Robust latent-variable interpretation of *in vivo* regression models by nested resampling

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Keywords: systems biology, partial least squares regression, vascular mechanics, inflammation, angiotensin II, tumor necrosis factor α

Word and item count:
Text = 5038
Abstract = 200; References = 58; Figures = 9; Tables = 3

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ABSTRACT

Simple multilinear methods, such as partial least squares regression (PLSR), are effective at interrelating dynamic, multivariate datasets of cell–molecular biology through high-dimensional arrays. However, data collected *in vivo* are more difficult, because animal-to-animal variability is often high, and each time-point measured is usually a terminal endpoint for that animal. Observations are further complicated by the nesting of cells within tissues or tissue sections, which themselves are nested within animals. Here, we introduce principled resampling strategies that preserve the tissue-animal hierarchy of individual replicates and compute the uncertainty of multidimensional decompositions applied to global averages. Using molecular–phenotypic data from the mouse aorta and colon, we find that interpretation of decomposed latent variables (LVs) changes when PLSR models are resampled. Lagging LVs, which statistically improve global-average models, are unstable in resampled iterations that preserve nesting relationships, arguing that these LVs should not be mined for biological insight. Interestingly, resampling is less discriminatory for multidimensional regressions of *in vitro* data, suggesting it is unnecessary when replicate-to-replicate variance is low. Our work illustrates the challenges and opportunities in translating systems-biology approaches from cultured cells to living organisms. Nested resampling adds a straightforward quality-control step aiding the interpretability of *in vivo* regression models.

INTRODUCTION

Modern biology and physiology demand rich, quantitative, time-resolved observations obtained by different methods[1]. To analyze such datasets, statistical "data-driven" modeling[2] approaches have been productively deployed *in vitro* to examine network-level relationships between signal transduction and cell phenotype[3–9]. One class of models uses partial least squares regression (PLSR) to factorize data by the measured biological variables[10]. Linear combinations are iteratively extracted as latent variables (LVs) that optimize the covariation between independent and dependent datasets to enable input-output predictions. Highly multivariate data are efficiently modeled by a small number of LVs because of the mass-action kinetic processes underlying biological regulation[11].

The success of PLSR at capturing biological function extends to nonlinear derivatives[12] and structured multidimensional data arrays[13] (tensors) from cell lines. By contrast, *in vivo* applications of PLSR have not gone beyond qualitative classification of inputs or outcomes[14–17]. The gap is unfortunate, because *in vivo* studies are the gold standard to compare phenotypes across species[18,19], disease models[20,21], and laboratories[22–26]. Animal surrogates can offer insight into the (patho)physiologic function of individual proteins, but interpreting the consequences of *in vivo* perturbations is complicated[27,28]. Applying PLSR quantitatively to *in vivo* data may better identify the underlying networks that, when perturbed, yield clinically relevant phenotypes.

For predictive modeling, there are many hurdles to using PLSR- and other LV-based approaches with *in vivo* data. Unlike spectroscopy (where PLSR originated[10]) or experiments in cultured cells, variation among *in vivo* replicates is often large even within inbred strains[29–31], and this uncertainty does not get transmitted to standard models built from global averages. Including all replicates fixes the problem but creates others related to crossvalidation[32] and the nesting of

replicates in the study design[33]. *In vivo* data are typically grouped by replicate within a time point but are unpaired between time points, complicating model construction. An open question is whether the combinatorics of replicated, multivariate *in vivo* datasets can be tackled algorithmically within a multidimensional PLSR framework.

In this study, we apply computational statistics[34] to the construction and interpretation of *in vivo* PLSR models built from multidimensional arrays (Fig. 1). Replicate-to-replicate uncertainty is propagated by resampling strategies that maintain the nesting relationships of the data acquisition. Nested resampling separates robust latent variables, which arise regardless of replicate configuration, from those that are statistically important in the global-average model but fragile upon resampling. Interpretations of robustness are more conservative when nested resampling is executed by bootstrapping (a leave-one-in approach) than by jackknifing (a leave-one-out approach). By contrast, neither is especially informative at discriminating latent variables when applied to a highly reproducible[35] multidimensional dataset collected *in vitro*, bolstering the claims of earlier studies with cultured cells[3–9]. By leveraging the structure of multidimensional arrays, nested resampling provides a rapid numerical means to incorporate the uncertainty of *in vivo* observations into data-driven models without violating their mathematical assumptions.

RESULTS

We sought an implementation of PLSR that robustly analyzes *in vivo* datasets comprised of temporal, multiparameter, and interrelated responses to perturbations. At the core of a PLSR model are its LVs (alternatively, principal components), which capture separable covariations among measured observations[2,36]. Interpreting LV features—for example, a "score" related to a condition or a "weight" ("loading") related to a measured observation—is aided by computational

106 randomization approaches that build hundreds of null models from the same data but without any
107 true structure[13,37]. Scores and loadings that are similar between the null model and the actual model
108 indicate data artifacts (biases, batch effects, etc.) that should not be used for hypothesis generation.
109 Thus, by systematically building many alternative models, the randomization approach
110 contextualizes the meaning of the true model.

111 We reasoned that a conceptually analogous approach might be useful for handling *in vivo*
112 datasets that are inherently more variable than is typical for PLSR[31,32]. Iterative leave-one-out
113 approaches such as jackknifing[38] or crossvalidation[10] are established approaches for omitting
114 individual conditions during PLSR training and validation. Unexplored is whether there could be
115 value in adapting such a strategy to replicates rather than conditions. To resample replicates by
116 jackknifing, one biological replicate (*i.e.*, animal) is randomly omitted from each condition. All
117 observations from that replicate are removed as a group to reflect the nesting relationships within
118 the dataset. After one replicate is left out, averages are recalculated and a resampled PLSR model
119 is built. The distribution of hundreds of jackknifed iterations indicates the extent to which the
120 global-average model requires all of the data available.

121 Reciprocally, one could ask whether the global-average model is sufficiently reconstructed
122 from any of the data by using bootstrapping instead of jackknifing. For bootstrap resampling, the
123 nested observations from one biological replicate (animal) are randomly selected from each
124 condition to build an n-of-one dataset that is modeled by PLSR. As with jackknife resampling,
125 hundreds of iterations are compiled, yielding a bootstrap distribution of models and LVs based on
126 a single instance of the data. Together, nested jackknife–bootstrap resampling should provide
127 numerical estimates for the fragility and robustness of PLSR models constructed from global-
128 average data with high inter-replicate variance.

129 The premise of nested resampling was tested in three contexts. First, we used a
130 multidimensional dataset from Bersi *et al*.[39] to build a new PLSR model, which warranted
131 reinterpretation after nested resampling. We next tested general applicability of the approach by
132 repurposing *in vivo* data from Lau *et al*.[14] to construct a second multidimensional PLSR model for
133 nested-resampling analysis. Last, we asked whether the same tools were similarly informative
134 when applied to an existing multidimensional PLSR model from Chitforoushzadeh *et al*.[13], which
135 was calibrated with highly reproducible data from cultured cells. The results collectively support
136 nested resampling as a useful complement to PLSR models applied to *in vivo* settings when
137 biological variability is large.
138
139 *Nested resampling uncovers PLSR model fragilities missed by randomization*
140 In the study by Bersi *et al*.[39], *ApoE*$^{-/-}$ mice (used for their highly maladaptive hypertension-
141 induced vascular remodeling[40]) were continuously administered Angiotensin II (AngII) and
142 evaluated for enzymatic, cellular, and mechanical changes in four regions of aortic tissue (Table
143 1). Enzymatic–cellular (immuno)histology was collected at three time points and mechanical data
144 at five time points over 28 days along with baseline controls (N = 2–7 animals; Fig. 2). For
145 multidimensional PLSR modeling, data were separated by histological (input) and mechanical
146 (output) data (Fig. 1) and standardized to predict mechanical metrics from histological and
147 immunohistochemical data (see Methods). The working hypothesis of the model was that
148 regionally disparate inflammatory and enzymatic changes in the aorta predictably drive differential
149 changes in tissue mechanical properties.
150 LVs were iteratively defined for the multidimensional arrays by established
151 approaches[13,41], and the model root mean squared error (RMSE) of prediction was minimized with

four LVs (Fig. 3a). By leave-one-out crossvalidation, we found that standardized predictions of the four-LV model were accurate to within ~75% of the measured result when averaged across all conditions (Fig. 3b), suggesting good predictive capacity. The four LVs of the multidimensional PLSR model thereby parse the regional, temporal, and molecular–cellular–mechanical covariations in the global-average dataset (Supplementary Fig. S1).

For LV interpretation and hypothesis generation from the Bersi *et al*.[39] dataset, we compared existing randomization methods[13,37] to nested resampling. Across the four LVs, nearly all mechanical observations were weighted beyond the standard deviation of random null models (Fig. 4a,b), supporting interpretation of the weights. For example, inner radius was positively weighted on LV3 (ir; Fig. 4b) whereas thickness measures were negatively weighted on LV3 (H and h; Fig. 4b), suggesting that LV3 may discriminate aneurysmal dilatation, which predisposes to aortic dissection and rupture[42], and fibrotic thickening, which predisposes to myocardial infarction and stroke via increased arterial stiffness[43]. However, interpretations changed when biological variability of the underlying *in vivo* data was considered through nested resampling (Fig. 4c–f). Both jackknifed and bootstrapped resampling suggested that LV3 and LV4 were too unstable to justify interpreting any parameters in these LVs (Fig. 4d,f). LV1 and LV2 yielded nonzero weights that were more robust, even retaining certain thickness and outer-diameter observations that were excluded by randomization (H, od, and OD; Fig. 4c). However, nested resampling revealed considerable uncertainty in the weights of LV3 and LV4 (Fig. 4d,f), arguing against any quantitative comparison of mechanical observations along these LVs. In contrast to standard performance metrics for PLSR (Fig. 3 and 4a,b), nested resampling provisioned the Bersi *et al*.[39] model as fragile in its lagging LVs compared to the robustness of LV1 and LV2.

One possible explanation for such high uncertainty is that some resampled models might switch the sign of an LV weight together with the associated LV score, which mutually offset as a degenerate solution (Fig. 1). We accounted for sign switching by looking for symmetric bimodal distributions about zero and flipping signs to the dominant mode when switching was evident. Some bimodal scores were asymmetrically distributed with a near-zero mode (*e.g.*, the distribution of LV1–LV2 scores for the DTA condition; Supplementary Fig. S2), indicating that their LV assignments were heavily dependent on the resampling iteration. For LV3 and LV4, however, the distribution of scores was broad among resampling replicates and mostly indistinguishable from zero (Supplementary Fig. S2). Uncertainty in the trailing LVs may stem from model iterations requiring less than 4 LVs to explain the variance in that iteration. The analysis further supports that the lagging LVs of this model do not contain prevailing trends in the data but instead capture a specific replicate configuration of the animals used.

Data pairing does not significantly alter results of nested resampling

In the Bersi *et al.*[39] study, inbred animals sacrificed at several time points were doubly used to collect enzymatic–cellular histology (X) and mechanical data (Y; Fig. 1). Possibly, the paired animal-by-animal covariation of histology and mechanics was greater than the condition-wide averages. We sought to evaluate the relative importance of within-animal pairing between independent and dependent datasets by applying nested resampling. To do so, we built a second PLSR model using only the time points with paired enzymatic–cellular and mechanical data: 0, 4, 14, and 28 days (Fig. 2). For the second model, resampling was coupled between X and Y to retain the paired information of each animal selected by bootstrapping. The interpretation of

196 bootstrap-resampled time weights for the paired model was then compared with the original
197 unpaired model to determine if conclusions were fundamentally different.

198 We found that the LV1–LV2 time weights obtained by paired sampling were
199 indistinguishable from those obtained by unpaired sampling (Fig. 5, upper). Relative to their
200 corresponding global-average model, both analyses indicated that the dynamics associated with
201 LV1 and LV2 were robust, consistent with the prior assessment of mechanical weights for these
202 LVs (Fig. 4). Histological time weights were similarly reliable for LV3 and LV4, but mechanical
203 time weights were highly variable and largely overlapping with zero (Fig. 5, lower). No
204 statistically significant differences were identified between paired and unpaired time weights in
205 LV3 or LV4 ($p > 0.25$ following two-way ANOVA with Tukey's post-hoc test for differences
206 between paired–unpaired or independent–dependent time weights), indicating that pairing does
207 not add statistical power to the trailing LVs for this dataset. More generally, the analysis suggests
208 that unpaired *in vivo* designs may be sufficient for nested resampling to assess the stability of
209 model components.
210
211 *Generality of nested resampling to other multidimensional* in vivo *and* in vitro *datasets*
212 The LV fragilities revealed by nested resampling could be specific to the Bersi *et al.*[39]
213 dataset. We thus sought another *in vivo* study comprised of multiple molecular–cellular
214 measurements, time points, and animals where nested replicate information could be recovered
215 confidently. Raw data was obtained from Lau *et al.*[14], who examined the molecular and cellular
216 inflammatory response of the small intestine to the cytokine tumor necrosis factor α (TNFα).
217 Animals ($N = 5$) were administered one of two doses of TNFα and sacrificed at one of six time
218 points after administration. From each animal, two intestinal regions were analyzed for signaling

by Luminex phosphoproteomics, cell proliferation by immunohistochemistry, and overall cell death by western blotting (Table 2). The data were used previously to classify cell-fate responses[14]—we asked here whether cell proliferation and death were predicted quantitatively from the time-resolved phosphoproteomic observations. If so, then nested resampling could address how robust or fragile those predictions were to the animals included.

We organized and standardized the data (Supplementary Fig. S3), building a single PLSR model of the global averages along with 500 null models by randomization. For the Lau *et al.*[14] dataset, a three-LV model was optimal and yielded good predictive accuracy (Fig. 6). LV1 of the global-average model did not discriminate between tissues or outcomes, but LV2 separated cell proliferation (ph3) vs. death (cc3) readouts and LV3 stratified duodenal vs. ileal segments of the intestine (Supplementary Fig. S4). Furthermore, randomization suggested that the ph3–cc3 distinction along LV2 was far outside chance expectation (Fig. 7a, left). Nested resampling, however, revealed a pronounced fragility of output weights when accounting for inter-replicate variability. Both jackknifing and bootstrapping eliminated any discrimination along LV2 (Fig. 7a, middle and right), undermining model interpretations based on it. Similarly, the time-dependent behavior associated with LV2 and LV3 (Fig. 7b) mostly reverted to near zero after bootstrap resampling (Fig. 7c). Therefore, as with the Bersi *et al.*[39] study, the lagging components of this multidimensional PLSR model capture *in vivo* replicate instabilities instead of salient trends in the data.

It is possible that nested resampling excludes lagging LVs in any multidimensional dataset irrespective of its origin. To determine if fragility is tied to the higher biological variability of *in vivo* datasets, we reassessed an earlier multidimensional PLSR model built from global averages of *in vitro* measurements. The model of Chitforoushzadeh *et al.*[13] predicts gene-expression cluster

dynamics from intracellular signaling in a colon-cancer cell line stimulated with combinations of cytokines and growth factors[3,35,44]. Cell extracts ($N = 2–6$) were collected at three or 13 time points and measured transcriptomically by microarray or for signaling by various methods (Table 3). The prior hypothesis was that quantitative predictions of gene-expression dynamics would uncover novel upstream signaling regulators of transcriptional programs[13].

After obtaining the original dataset and confirming the nested replicate structure, we modeled the mean dataset (Supplementary Fig. S5) standardized as before[13]. The global-average model was optimally decomposed with four LVs, and randomizing 500 null models reproduced all the meaningfully weighted parameters (*e.g.*, gene-cluster weights) described in the original study (Fig. 8a,b). Remarkably, when nested resampling was applied to this PLSR model, the conclusions were largely unaltered. Cluster weights were retained in ~90% of LV2 and LV3 and even ~56% of LV4 (Fig. 8c–f), bolstering prior interpretations of this PLSR model along with others built upon highly reproducible *in vitro* data[3–9,13].

Using all three models resampled here, we plotted RMSE as a function of increasing LV for the global-average model compared to its mean jackknife or bootstrap replication. For the Chitforoushzadeh *et al*.[13] model built from *in vitro* data, jackknife and bootstrap resamplings were superimposable with the global average (Fig. 9a). However, for the two *in vivo* studies, the resampled variants were consistently less accurate than the corresponding global average (Fig. 9b,c). Taken together, the results indicate that nested resampling is an effective strategy—distinct from prevailing methods—to benchmark meaningful LVs extracted from *in vivo* datasets.

DISCUSSION

When applied to *in vivo* PLSR models, nested resampling is an effective way to hone in on latent variables that are robust to the replicate fluctuations of individual inbred animals. For high-variance observations, the method gives information complementary to that obtained by condition-specific jackknifing[38] or crossvalidation[10]. In building hundreds of instances around the global-average model, nested resampling does not rely on any further assumptions to execute. However, it is important to recognize the nesting relationships within a study design and ensure that they are retained during resampling. The diversity of study designs[33] precludes a universal software for nested resampling, but we provide code for the specific implementations here, which can readily be adapted for other *in vivo* datasets (Supplementary File S1).

Normally, direct use of replicated data in PLSR is discouraged, because replicates inflate the number of observations and reduce the stringency of crossvalidation[32]. Resampling avoids data inflation but is minimally effective for latent-variable assessment when replicates are highly reproducible. The *in vitro* model[13] resampled here uses data with a median coefficient of variation of ~11% (Ref. [44]), which is too small to impact the latent variables of the model. In mice, however, phenotypic variability within inbred strains is typically 3–5 times greater[31], competing with the biological effect size of many studies. Replicates are essential for more reliable central estimates and statistical power[45]. This work shows how replicates can be repurposed to reflect better the internal variability of *in vivo* datasets and identify the robust vs. fragile components of regression models that are ordinarily limited to using replication indirectly.

The *in vivo* datasets modeled here used inbred strains of mice to minimize genotypic differences. Modeling outbred strains of animals[31] or diverse human populations[46] will involve very different approaches. Rather than averaging (followed by jackknife–bootstrap resampling), each individual will be better handled as a separate observation if the independent and dependent

data can be reliably paired to that individual. Data pairing may be particularly difficult when X and Y observations are collected at multiple time points. The paired-vs.-unpaired resampling comparison involving the Bersi *et al.*[39] dataset (Fig. 5) provides a useful guide for determining when less conservative experimental designs (*i.e.*, averaging without pairing) are acceptable.

The nested methods proposed here differ from prior resampling approaches that focus on defining observation sets for proper model selection[47]. Numerical Monte-Carlo simulations have a rich history in PLSR originating in chemometrics[48,49]. However, applications to replicated data have not been considered previously, likely because of the high reproducibility of measured chemical spectra. In nested resampling, the bootstrap and jackknife gauge different ends of latent-variable robustness. Bootstrapping is highly conservative, evaluating whether any random draw of replicates yields essentially the same model. Latent variables that survive bootstrapping capture large, reproducible effect sizes and thus are highly robust. Conversely, jackknifing is a much weaker test of model fragility. Global-average relationships that disappear with jackknifing are severely underpowered and should be ignored or followed up with more replicates. Together, these established tools from computational statistics[34] enable formal examination of data qualities that would otherwise be inaccessible by PLSR alone.

The concepts put forth here generalize to other data-driven approaches besides PLSR. For example, when classifying observations by support vector machines[50], the handling of replicated observations is often heuristic. Heinemann *et al.*[51] investigated the effects of replicate downsampling on classification by metabolomics data with small or large variance, but nesting of replicates within observations was not considered as we did. Nested resampling of PLSR models shares conceptual analogies with the method of random forests[52] for decision tree classifiers. Individual decision trees are unstable in their predictions, but robustness is improved when training

data are randomly resampled to make ensemble classifications. Biological data *in vivo* are typically noisy and the number of observations is often limited, suggesting that some form of nested resampling would be beneficial for many data-driven methods seeking to identify molecular–cellular drivers of organismal phenotypes.

A primary motivation for applying PLSR in biological systems is to simplify complex observations and generate testable hypotheses[2,36]. The latter goal is impossible when chasing latent variables that are statistically significant overall but fragile upon replication. By using all of the *in vivo* data available, nested resampling identifies where PLSR stops modeling effect sizes and starts fitting biologically noisy averages. It contributes to the ongoing effort to improve the reproducibility of models[53] and preclinical research[26,54].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Experimental models

Three studies were selected in which an inflammatory agent was administered *in vivo* or *in vitro* and subsequent temporal and/or spatial analyses were performed[13,14,39]. First, source data were obtained from Bersi *et al.*[39] in which male *ApoE*$^{-/-}$ mice were infused with Angiotensin II (AngII, 1000 ng/kg/min) via an implantable osmotic mini-pump for 4, 7, 14, 21, or 28 days. Following treatment, the aorta was harvested and separated into four regions: 1) the ascending thoracic aorta (ATA) spanning from the aortic root to the brachiocephalic artery, 2) the descending thoracic aorta (DTA) spanning from the left subclavian artery to the 4th or 5th pair of intercostal arteries, 3) the suprarenal abdominal aorta (SAA) spanning from the diaphragm to the left renal artery, and 4) the infrarenal abdominal aorta (IAA) spanning from the left renal artery to the iliac trifurcation. Vessels were cleaned, sutured, and mounted on an opposing glass cannula and

subjected to passive biomechanical testing without contribution from smooth muscle as previously described[55]. Briefly, vessels were preconditioned to minimize viscoelastic behavior of the material and then subjected to three fixed-length, pressure-diameter inflation tests and four fixed-pressure, force-length extension tests. Following testing, vessels were fixed in 10% neutral buffered formalin, embedded in paraffin, and sectioned and stained with Movat's pentachrome, Picrosirius red, or Elastica van Gieson to quantify layer-specific matrix content. Additional slides were stained for CD3, CD45, CD68, MMP2, MMP12, or MMP13 expression. Details regarding region- and layer-specific matrix, inflammatory cell, and enzyme content can be found in the original publication[39]. Animal housing and experimental procedures were carried out in compliance with regulations and protocols approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee at Yale University.

Passive mechanical properties of the tissue were quantified using a microstructurally-motivated strain energy function assuming hyperelasticity. The analytical methods for determining mechanical metrics have been described in detail previously[55]. Briefly, biaxial Cauchy wall stresses were calculated as

$$\mathbf{t} = -p\mathbf{I} + 2\mathbf{F}\frac{\partial W}{\partial \mathbf{C}}\mathbf{F}^T \quad (1)$$

where $\mathbf{t}$ is the Cauchy stress tensor, p is the Lagrange multiplier enforcing incompressibility, $\mathbf{I}$ is the second-order identity matrix, $\mathbf{F}$ is the deformation gradient mapping spatial coordinates from a reference to deformed configuration, $\mathbf{C}$ is the right Cauchy-Green deformation tensor ($\mathbf{C} = \mathbf{F}^T\mathbf{F}$), and W is a microstructurally-motivated strain energy density function reflecting contributions of matrix constituents to material behavior. Linearized biaxial material stiffnesses were determined in terms of the second derivative of W with respect to deformations. These metrics, along with

355 associated loaded geometry, were evaluated at group-specific blood pressures and at estimated *in*
356 *vivo* axial stretch values.

357 For the second study, source data were obtained from Lau *et al*.[14] in which male C57BL/6J
358 mice were injected with 5 or 10 μg TNFα by retro-orbital injection for 0.5, 1, 2, 4, or 8 hours.
359 Following treatment, mice were euthanized, and two regions of the small intestine were harvested:
360 1) the duodenum consisting of the 1 cm of area immediately distal to the stomach, and 2) the ileum
361 consisting of the 3 cm of area immediately proximal to the cecum. Tissue samples were rinsed in
362 PBS and lysed and homogenized in Bio-Plex lysis buffer or fixed in formalin for
363 immunohistochemical analysis. Data characterizing apoptosis and proliferation were obtained by
364 quantitative immunoblotting for cleaved caspase 3 (cc3) and by immunohistochemistry for
365 phosphorylated histone 3 (ph3), respectively. Signaling data were obtained via Bio-Plex signaling
366 analysis. The targets included pIκβα, pJnk, pMek1, pErk1/2, pRsk, pp38, pc-Jun, pAtf2, pAkt,
367 pS6, pStat3, and Mek1, totaling 12 signaling targets. Details regarding the quantification of
368 apoptosis, proliferation, and signaling are in the original publication[14]. Animal housing and
369 experimental procedures were carried out in compliance with regulations and protocols approved
370 by the Subcommittee on Research Animal Care at Massachusetts General Hospital.

371 For the third study, source data were obtained from Chitforoushzadeh *et al*.[13] in which HT-
372 29 cells were pretreated with interferon γ (IFNγ; 200 U/mL) for 24 hours and subsequently treated
373 with various combinations and concentrations of TNFα, insulin, and epidermal growth factor
374 (EGF) for 5 min, 15 min, 30 min, 1 hours, 1.5 hours, 2 hours, 4 hours, 8 hours, 12 hours, 16 hours,
375 20 hours, or 24 hours. Signaling metrics included 12 proteins that were evaluated via kinase
376 activity, protein phosphorylation, total protein, phospho-total ratio, zymogen amount, or cleaved
377 amount. Proteins included ERK, Akt, JNK1, IKK, MK2, pMEK, pFKHR, pIRS1, caspase 8,

caspase 3, and EGFR. The combination of 12 proteins and multiple possible proteoforms (*e.g.*, phosphorylated protein and total protein) yielded a total of 19 signaling metrics. Additionally, microarray profiling of HT-29 cells was performed on Affymetrix U133A arrays and organized by Cluster Identification via Connectivity Kernels (CLICK). Briefly, cells were pretreated with IFNγ (200 U/mL) for 24 hours before stimulation with TNFα (0, 5, or 100 ng/mL), insulin (0, 5, or 500 ng/mL), and EGF (0, 1, or 100 ng/mL) for 4, 8, or 16 hours. CLICK clustering of microarray data yielded 9 clusters for each condition and time point[13].

For all studies, global averages were calculated as the mean among replicates.

Multidimensional partial least squares modeling

Multidimensional PLSR was performed in MATLAB using version 2.02 of the NPLS Toolbox[56] after dividing each study into independent and dependent datasets according to the stated hypothesis. Model variables for the three studies are listed in Tables 1–3 with associated abbreviations, methods of acquisition, sample sizes, and input–output classifications. The algorithm for PLSR has been described in detail previously with specific application to multi-linear frameworks[13,57]. Briefly, PLSR is a simultaneous decomposition of two matrices where the scores of each decomposition are linearly related (Fig. 1). Various options exist for exact algorithms. The algorithm applied in this study is detailed below:

1) Organize independent data into an i x j x k array **X**, where i is the number of experimental conditions, j is the number of time points, and k is the number of variables in the independent dataset. In parallel, organize the dependent data into an i x l x m array **Y** where l is the number of time points, and m is the number of variables in the dependent dataset.

Note that the algorithm requires the first dimension of each matrix to be equal but numbers of variables and time points need not be equal.

2) Standardize the data by mean centering and/or variance scaling the data. Different standardization techniques can yield markedly different results[58]. For Bersi *et al.*[39], only variance scaling across mode 3 was performed, and time 0 values were subtracted for a given condition and variable from all other corresponding time points within the same condition and variable such that regional differences are not considered at baseline. For Lau *et al.*[14] and Chitforoushzadeh *et al.*[13], variance scaling across modes 2 and 3 was performed.

3) Initialize an i x 1 vector for the n^{th} latent variable for the dependent condition scores, **u**, and the independent condition scores, **t**. Here, **u** is initialized by performing principal components analysis on the standardized residual **Y** matrix (which equals the original scaled **Y** matrix for the first LV) and setting **u** = principal component 1. The vector **t** is randomly initialized.

4) Calculate variable and time weights for the independent data, **w**, by back projecting the independent data, **X**, onto **u**,

$$\mathbf{w} = \mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{u} \tag{3}$$

Back projection requires unfolding **X** into an i x (j*k) matrix, **X**.

5) Update independent condition scores, **t**, by projecting **X** onto **w**,

$$\mathbf{t} = \mathbf{X}\mathbf{w} \tag{4}$$

6) Calculate variable and time weights for the dependent data, **q**, by back projecting the residual of the **Y** matrix onto **t**,

$$\mathbf{q} = \mathbf{Y}^T\mathbf{t} \tag{5}$$

Back projection requires unfolding $\underline{\mathbf{Y}}$ into an i x (l*m) matrix, **Y**.

7) Update dependent condition scores, **u**, by projecting the residual of **Y** onto **q**,

$$\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{Yq} \tag{6}$$

8) Calculate the difference in magnitude between the updated **t** from step 5 and the original **t** from step 3 (or the previously calculated **t** if on iteration 2 or more) and return to step 4 as long as the change in magnitude remains above a critical threshold (here, 10^{-10}).

9) Calculate the regression coefficient between the independent and dependent condition scores,

$$\mathbf{B} = (\mathbf{T}^{T}\mathbf{T})^{-1}\mathbf{T}^{T}\mathbf{U} \tag{7}$$

where **B** is an n x n matrix where n is the number of the current LV. If the calculation is for the first LV, then **B** becomes a scalar calculated as $b = (\mathbf{t}^{T}\mathbf{t})^{-1}\mathbf{t}^{T}\mathbf{u}$.

10) Calculate the residuals of $\underline{\mathbf{X}}$ and $\underline{\mathbf{Y}}$ by subtracting the decomposed matrices from the previous residual matrices.

11) Complete steps 4 – 10 for the desired number of LVs using $\underline{\mathbf{X}}$ and $\underline{\mathbf{Y}}_{\mathbf{res}}$.

Statistical significance of variable weights was determined by calculating a null PLSR model in which raw data were shuffled within mode 1 (*i.e.*, time and variable data were shuffled within each condition) and re-standardized, and the scores and weights recalculated according to the previously mentioned algorithm. Average scores and weights were calculated for 500 iterations of reshuffling, and meaningful scores–weights were considered to be those exceeding one standard deviation from the mean. The PLSR model was cross-validated using a leave-one-out approach in which predictions for one condition are calculated from parameters derived from the remaining conditions. The root mean squared error (RMSE) for the cross-validated predictions was calculated

445 with the addition of each LV, and the optimal number of LVs was determined by the number of
446 LVs that minimized the RMSE in the global-average model.
447
448 *Nested resampling*
449 Data subsets were generated by sampling individual replicates for each condition and time
450 point by using a jackknifing (leave-one-out) approach or bootstrapping (leave-one-in) approach,
451 and PLSR models were developed for each sampled dataset. Data were resampled 500 times with
452 or without retention of data pairing by animal if pairing information was available. Replicate sizes
453 per condition per time point are denoted in Tables 1–3. From Bersi *et al.*[39], the majority of the
454 histological samples were paired to one of the biomechanical datasets and were chosen based on
455 the nearness of the unloaded thickness to the mean within each condition (aortic region) and time
456 point. For ph3 data in Lau *et al.*[14], source data for individual replicates was not available because
457 of blinding in the original study. Therefore, sets of 5 individual samples for each condition
458 (intestinal region and TNFα dose) and time point were simulated from published means and
459 standard deviations by assuming the data were normally distributed.
460 For each randomly generated dataset, scores and weights were calculated using the number
461 of LVs required for the corresponding mean dataset to facilitate comparison to the global-average
462 model. Each model was cross-validated using the leave-one-out approach as previously described,
463 and scores, weights, and cross-validated predictions were summarized and compared to the
464 corresponding values derived from the model of the mean dataset.
465

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Dr. Matthew Bersi and Prof. Ken Lau for generously providing source data and the interpretations needed for its reuse in this study and Prof. Jay Humphrey for his valuable insight and feedback during the study design and manuscript preparation. This work was supported by the David & Lucile Packard Foundation #2009-34710 (K.A.J.) and the National Institutes of Health #U01-CA215794 (K.A.J.) and #R01-HL105297 (C.A. Figueroa and J.D. Humphrey).

COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare no competing interests.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A.W.C. participated in study design, code generation, model development and interpretation, and manuscript preparation. K.A.J. led the study design and participated in model interpretation and manuscript preparation. Both authors reviewed and approved the manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

All code and source data are available in Supplementary File S1. Parameter values for the the Bersi *et al.*[39], Lau *et al.*[14], and Chitforoushzadeh *et al.*[13] PLSR models are available in Supplementary File S2.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Symbols, metrics, methods of acquisition, and sample sizes per condition per time point (N =) for the PLSR model of Bersi *et al.*[39]. Histological stains used for matrix quantification include Elastica van Gieson (elastin – black stain), Movat's Pentachrome (smooth muscle cells – red stain, GAGs – blue stain), and Picrosirius Red (collagen). Output samples were whole aortic sections from one mouse which were formalin-fixed after testing. Input samples were slides from output samples chosen for sectioning and staining based on their proximity to the mean thickness of their associated groups. Inputs were averages of three sections per slide.

Symbol	*Variable Name (Mode 3)*	*Method*	*N =*	*Input/Output*
eln^m	Elastin - media	Histology	2	Input
col^m	Collagen - media	Histology	2	Input
SMC^m	Smooth muscle cells - media	Histology	2	Input
GAG^m	Glycosaminoglycans - media	Histology	2	Input
col^a	Collagen - adventitia	Histology	2	Input
$CD3^m$	Cluster of differentiation 3 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$CD45^m$	Cluster of differentiation 45 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$CD68^m$	Cluster of differentiation 68 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$CD3^a$	Cluster of differentiation 3 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$CD45^a$	Cluster of differentiation 45 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$CD68^a$	Cluster of differentiation 68 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP2^m$	Matrix metalloproteinase 2 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP12^m$	Matrix metalloproteinase 12 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP13^m$	Matrix metalloproteinase 13 - media	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP2^a$	Matrix metalloproteinase 2 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP12^a$	Matrix metalloproteinase 12 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
$MMP13^a$	Matrix metalloproteinase 13 - adventitia	Immunofluorescence	2	Input
OD	Unloaded outer diameter	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
H	Unloaded thickness	Imaging	4 - 7	Output
od	Systolic outer diameter	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
h	Systolic thickness	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
ir	Systolic inner radius	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
$\lambda_{z,iv}$	*In vivo* axial stretch	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
$\sigma_{\theta\theta}$	Circumferential stress	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
σ_{zz}	Axial stress	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
$C_{\theta\theta\theta\theta}$	Circumferential stiffness	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
C_{zzzz}	Axial stiffness	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
W	Stored strain energy	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output
Dist	Distensibility	Biaxial testing	4 - 7	Output

628 **Table 2.** Symbols, metrics, methods of acquisition, and sample sizes per condition per time point
629 (*N* =) for the PLSR model of Lau *et al*.[14] All input and output samples represent mice per time
630 point and one intestinal segment each. qWB – Quantitative western blotting, IHC –
631 Immunohistochemistry.

Symbol	*Variable Name (Mode 3)*	*Marker*	*Method*	*N =*	*Input/Output*
pIκβα	Inhibitor of nuclear factor κβ-α	Phospho $Ser^{32/36}$	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pJnk	c-Jun N-terminal kinase	Phospho Thr^{183}/Tyr^{185}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pMek1	MAPK and ERK kinase 1	Phospho $Ser^{217/221}$	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pErk1/2	Extracellular signal-related kinase 1/2	Phospho Thr^{202}/Tyr^{204} (1), Thr^{185}/Tyr^{187} (2)	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pRsk	Ribosomal S6 kinase	Phospho Thr^{359}/Ser^{363}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pp38	p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase	Phospho Thr^{180}/Tyr^{182}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pc-Jun	c-Jun	Phospho Ser^{63}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pAtf2	Activating transcription factor 2	Phospho Thr^{71}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pAkt	Akt/Protein kinase B	Phospho Ser^{473}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
pS6	Ribosomal protein S6	Phospho $Ser^{235/236}$	Bio-Plex	5	Input
$pStat3^{S727}$	Signal transducer and activator of transcription 3	Phospho Ser^{727}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
$pStat3^{Y705}$	Signal transducer and activator of transcription 3	Phospho Tyr^{705}	Bio-Plex	5	Input
cc3	Cleaved caspase 3	Cleaved levels	qWB	5	Output
ph3	Phosphorylated histone 3	Number positive cells	IHC	5	Output

632

633 **Table 3.** Symbols, metrics, methods of acquisition, and sample sizes per condition per time point
634 (*N* =) for the PLSR model of Chitforoushzadeh *et al.*[13]. All input and output data represent cell
635 extracts per time point. Ab – antibody, µ-array – microarray, qWB – Quantitative western blotting,
636 CLICK – Cluster Identification via Connectivity Kernels.

Symbol	*Variable Name (Mode 3)*	*Marker*	*Method*	*N =*	*Input/Output*
ERK	Extracellular signal-related kinase	Kinase activity	Kinase assay	3 - 6	Input
Akt	Akt/Protein kinase B	Kinase activity	Kinase assay	3 - 6	Input
$pAkt_{Ab}$	Akt/Protein kinase B	Phospho Ser^{473}	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
$pAkt_{WB}$	Akt/Protein kinase B	Phospho Ser^{473}	qWB	3 - 6	Input
tAkt	Akt/Protein kinase B	Total amount	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
ptAkt	Akt/Protein kinase B	Phospho/total ratio	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
JNK1	Jun N-terminal kinase 1	Kinase activity	Kinase assay	3 - 6	Input
IKK	IκB kinase	Kinase activity	Kinase assay	3 - 6	Input
MK2	MAP kinase-activated protein kinase 2	Kinase activity	Kinase assay	3 - 6	Input
pMEK	MAPK and ERK kinase 1	Phospho $Ser^{217/221}$	qWB	3 - 6	Input
pFKHR	Forkhead in rhabdomyosarcoma	Phospho Ser^{256}	qWB	3 - 6	Input
$pIRS1_{636}$	Insulin receptor substrate 1	Phospho Ser^{636}	qWB	3 - 6	Input
$pIRS1_{896}$	Insulin receptor substrate 1	Phospho Tyr^{896}	qWB	3 - 6	Input
proC8	Caspase-8	Zymogen amount	qWB	3 - 6	Input
cc8	Caspase-8	Cleaved amount	qWB	3 - 6	Input
proC3	Caspase-3	Zymogen amount	qWB	3 - 6	Input
pEGFR	Epidermal growth factor receptor	Phospho Tyr^{1068}	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
tEGFR	Epidermal growth factor receptor	Total amount	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
ptEGFR	Epidermal growth factor receptor	Phospho/total ratio	Ab µ-array	3 - 6	Input
c1 - c9	Gene clusters 1-9	Transcription level	µ-array + CLICK	2	Output

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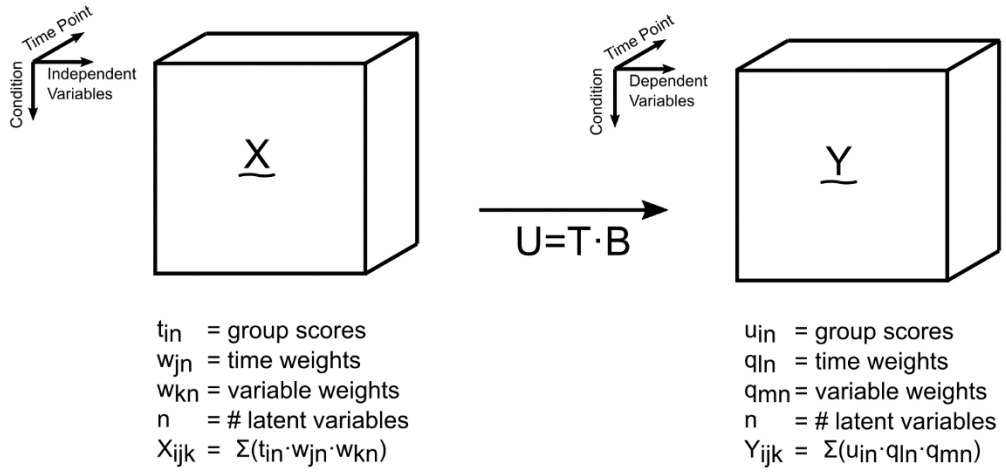

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639 **Figure 1.** A three-mode structure efficiently models dynamic, multivariate data as multi-
640 dimensional arrays. Data were organized as multidimensional arrays (**X** and **Y**) with mode 1
641 (indexed as i) delineating experimental conditions, mode 2 (indexed as j) delineating time course
642 of experimental endpoints, and mode 3 (indexed as k) delineating variables measured for each
643 experiment. Independent and dependent variables were selected according to the original datasets
644 as detailed in Tables 1–3. PLSR derives condition scores (**U**) for the dependent data that are
645 linearly related by regression coefficients (**B**) to the scores for the independent data (**T**).

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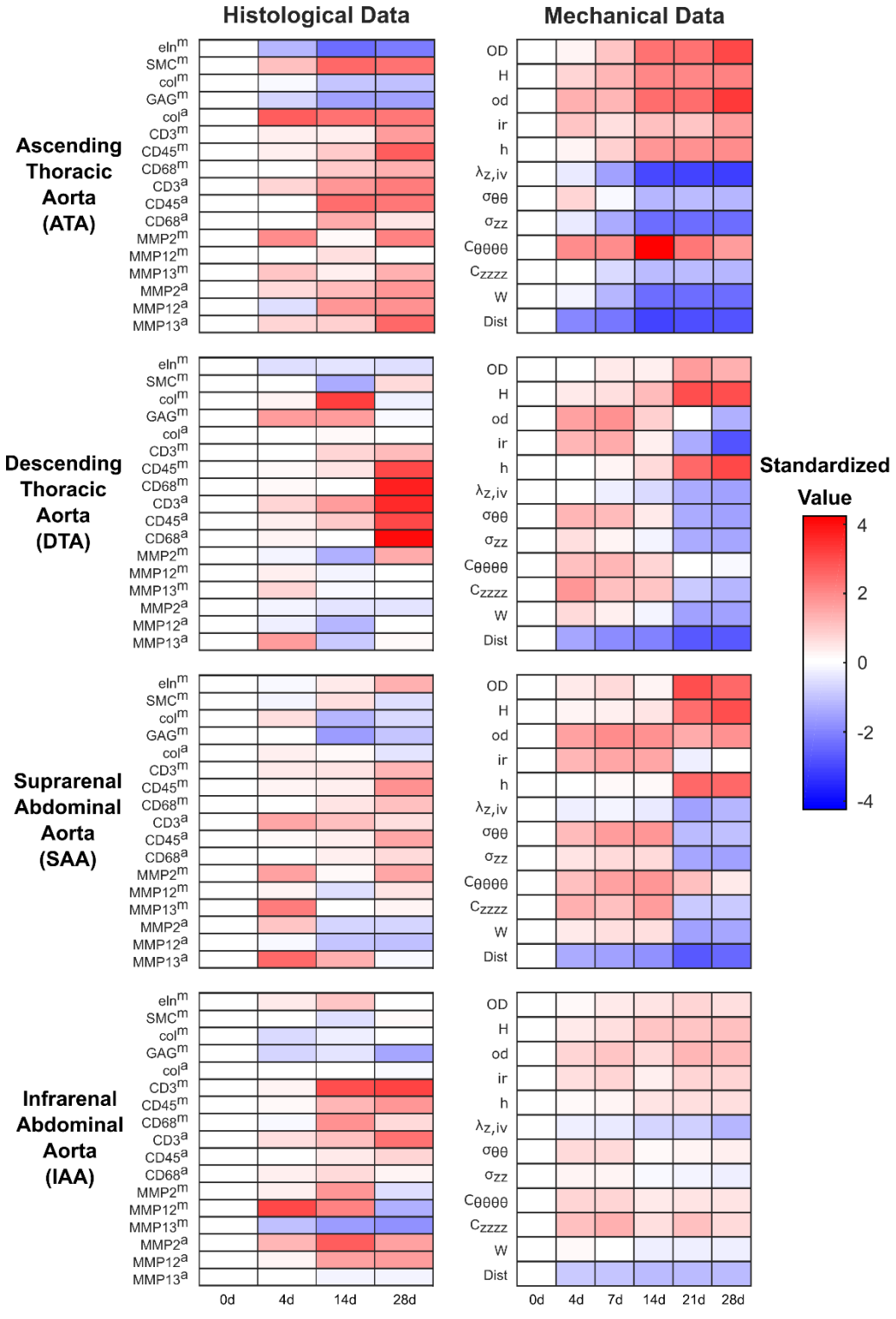

Figure 2. Time-resolved profiling of cellular infiltration, extracellular matrix production–turnover, and aortic geometry and mechanics during pharmacologically-induced hypertension. Mice were treated with AngII and tissue harvested at the indicated time points for subsequent

651 histological and mechanical analysis (Table 1). Data are separated by independent (left) and
652 dependent data (right) and aortic region (rows). Standardized differential changes (see Methods)
653 from the 0-day baseline value are shaded red (increase) or blue (decrease).

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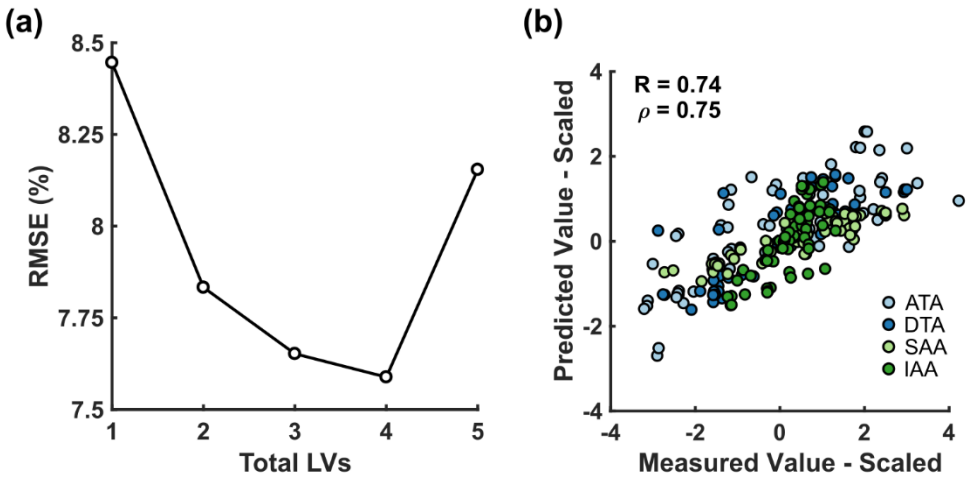
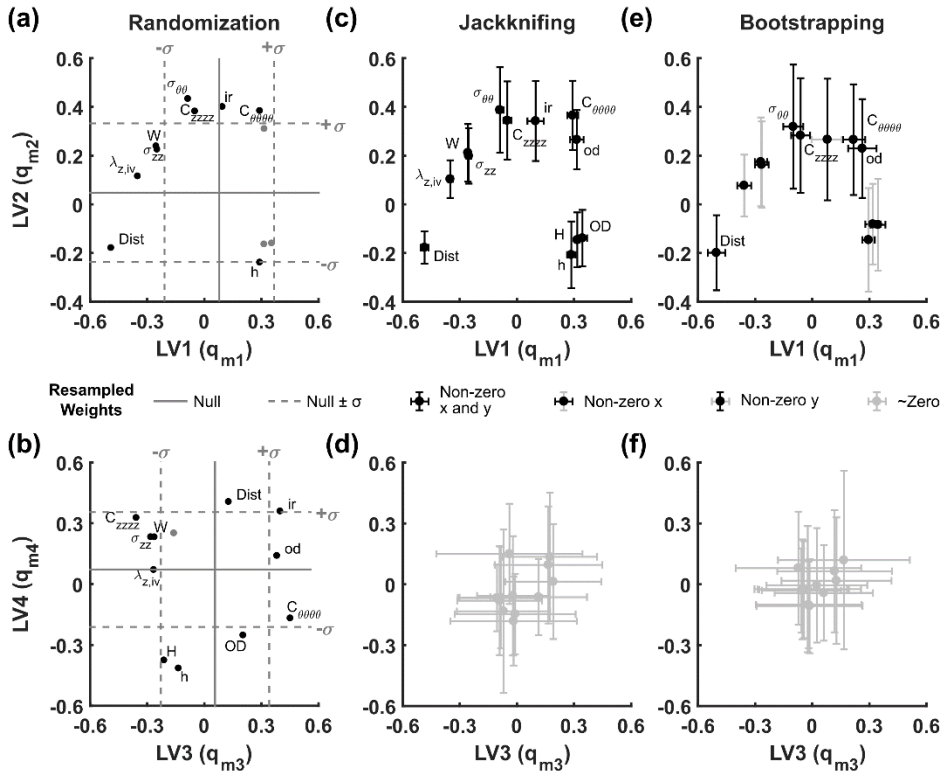


Figure 3. A four-component multidimensional PLSR model predicts AngII-induced evolution of aortic geometry and mechanics from matrix production and turnover, proteolytic enzyme expression, and inflammatory cell infiltrate. **(a)** Root mean squared error (RMSE) of cross-validated predictions is minimized with four LVs. **(b)** Pearson (R) and Spearman (ρ) correlation coefficients of the four-LV PLSR model for all aortic regions and time points. Cross-validated predictions were made by leaving out one entire aortic region at a time. ATA – ascending thoracic aorta, DTA – descending thoracic aorta, SAA – suprarenal abdominal aorta, IAA – infrarenal abdominal aorta.



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665 **Figure 4.** Resampling PLSR distinguishes robust dependent variable weights (q_{mn}) in a four-LV
666 model of AngII-induced hypertension. **(a, b)** Generation of a null PLSR model via data
667 randomization of data to identify parameters of interest. Dependent variable weights (q_{mn}) in the
668 original PLSR model lying outside of a single standard deviation of the null PLSR model are
669 labeled in black (see Table 1 for abbreviations). Solid gray lines denote the mean of N = 500
670 reshufflings within mode 1 (*i.e.*, time and measured variables were shuffled within each aortic
671 region). Dotted-gray lines denote mean ± standard deviation of weights. **(c, d)** Replicate
672 resampling (N = 500) by jackknifing ("leave one out") changes confidence of predictions for
673 parameters compared with randomization. Black dots denote variable weights with error bars that
674 do not intersect with zero (*i.e.*, parameters weight consistently in a single region). Gray error bars
675 denote errors that intersect with zero. **(e, f)** Replicate resampling (N = 500) by bootstrapping
676 ("leave one in") decreases confidence of parameters compared to jackknifing and yields no
677 significant identifications in LV3 or LV4. Color delineations are identical to those in (c, d). The
678 top row depicts results for LV1 and LV2, and the bottom row depicts results for LV3 and LV4.

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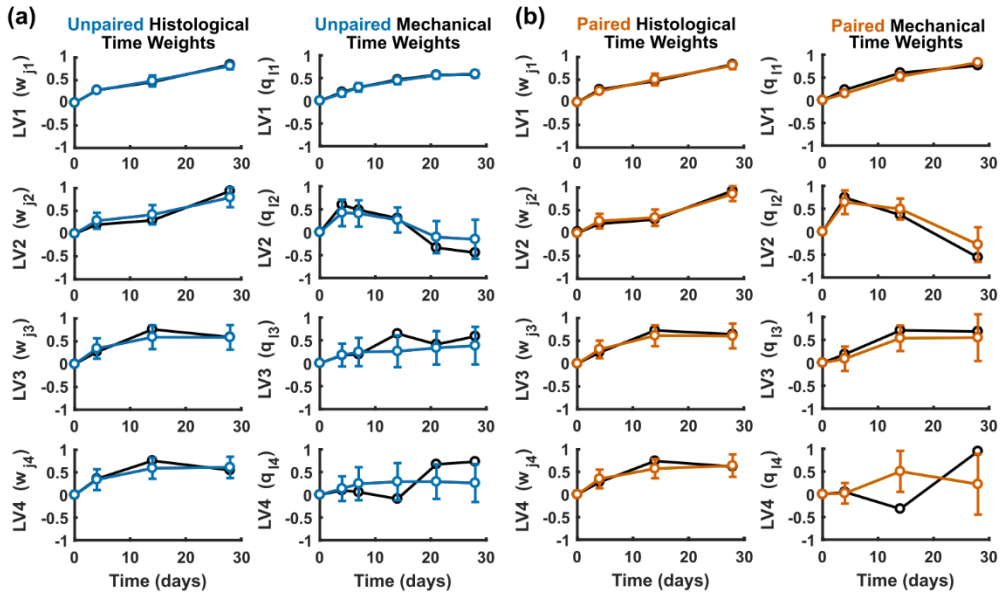


Figure 5. Bootstrapping PLSR with paired data shows similar performance to bootstrapping with unpaired data. Time weights (w_{jn}, q_{ln}) from a PLSR model using **(a)** unpaired (blue) and **(b)** paired (orange) bootstrapping of histological and biomechanical data were generated 500 times for unpaired and paired sampling each. Note that paired sampling required omission of the 7 and 21 day time points in the dependent variables because histological data were not collected for those time points. Paired data were available for only two samples per aortic region and time point, both of which were chosen based on the proximity of the thickness value to the mean thickness value for the corresponding region and time point.

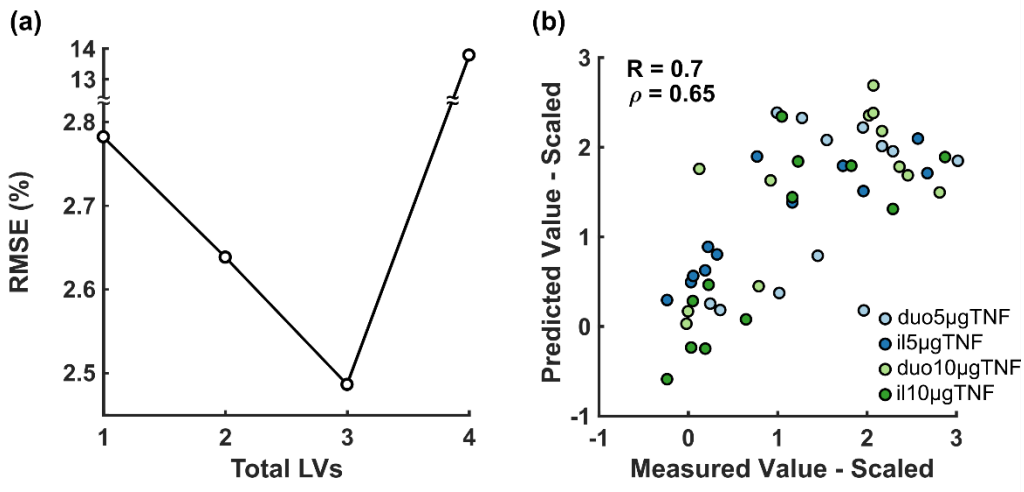


Figure 6. A three-component multidimensional PLSR model predicts TNFα-induced apoptosis and proliferation of intestinal cells from cell signaling in the duodenum and ileum. **(a)** Root mean squared error (RMSE) of cross-validated predictions is minimized with three LVs. **(b)** Pearson (R) and Spearman (ρ) correlation coefficients of the three-LV PLSR model for all intestinal regions and time points. Cross-validated predictions were made using the leave-one-out approach. duo – duodenum, il – ileum, 5μgTNF – 5 μg TNFα treatment, 10μgTNF – 10 μg TNFα treatment.

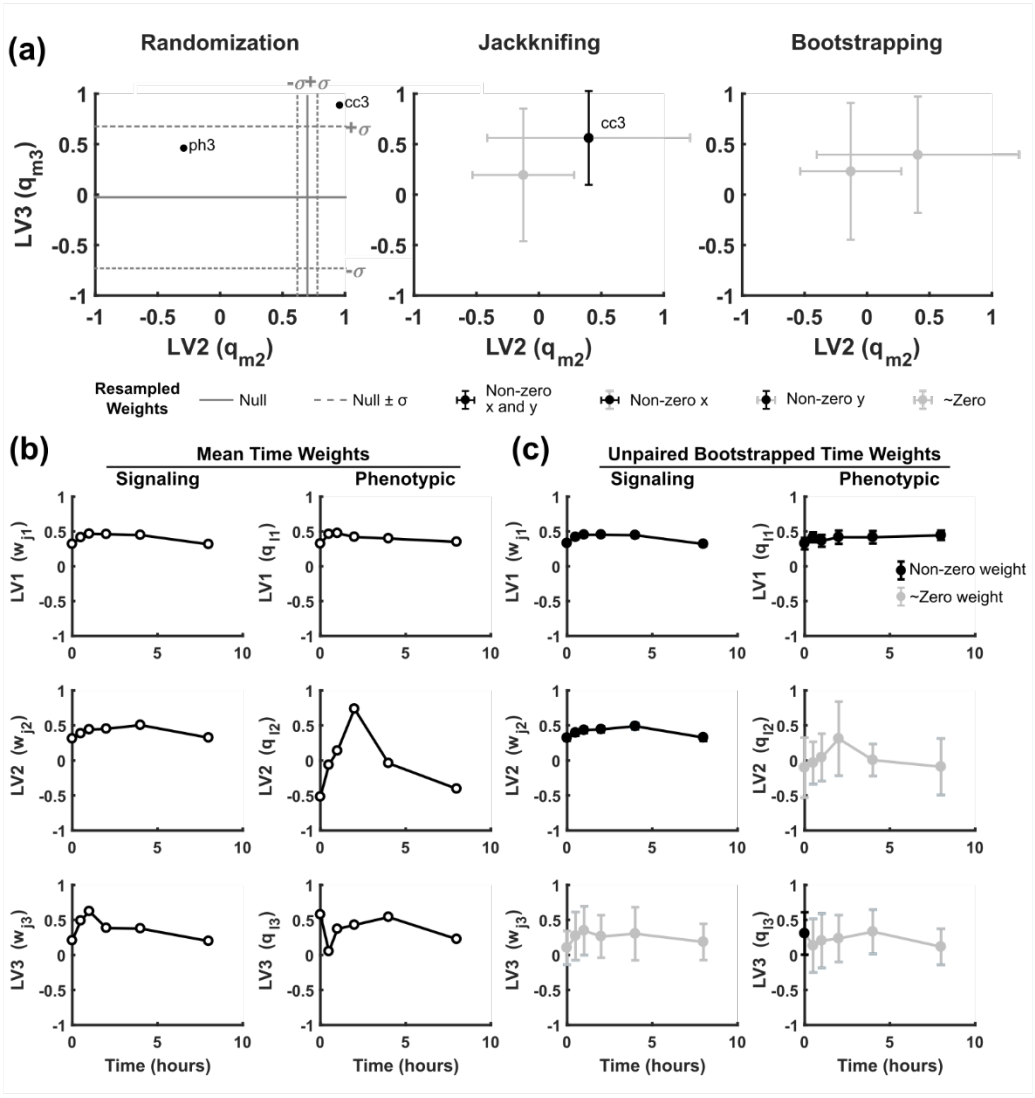


Figure 7. Bootstrapping PLSR of a second *in vivo* dataset reveals poor repeatability in trailing LVs. **(a)** Dependent variable weights (q_{mn}) for LV2 vs. LV3 following randomization, jackknifing, and bootstrapping. LV1 is omitted for clarity. Graphs are labeled as in Fig. 4. **(b)** Time weights for the global-average model delineating temporal behaviors of each LV. **(c)** Bootstrapped time weights (N = 500) show good agreement with the mean dataset on LV1 and LV3 with less agreement on LV2. Data are presented as mean ± standard deviation, with black markers indicating error bars that do not intersect with zero and gray markers indicating error bars that intersect with zero.

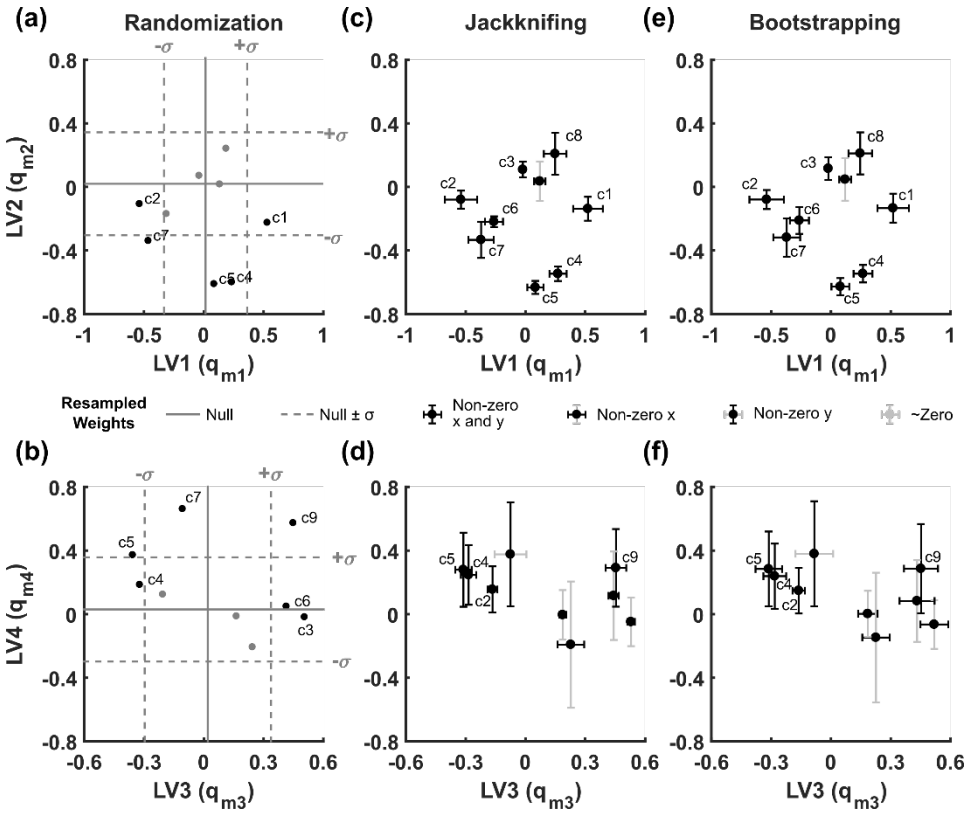
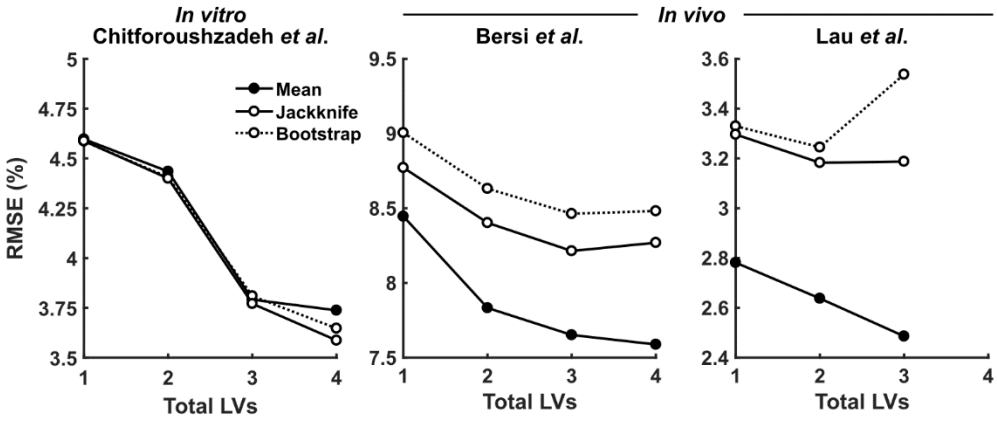


Figure 8. Resampling PLSR validates the robustness of higher-order LVs in multidimensional arrays. **(a, b)** Generation of a null PLSR model via randomization (N = 500 reshufflings within mode 1) identifies parameters of interest as variable weights in the original PLSR model (black dots) lying outside of a single standard deviation of the null PLSR model. **(c, d)** Replicate resampling (N = 500) by jackknifing ("leave one out") increases confidence of most LV parameters. **(e, f)** Replicate resampling (N = 500) by bootstrapping ("leave one in") yields very similar results to jackknifing, as expected given the N = 2 sample size for output data (Table 3). Graphs are labeled as in Fig. 4.



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717 **Figure 9.** Nested resampling PLSR vets the robustness of *in vivo* multidimensional arrays. Root
718 mean squared error (RMSE) as a function of total included LVs is reported for PLSR models of
719 mean datasets (solid lines and filled circles; reprinted from Fig. 3a, 6a, and Chitforoushzadeh *et*
720 *al.*[13]), mean predictions from jackknifed models (solid lines and open circles), and mean
721 predictions from bootstrapped models (dotted lines and open circles).

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