for caste, nurses/foragers for behavior). The red line is the trendline of a linear model; Spearman correlation P < 0.001 in all cases.

Fig. S8. Overall caste bias and overall behavior bias were correlated within A) ants and B) honey bees. "Overall" bias refers to the Euclidean distance of all log$_2$ fold-change values (queens/worker for caste, nurses/foragers for behavior). The red line is the trendline of a linear model; Spearman correlation $P < 0.001$ in all cases.

Fig. S9. Genes that exhibit more behavior bias across tissues have younger estimated evolutionary ages (A,B) and tend to be loosely connected (C,D; ant: rho = -0.099, P < 0.001; honey bee: rho = -0.157, P < 0.001) and rapidly evolving (E,F; ant: rho = 0.079, P < 0.001; honey bee: rho = 0.226, P < 0.001). "Overall behavior bias" combines nurse forager $\log_2$ fold-change values across all adult body segments. Connectivity is calculated using all samples and genes and scaled proportionally to the highest value.

Fig. S10. Genes exhibiting more behavior bias tend to be tissue-specific. There was a positive correlation (Spearman correlation, P < 0.001 in each case) between caste/behavior bias and tissue specificity, where tissue specificity ( ) is estimated using data from 12 honey bee tissues.   = 1 indicates a genes is expressed in only one tissue, while lower values indicate genes are more ubiquitously (i.e. evenly) expressed across tissues. The red line is the trendline of a linear model.

Fig. S11. Histogram of the frequency with which genes were placed in the queen abdomen bicluster (out of 1000 runs). Plaid biclustering is a non-deterministic process, so different sets of genes can be present in each run. In ants (A), 1039 genes were present in >90% of queen abdomen biclusters and retained for further analysis. There are two peaks in the frequency distribution for honey bees (B). The lower frequency peak is made up of worker-associated genes (downregulated in queen abdomens) while the higher frequency peak (~60%) is made up of queen-associated genes. We retained genes with >60% frequency for further analysis.

Species	Stage	Tissue	Caste	Type	Replicates
ant	egg	whole body	N/A	N/A	6
ant	L1	whole body	N/A	N/A	6
ant	L2	whole body	queen	N/A	3
ant	L2	whole body	worker	N/A	3
ant	L3	whole body	queen	N/A	3
ant	L3	whole body	worker	N/A	3
ant	L4	whole body	queen	N/A	3
ant	L4	whole body	worker	N/A	3
ant	L5	whole body	queen	N/A	3
ant	L5	whole body	worker	N/A	3
ant	pupa	whole body	queen	N/A	3
ant	pupa	whole body	worker	N/A	3
ant	pupa	whole body	male	N/A	3
ant	adult	head	queen	virgin queen	3
ant	adult	thorax	queen	virgin queen	3
ant	adult	abdomen	queen	virgin queen	3
ant	adult	head	queen	mated queen	3
ant	adult	thorax	queen	mated queen	3
ant	adult	abdomen	queen	mated queen	3
ant	adult	head	worker	nurse	3
ant	adult	thorax	worker	nurse	3
ant	adult	abdomen	worker	nurse	3
ant	adult	head	worker	forager	3
ant	adult	thorax	worker	forager	3
ant	adult	abdomen	worker	forager	3
ant	adult	head	male	N/A	3
ant	adult	thorax	male	N/A	3
ant	adult	abdomen	male	N/A	3
honey bee	egg	whole body	N/A	N/A	3
honey bee	L1	whole body	N/A	N/A	3
honey bee	L2	whole body	queen	N/A	3
honey bee	L2	whole body	worker	N/A	3
honey bee	L3	whole body	queen	N/A	3
honey bee	L3	whole body	worker	N/A	3
honey bee	L4	whole body	queen	N/A	3
honey bee	L4	whole body	worker	N/A	3
honey bee	L5	whole body	queen	N/A	3
honey bee	L5	whole body	worker	N/A	4
honey bee	pupa	whole body	queen	N/A	5
honey bee	pupa	whole body	worker	N/A	3
honey bee	pupa	whole body	male	N/A	3
honey bee	adult	head	queen	virgin queen	3
honey bee	adult	thorax	queen	virgin queen	3
honey bee	adult	abdomen	queen	virgin queen	3
honey bee	adult	head	queen	mated queen	3
honey bee	adult	thorax	queen	mated queen	3
honey bee	adult	abdomen	queen	mated queen	3
honey bee	adult	head	worker	nurse	3
honey bee	adult	thorax	worker	nurse	3
honey bee	adult	abdomen	worker	nurse	3
honey bee	adult	head	worker	forager	3
honey bee	adult	thorax	worker	forager	3
honey bee	adult	abdomen	worker	forager	3
honey bee	adult	head	male	N/A	3
honey bee	adult	thorax	male	N/A	3
honey bee	adult	abdomen	male	N/A	3

Table S1. Full listing of sample types and number of each sample collected. "L1" and "L2" refers to larvae of the first and second stage, etc. We began caste-specific sampling at stage two because caste is determined and regulated in *M. pharaonis* by the end of the first larval instar (101). After the first larval instar in *M. pharaonis*, worker-destined larvae can be distinguished from reproductive-destined larvae, which include male-destined and queen-destined larvae (97). As such, our "queen-destined" ant larvae samples likely contain some male-destined larvae, but the proportion is expected to be low, as the sex ratio is known to be heavily queen-biased (128). Sex and caste are both known in *A. mellifera* larvae, as individuals are reared in separate cells (16).

stage/tissue	species	total DEGs	queen associated	worker associated
L2	ant	119	31	88
L3	ant	818	490	328
L4	ant	81	65	16
L5	ant	757	437	320
pupa	ant	290	88	202
head	ant	741	420	321
thorax	ant	1327	695	632
abdomen	ant	4395	2711	1684
larva_overall	ant	361	241	120
L2	honey bee	136	60	76
L3	honey bee	117	28	89
L4	honey bee	724	224	500
L5	honey bee	1009	540	469
pupa	honey bee	245	163	82
head	honey bee	1144	717	427
thorax	honey bee	1369	721	648
abdomen	honey bee	5352	2769	2583
larva_overall	honey bee	473	176	297

Table S2. Number of differentially expressed genes (DEGs) between queens and workers for each comparison (FDR < 0.1). "L2", "L3", etc refer to the 2nd and 3rd larval stage, respectively, while "larva_overall" is the result of differential expression with caste as main effect across all larval samples. Differentially expressed genes are divided into "queen associated", which

exhibited higher expression in queens, and "worker associated", which exhibited higher expression in workers. Differential expression analysis performed with N = 10804 (ant) and 11775 (honey bee) genes.

GO.ID	Term	P	stage/tissue
GO:0007265	Ras protein signal transduction	0.00026	larva
GO:0046578	regulation of Ras protein signal transduction	0.00029	larva
GO:0051056	regulation of small GTPase mediated signal transduction	0.00048	larva
GO:0007264	small GTPase mediated signal transduction	0.00071	larva
GO:0060628	regulation of ER to Golgi vesicle-mediated transport	0.00071	larva
GO:0006970	response to osmotic stress	0.00089	pupa
GO:0009651	response to salt stress	0.00287	pupa
GO:0019432	triglyceride biosynthetic process	0.00297	pupa
GO:0046460	neutral lipid biosynthetic process	0.00297	pupa
GO:0046463	acylglycerol biosynthetic process	0.00297	pupa
GO:0072525	pyridine-containing compound biosynthetic process	0.0018	head
GO:0001704	formation of primary germ layer	0.0042	head
GO:0002098	tRNA wobble uridine modification	0.0050	head
GO:0043086	negative regulation of catalytic activity	0.0071	head
GO:0010508	positive regulation of autophagy	0.0078	head
GO:0019362	pyridine nucleotide metabolic process	0.00021	thorax
GO:0046496	nicotinamide nucleotide metabolic process	0.00021	thorax
GO:0006733	oxidoreduction coenzyme metabolic process	0.00043	thorax
GO:0072524	pyridine-containing compound metabolic process	0.00054	thorax
GO:0006739	NADP metabolic process	0.00088	thorax
GO:0042445	hormone metabolic process	7.5e-05	abdomen
GO:0010817	regulation of hormone levels	0.00041	abdomen
GO:0042181	ketone biosynthetic process	0.00089	abdomen
GO:0042180	cellular ketone metabolic process	0.00094	abdomen
GO:0034754	cellular hormone metabolic process	0.00108	abdomen

Table S3. Enriched gene ontology terms based on Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA) of differential expression between queens and workers in ants. P-value derived from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests.

GO.ID	Term	P	stage/tissue
GO:0019722	calcium-mediated signaling	0.0010	larva
GO:0046113	nucleobase catabolic process	0.0021	larva
GO:0007411	axon guidance	0.0024	larva
GO:0061564	axon development	0.0027	larva
GO:0035039	male pronucleus assembly	0.0032	larva
GO:0008544	epidermis development	0.00053	pupa
GO:0008286	insulin receptor signaling pathway	0.00065	pupa
GO:0034599	cellular response to oxidative stress	0.00097	pupa
GO:0032869	cellular response to insulin stimulus	0.00106	pupa
GO:0071375	cellular response to peptide hormone stimulus	0.00106	pupa
GO:0008610	lipid biosynthetic process	0.00011	head
GO:0016070	RNA metabolic process	0.00018	head
GO:0030534	adult behavior	0.00028	head
GO:0008344	adult locomotory behavior	0.00031	head
GO:0007478	leg disc morphogenesis	0.00041	head
GO:0048747	muscle fiber development	0.0011	thorax
GO:0090254	cell elongation involved in imaginal disc-derived wing morphogenesis	0.0027	thorax
GO:0006457	protein folding	0.0045	thorax
GO:0071897	DNA biosynthetic process	0.0055	thorax
GO:0034063	stress granule assembly	0.0071	thorax
GO:0045887	positive regulation of synaptic growth at neuromuscular junction	0.00037	abdomen
GO:1904398	positive regulation of neuromuscular junction development	0.00037	abdomen
GO:0051965	positive regulation of synapse assembly	0.00116	abdomen
GO:0030490	maturation of SSU-rRNA	0.00126	abdomen
GO:0007436	larval salivary gland morphogenesis	0.00205	abdomen

Table S4. Enriched gene ontology terms based on Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA) of differential expression between queens and workers in honey bees. P-value derived from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests.

stage/tissue	species	total DEGs	nurse associated	forager associated
head	ant	405	314	91
thorax	ant	490	305	185
abdomen	ant	544	341	203
head	honey bee	927	404	523
thorax	honey bee	2519	1243	1276
abdomen	honey bee	2017	1007	1010

Table S5. Number of differentially expressed genes (DEGs) between nurses and foragers for each comparison (FDR < 0.1). Differentially expressed genes are divided into "nurse associated", which exhibited higher expression in nurses, and "forager associated", which exhibited higher expression in foragers. Differential expression analysis performed with N = 10804 (ant) and 11775 (honey bee) genes.

GO.ID	Term	P	tissue
GO:0048284	organelle fusion	0.00021	head
GO:0006629	lipid metabolic process	0.00138	head
GO:0048580	regulation of post-embryonic development	0.00186	head
GO:0044255	cellular lipid metabolic process	0.00217	head
GO:0044801	single-organism membrane fusion	0.00226	head
GO:0032502	developmental process	0.00019	thorax
GO:0007525	somatic muscle development	0.00035	thorax
GO:0044767	single-organism developmental process	0.00041	thorax
GO:0007275	multicellular organism development	0.00041	thorax
GO:0090175	regulation of establishment of planar polarity	0.00043	thorax
GO:0000289	nuclear-transcribed mRNA poly(A) tail shortening	0.0017	abdomen
GO:0007006	mitochondrial membrane organization	0.0054	abdomen
GO:0042441	eye pigment metabolic process	0.0056	abdomen
GO:0043324	pigment metabolic process involved in developmental pigmentation	0.0056	abdomen
GO:0043474	pigment metabolic process involved in pigmentation	0.0056	abdomen

Table S6. Enriched gene ontology terms based on Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA) of differential expression between nurses and foragers in ants. P-value derived from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests.

GO.ID	Term	P	stage/tissue
GO:0019722	calcium-mediated signaling	0.0010	larva
GO:0046113	nucleobase catabolic process	0.0021	larva
GO:0007411	axon guidance	0.0024	larva
GO:0061564	axon development	0.0027	larva
GO:0035039	male pronucleus assembly	0.0032	larva
GO:0008544	epidermis development	0.00053	pupa
GO:0008286	insulin receptor signaling pathway	0.00065	pupa
GO:0034599	cellular response to oxidative stress	0.00097	pupa
GO:0032869	cellular response to insulin stimulus	0.00106	pupa
GO:0071375	cellular response to peptide hormone stimulus	0.00106	pupa
GO:0008610	lipid biosynthetic process	0.00011	head
GO:0016070	RNA metabolic process	0.00018	head
GO:0030534	adult behavior	0.00028	head
GO:0008344	adult locomotory behavior	0.00031	head
GO:0007478	leg disc morphogenesis	0.00041	head
GO:0048747	muscle fiber development	0.0011	thorax
GO:0090254	cell elongation involved in imaginal disc-derived wing morphogenesis	0.0027	thorax
GO:0006457	protein folding	0.0045	thorax
GO:0071897	DNA biosynthetic process	0.0055	thorax
GO:0034063	stress granule assembly	0.0071	thorax
GO:0045887	positive regulation of synaptic growth at neuromuscular junction	0.00037	abdomen
GO:1904398	positive regulation of neuromuscular junction development	0.00037	abdomen
GO:0051965	positive regulation of synapse assembly	0.00116	abdomen
GO:0030490	maturation of SSU-rRNA	0.00126	abdomen
GO:0007436	larval salivary gland morphogenesis	0.00205	abdomen

Table S7. Enriched gene ontology terms based on Gene Set Enrichment Analysis (GSEA) of differential expression between nurses and foragers in honey bees. P-value derived from Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests.

Gene	logFC queen/worker	connectivity	SwissProt
LOC105837185	9.333	0.793	Leukocyte elastase inhibitor A
LOC105838268	8.610	0.790	Gephyrin
LOC105836111	8.147	0.784	RCC1 and BTB domain-containing protein 1
LOC105836023	7.962	0.772	Histone H2B
LOC105834654	7.258	0.797	Vitellogenin receptor
LOC105837528	6.871	0.848	Ankyrin-2
LOC105838623	6.713	0.855	Transcription factor SOX-14
LOC105829700	6.447	0.839	Maternal embryonic leucine zipper kinase
LOC105834441	6.307	0.864	Nuclear RNA export factor 1
LOC105830728	6.115	0.911	S-phase kinase-associated protein 2
LOC105837219	5.825	0.926	Rac GTPase-activating protein 1
LOC105840891	5.777	0.973	Acidic repeat-containing protein
LOC105838786	5.389	0.824	Spondin-1
LOC105837988	5.364	0.819	Multiple PDZ domain protein
LOC105830806	5.311	0.833	Insulin-degrading enzyme
LOC105836312	5.144	0.797	Serine protease nudel
LOC105836129	5.108	0.915	Rho GTPase-activating protein 19
LOC105834586	5.078	0.906	Putative bifunctional UDP-N-acetylglucosamine transferase and deubiquitinase ALG13
LOC105832223	5.058	0.874	E3 ubiquitin-protein ligase SIAH1
LOC105840292	4.974	0.785	Pre-mRNA-splicing factor RBM22
LOC105840093	4.833	0.897	ATP-dependent RNA helicase vasa isoform A
LOC105833898	4.812	0.925	Piwi-like protein 1
LOC105839662	4.676	0.966	G2/mitotic-specific cyclin-B3
LOC105828383	4.542	0.949	Histone RNA hairpin-binding protein
LOC105831777	4.326	0.815	Protein dispatched
LOC105835848	4.292	0.807	Glyoxylate reductase
LOC105838831	4.242	0.890	Broad-complex core protein isoform 6
LOC105832464	4.188	0.774	Zinc finger protein 800
LOC105837226	4.096	0.883	DNA repair and recombination protein RAD54-like (Fragment)
LOC105834656	4.077	0.805	Putative ATP-dependent RNA helicase me31b

Table S8. Hub genes of the queen abdominal module in ants. Hub genes were defined as genes with intra-modular connectivity in at least the 90th percentile, and $\log_2$ fold-change (queen/worker) greater than 2.

Gene	logFC queen/worker	connectivity	SwissProt
LOC724752	11.662	0.746	E3 ubiquitin-protein ligase TRIM71
LOC410888	9.000	0.829	lachesin-like
LOC410684	7.405	0.754	homeobox protein OTX1 A
LOC100576333	6.493	0.738	nucleoredoxin-like
LOC725841	6.339	0.897	hyaluronan mediated motility receptor
LOC100577382	6.272	0.896	targeting protein for Xklp2 homolog
LOC551099	6.172	0.760	coiled-coil domain-containing protein 43
LOC724193	5.957	0.859	kinesin-like protein KIF18A
LOC726506	5.927	0.828	protein claret segregational
LOC725920	5.829	0.875	vitellogenin receptor
LOC100576828	5.826	0.843	protein maelstrom 2
LOC412031	5.811	0.930	S-phase kinase-associated protein 2
LOC102656846	5.705	0.942	cyclin-A2
LOC411529	5.531	0.861	maternal embryonic leucine zipper kinase-like
LOC410502	5.456	0.910	transformation/transcription domain-associated protein
LOC410015	5.270	0.778	protein LSM14 homolog A
LOC100578691	5.186	0.909	rhoGEF domain-containing protein gxcJ-like
LOC100578255	5.073	0.734	ras GTPase-activating-like protein IQGAP1
LOC552100	4.953	0.809	protein ovo
LOC100576908	4.883	0.917	polycomb protein Asx
LOC551871	4.808	0.912	P protein-like
LOC411970	4.546	0.767	G kinase-anchoring protein 1-like
LOC725606	4.498	0.758	serine protease gd
LOC409092	4.486	0.850	enhancer of mRNA-decapping protein 3
LOC409681	4.483	0.807	RWD domain-containing protein 1
LOC411809	4.460	0.780	enolase-phosphatase E1
LOC551773	4.320	0.876	serine/threonine-protein kinase VRK1-like
LOC413667	4.212	0.914	G2/mitotic-specific cyclin-B3
LOC409472	3.995	0.975	protein Smaug homolog 1
LOC552725	3.868	0.848	N-acetylglucosamine-1-phosphotransferase subunits alpha/beta

Table S9. Hub genes of the queen abdominal module in honey bees. Hub genes were defined as genes with intra-modular connectivity in at least the 90th percentile, and $\log_2$ fold-change (queen/worker) greater than 2.

GO.ID	Term	P	test
GO:0010977	negative regulation of neuron projection development	0.00032	ant caste
GO:0014017	neuroblast fate commitment	0.00038	ant caste
GO:0045165	cell fate commitment	0.00041	ant caste
GO:0007400	neuroblast fate determination	0.00085	ant caste
GO:0010771	negative regulation of cell morphogenesis involved in differentiation	0.00122	ant caste
GO:0060322	head development	2.3e-07	ant behavior
GO:0007420	brain development	3.6e-07	ant behavior
GO:0016319	mushroom body development	1.6e-05	ant behavior
GO:0045165	cell fate commitment	2.1e-05	ant behavior
GO:0007417	central nervous system development	4.2e-05	ant behavior
GO:0006650	glycerophospholipid metabolic process	0.00046	bee caste
GO:0051231	spindle elongation	0.00098	bee caste
GO:0046488	phosphatidylinositol metabolic process	0.00134	bee caste
GO:0035050	embryonic heart tube development	0.00194	bee caste
GO:0000022	mitotic spindle elongation	0.00222	bee caste
GO:0035295	tube development	0.00020	bee behavior
GO:0002009	morphogenesis of an epithelium	0.00029	bee behavior
GO:0035239	tube morphogenesis	0.00032	bee behavior
GO:0048729	tissue morphogenesis	0.00061	bee behavior
GO:0060562	epithelial tube morphogenesis	0.00123	bee behavior

Table S10. Enriched gene ontology terms based on overall caste or behavior bias in ants and honey bees. GO terms are derived from *D. melanogaster* orthologs. P-value is from gene set enrichment analysis (Kolmogorov–Smirnov test)

species	comparison	abdomen included?	variable tested	Spearman rho	P-value
ant	caste	yes	connectivity	-0.162	3.92e-33
ant	caste	no	connectivity	-0.282	1.38e-99
ant	caste	yes	dN/dS	0.151	6.07e-29
ant	caste	no	dN/dS	0.130	8.51e-22
ant	caste	yes	evolutionary age	0.159	5.19e-32
ant	caste	no	evolutionary age	0.161	5.96e-33
honey bee	caste	yes	connectivity	0.003	8.13e-01
honey bee	caste	no	connectivity	-0.132	4.61e-20
honey bee	caste	yes	dN/dS	0.155	3.15e-27
honey bee	caste	no	dN/dS	0.169	4.27e-32
honey bee	caste	yes	evolutionary age	0.166	3.72e-31
honey bee	caste	no	evolutionary age	0.154	7.95e-27
honey bee	caste	yes	tau	0.409	1.33e-193
honey bee	caste	no	tau	0.397	1.14e-180
ant	behavior	yes	connectivity	-0.157	4.29e-31
ant	behavior	no	connectivity	-0.119	1.24e-18
ant	behavior	yes	dN/dS	0.043	1.75e-03
ant	behavior	no	dN/dS	0.020	1.38e-01
ant	behavior	yes	evolutionary age	0.021	1.25e-01
ant	behavior	no	evolutionary age	0.014	3.02e-01
honey bee	behavior	yes	connectivity	-0.162	9.22e-30
honey bee	behavior	no	connectivity	-0.137	1.49e-21
honey bee	behavior	yes	dN/dS	0.174	7.02e-34
honey bee	behavior	no	dN/dS	0.150	1.83e-25
honey bee	behavior	yes	evolutionary age	0.161	3.49e-29
honey bee	behavior	no	evolutionary age	0.126	1.95e-18
honey bee	behavior	yes	tau	0.328	9.55e-121
honey bee	behavior	no	tau	0.281	5.79e-88

Table S11. Partial correlation between connectivity, evolutionary rate (dN/dS), evolutionary age (phylostrata), and tissue-specificity (tau) and caste or behavior bias while accounting for expression. Analysis was performed separately for each species and comparison (i.e. separately for caste bias and behavior bias), as well as while including or excluding abdomen in calculations of caste bias and expression. Connectivity is total connectivity measured across all samples and genes. Phylostrata is a measure of estimated evolutionary age, with higher values indicating younger genes. Tau is the degree to which genes exhibit tissue-specific expression across 12 honey bee tissues (results presented only for honey bees). N = 10520 genes (ants), 10011 genes (honey bees).

Species	NCBI Taxonomy ID
Acromyrmex echinatior	103372
Atta cephalotes	12957
Atta colombica	520822
Camponotus floridanus	104421
Cardiocondyla obscurior	286306
Monomorium pharaonis	307658
Linepithema humile	83485
Lasius niger	67767
Harpegnathos saltator	610380
Dinoponera quadriceps	609295
Cyphomyrmex costatus	456900
Ooceraea biroi	2015173
Pogonomyrmex barbatus	144034
Pseudomyrmex gracilis	219809
Solenopsis invicta	13686
Trachymyrmex septentrionalis	34720
Trachymyrmex cornetzi	471704
Trachymyrmex zeteki	64791
Vollenhovia emeryi	411798
Wasmannia auropunctata	64793
Temnothorax curvispinosus	300111
Apis cerana	7461
Apis dorsata	7462
Apis florea	7463
Apis mellifera	7460
Bombus impatiens	132113
Bombus terrestris	30195
Melipona quadrifasciata	166423
Eufriesea mexicana	516756
Ceratina calcarata	156304
Megachile rotundata	143995
Habropoda laboriosa	597456
Dufourea novaeangliae	178035
Polistes canadensis	91411
Polistes dominula	743375
Ceratosolen solmsi	142686
Ceratosolen solmsi marchali	326594
Copidosoma floridanum	29053
Fopius arisanus	64838
Microplitis demolitor	69319
Nasonia vitripennis	7425
Trichogramma pretiosum	7493
Trichomalopsis sarcophagae	543379
Diachasma alloeum	454923
Orussus abietinus	222816
Athalia rosae	37344
Cephus cinctus	211228
Neodiprion lecontei	441921
Pediculus humanus	121225
Drosophila melanogaster	7227
Aedes aegypti	7159
Bombyx mori	7091
Papilio machaon	76193
Anopheles gambiae	7165
Onthophagus taurus	166361
Tribolium castaneum	7070
Acyrthosiphon pisum	7029
Zootermopsis nevadensis	136037
Caenorhabditis elegans	6239
Hydra vulgaris	6087
Strongylocentrotus purpuratus	7668
Lottia gigantea	225164
Helobdella robusta	6412
Mus musculus	10090
Homo sapiens	9606
Xenopus tropicalis	8364
Latimeria chalumnae	7897
Danio rerio	7955

Table S12. List of species used for phylostratigraphy analysis, with the NCBI Taxonomy ID.