

Contents

Glossary	xi
Acronyms	xiii
1 Introduction and Literature Review	1
1.1 Cancer Research in the Post-Genomic Era	1
1.1.1 Cancer is a Global Health Issue	2
1.1.1.1 The Genetics and Molecular Biology of Cancers	3
1.1.2 The Genomics Revolution in Cancer Research	3
1.1.2.1 High-Throughput Technologies	4
1.1.2.2 Bioinformatics and Genomic Data	5
1.1.3 Genomics Projects	5
1.1.3.1 The Cancer Genome Project	6
1.1.3.2 The Cancer Genome Atlas Project	6
1.1.4 Genomic Cancer Medicine	8
1.1.4.1 Cancer Genes and Driver Mutations	8
1.1.4.2 Precision Cancer Medicine	9
1.1.4.3 Molecular Diagnostics and Pan-Cancer Medicine	9
1.1.4.4 Targeted Therapeutics and Pharmacogenomics	10
1.1.5 Systems and Network Biology	11
1.2 Synthetic Lethal Cancer Medicine	12
1.2.1 Synthetic Lethal Genetic Interactions	12
1.2.2 Synthetic Lethal Concepts in Genetics	14
1.2.3 Synthetic Lethality in Model Systems	14
1.2.3.1 Synthetic Lethal Pathways and Networks	15
1.2.3.2 Evolution of Synthetic Lethality	15
1.2.4 Synthetic Lethality in Cancer	16
1.2.5 Clinical Impact of Synthetic Lethality in Cancer	18
1.2.6 High-throughput Screening for Synthetic Lethality	19
1.2.6.1 Synthetic Lethal Screens	21
1.2.7 Computational Prediction of Synthetic Lethality	22
1.2.7.1 Bioinformatics Approaches to Genetic Interactions	22
1.2.7.2 Comparative Genomics	24
1.2.7.3 Analysis and Modelling of Protein Data	26
1.2.7.4 Differential Gene Expression	28
1.2.7.5 Data Mining and Machine Learning	29

1.2.7.6	Mutual Exclusivity and Bimodality	31
1.2.7.7	Rationale for Further Development	33
1.3	E-cadherin as a Synthetic Lethal Target	33
1.3.1	The <i>CDH1</i> gene and its Biological Functions	33
1.3.1.1	Cytoskeleton	34
1.3.1.2	Extracellular and Tumour Micro-environment	34
1.3.1.3	Cell-Cell Adhesion and Signalling	34
1.3.2	<i>CDH1</i> as a Tumour (and Invasion) Suppressor	35
1.3.2.1	Breast Cancers and Invasion	35
1.3.3	Hereditary Diffuse Gastric (and Lobular Breast) Cancer	35
1.3.4	Cell Line Models of <i>CDH1</i> Null Mutations	37
1.4	Summary and Research Direction of Thesis	37
1.4.1	Thesis Aims	39
2	Methods and Resources	40
2.1	Bioinformatics Resources for Genomics Research	40
2.1.1	Public Data and Software Packages	40
2.1.1.1	Cancer Genome Atlas Data	41
2.1.1.2	Reactome and Annotation Data	42
2.2	Data Handling	42
2.2.1	Normalisation	42
2.2.2	Sample Triage	42
2.2.3	Metagenes and the Singular Value Decomposition	43
2.2.4	Candidate Triage and Integration with Screen Data	45
2.3	Techniques	45
2.3.1	Statistical Procedures and Tests	46
2.3.2	Gene Set Over-representation Analysis	47
2.3.3	Clustering	47
2.3.4	Heatmap	47
2.3.5	Modelling and Simulations	48
2.3.5.1	Receiver Operating Characteristic Curves	49
2.3.6	Resampling Analysis	49
2.4	Pathway Structure Methods	50
2.4.1	Network and Graph Analysis	50
2.4.2	Sourcing Graph Structure Data	51
2.4.3	Constructing Pathway Subgraphs	51
2.4.4	Network Analysis Metrics	52
2.5	Implementation	53
2.5.1	Computational Resources and Linux Utilities	53
2.5.2	R Language and Packages	54
2.5.3	High Performance and Parallel Computing	57
3	Methods Developed During Thesis	59
3.1	A Synthetic Lethal Detection Methodology	59
3.2	Synthetic Lethal Simulation and Modelling	61
3.2.1	A Model of Synthetic Lethality in Expression Data	62

3.2.2	Simulation Procedure	66
3.3	Detecting Simulated Synthetic Lethal Partners	69
3.3.1	Binomial Simulation of Synthetic Lethality	69
3.3.2	Multivariate Normal Simulation of Synthetic Lethality	71
3.3.2.1	Multivariate Normal Simulation with Correlated Genes	73
3.3.2.2	Specificity with Query-Correlated Pathways	81
3.4	Graph Structure Methods	83
3.4.1	Upstream and Downstream Gene Detection	83
3.4.1.1	Permutation Analysis for Statistical Significance	84
3.4.2	Simulating Gene Expression from Graph Structures	85
3.5	Customised Functions and Packages Developed	89
3.5.1	Synthetic Lethal Interaction Prediction Tool	89
3.5.2	Data Visualisation	90
3.5.3	Extensions to the iGraph Package	91
3.5.3.1	Sampling Simulated Data from Graph Structures	91
3.5.3.2	Plotting Directed Graph Structures	91
3.5.3.3	Computing Information Centrality	93
3.5.3.4	Testing Pathway Structure with Permutation Testing	93
3.5.3.5	Metapackage to Install iGraph Functions	94
4	Synthetic Lethal Analysis of Gene Expression Data	96
4.1	Synthetic Lethal Genes in Breast Cancer	97
4.1.1	Synthetic Lethal Pathways in Breast Cancer	98
4.1.2	Expression Profiles of Synthetic Lethal Partners	100
4.1.2.1	Subgroup Pathway Analysis	103
4.2	Comparing Synthetic Lethal Gene Candidates	105
4.2.1	Primary siRNA Screen Candidates	105
4.2.2	Comparison with Correlation	105
4.2.3	Comparison with Primary Screen Viability	108
4.2.4	Comparison with Secondary siRNA Screen Validation	110
4.2.5	Comparison to Primary Screen at Pathway Level	111
4.2.5.1	Resampling Genes for Pathway Enrichment	113
4.2.6	Integrating Synthetic Lethal Pathways and Screens	118
4.3	Synthetic Lethal Pathway Metagenes	119
4.4	Replication in Stomach Cancer	121
4.5	Discussion	122
4.5.1	Strengths of the SLIPT Methodology	122
4.5.2	Synthetic Lethal Pathways for E-cadherin	123
4.5.3	Replication and Validation	125
4.5.3.1	Integration with siRNA Screening	125
4.5.3.2	Replication across Tissues	126
4.6	Summary	126

5	Synthetic Lethal Pathway Structure	128
5.1	Synthetic Lethal Genes in Reactome Pathways	128
5.1.1	The PI3K/AKT Pathway	129
5.1.2	The Extracellular Matrix	131
5.1.3	G Protein Coupled Receptors	134
5.1.4	Gene Regulation and Translation	134
5.2	Network Analysis of Synthetic Lethal Genes	136
5.2.1	Gene Connectivity and Vertex Degree	137
5.2.2	Gene Importance and Centrality	138
5.2.2.1	Information Centrality	138
5.2.2.2	PageRank Centrality	140
5.3	Relationships between Synthetic Lethal Genes	141
5.3.1	Detecting Upstream or Downstream Synthetic Lethality	142
5.3.2	Resampling for Synthetic Lethal Pathway Structure	144
5.4	Discussion	146
5.5	Summary	148
6	Simulation and Modelling of Synthetic Lethal Pathways	150
6.1	Synthetic Lethal Detection Methods	151
6.1.1	Performance of SLIPT and χ^2 across Quantiles	152
6.1.1.1	Correlated Query Genes affects Specificity	155
6.1.2	Alternative Synthetic Lethal Detection Strategies	157
6.1.2.1	Correlation for Synthetic Lethal Detection	158
6.1.2.2	Testing for Bimodality with BiSEp	159
6.2	Simulations with Graph Structures	160
6.2.1	Performance over Graph Structures	161
6.2.1.1	Simple Graph Structures	161
6.2.1.2	Constructed Graph Structures	164
6.2.2	Performance with Inhibitions	166
6.2.3	Synthetic Lethality across Graph Structures	172
6.2.4	Performance within a Large Simulated Datasets	175
6.3	Simulations in More Complex Graph Structures	180
6.3.1	Simulations over Pathway-based Graphs	181
6.3.2	Pathway Structures in a Large Simulated Datasets	184
6.4	Discussion	187
6.4.1	Simulation Procedure	187
6.4.2	Comparing Methods with Simulated Data	188
6.4.3	Design and Performance of SLIPT	189
6.4.4	Simulations from Graph Structures	191
6.5	Summary	192
7	Discussion	193
7.1	Synthetic Lethality and <i>CDH1</i> Biology	193
7.1.1	Established Functions of <i>CDH1</i>	194
7.1.2	The Molecular Role of <i>CDH1</i> in Cancer	194
7.2	Significance	195

7.2.1	Synthetic Lethality in the Genomic Era	195
7.2.2	Clinical Interventions based on Synthetic Lethality	197
7.3	Future Directions	198
7.4	Conclusions	200
	Bibliography	202
A	Sample Quality	226
A.1	Sample Correlation	226
A.2	Replicate Samples in TCGA Breast Cancer Data	229
B	Software Used for Thesis	233
C	Mutation Analysis in Breast Cancer	242
C.1	Synthetic Lethal Genes and Pathways	242
C.2	Synthetic Lethal Expression Profiles	243
C.3	Comparison to Primary Screen	246
C.3.1	Resampling Analysis	248
C.4	Compare SLIPT genes	250
D	Metagene Analysis	252
D.1	Pathway Signature Expression	252
D.2	Synthetic Lethal Reactome Metagenes	256
E	Intrinsic Subtyping	257
F	Stomach Expression Analysis	259
F.1	Synthetic Lethal Genes and Pathways	259
F.2	Comparison to Primary Screen	263
F.2.1	Resampling Analysis	265
F.3	Metagene Analysis	267
G	Synthetic Lethal Genes in Pathways	268
H	Network Analysis for Mutation SLIPT	275
I	Pathway Structure for Mutation SLIPT	278
J	Performance of SLIPT and χ^2	280
J.1	Correlated Query Genes affects Specificity	286
K	Simulations on Graph Structures	292
K.0.1	Simulations from Inhibiting Graph Structures	293
K.1	Simulation across Graph Structures	296
K.2	Simulations from Complex Graph Structures	300
K.2.1	Simulations from Complex Inhibiting Graphs	303
K.3	Simulations from Pathway Graph Structures	309

List of Figures

1.1	Synthetic genetic interactions	13
1.2	Synthetic lethality in cancer	17
2.1	Read count density	44
2.2	Read count sample mean	44
3.1	Framework for synthetic lethal prediction	60
3.2	Synthetic lethal prediction adapted for mutation	61
3.3	A model of synthetic lethal gene expression	63
3.4	Modelling synthetic lethal gene expression	64
3.5	Synthetic lethality with multiple genes	65
3.6	Simulating gene function	67
3.7	Simulating synthetic lethal gene function	67
3.8	Simulating synthetic lethal gene expression	68
3.9	Performance of binomial simulations	70
3.10	Comparison of statistical performance	70
3.11	Performance of multivariate normal simulations	72
3.12	Simulating expression with correlated gene blocks	74
3.13	Simulating expression with correlated gene blocks	75
3.14	Synthetic lethal prediction across simulations	77
3.15	Performance with correlations	78
3.16	Comparison of statistical performance with correlation structure	79
3.17	Performance with query correlations	80
3.18	Statistical evaluation of directional criteria	81
3.19	Performance of directional criteria	82
3.20	Simulated graph structures	86
3.21	Simulating expression from a graph structure	87
3.22	Simulating expression from graph structure with inhibitions	88
3.23	Demonstration of violin plots with custom features	92
3.24	Demonstration of annotated heatmap	92
3.25	Simulating graph structures	93
4.1	Synthetic lethal expression profiles of analysed samples	101
4.2	Comparison of SLIPT with siRNA	106
4.3	Comparison of SLIPT and siRNA genes with correlation	106
4.4	Comparison of SLIPT and siRNA genes with correlation	108
4.5	Comparison of SLIPT and siRNA genes with screen viability	109

4.6	Comparison of SLIPT genes with siRNA screen viability	109
4.7	Resampled intersection of SLIPT and siRNA candidate genes	114
5.1	Synthetic lethality in the PI3K cascade	130
5.2	Synthetic lethality in Elastic Fibre Formation	132
5.3	Synthetic lethality in Fibrin Clot Formation	133
5.4	Synthetic lethality in the GPCRs	135
5.5	Synthetic lethality and vertex degree	137
5.6	Synthetic lethality and centrality	139
5.7	Synthetic lethality and PageRank	141
5.8	Structure of synthetic lethality resampling	143
6.1	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles	153
6.2	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with more genes	154
6.3	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with query correlation	155
6.4	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with query correlation and more genes	156
6.5	Performance of negative correlation and SLIPT	159
6.6	Simple graph structures	162
6.7	Performance of simulations on a simple graph	163
6.8	Performance of simulations is similar in simple graphs	164
6.9	Performance of simulations on a pathway	165
6.10	Performance of simulations on a simple graph with inhibition	167
6.11	Performance is higher on a simple inhibiting graph	169
6.12	Performance of simulations on a constructed graph with inhibition	170
6.13	Performance is affected by inhibition in graphs	171
6.14	Detection of synthetic lethality within a graph structure	173
6.15	Performance of simulations including a simple graph	177
6.16	Performance on a simple graph improves with more genes	178
6.17	Performance on an inhibiting graph improves with more genes	179
6.18	Performance of simulations on the PI3K cascade	183
6.19	Performance of simulations including the PI3K cascade	185
6.20	Performance on pathways improves with more genes	186
A.1	Correlation profiles of removed samples	227
A.2	Correlation analysis and sample removal	228
A.3	Replicate excluded samples	229
A.4	Replicate samples with all remaining	230
A.5	Replicate samples with some excluded	231
C.1	Synthetic lethal expression profiles of analysed samples	244
C.2	Comparison of mtSLIPT to short interfering RNA (siRNA)	246
C.3	Compare mtSLIPT and siRNA genes with correlation	250
C.4	Compare mtSLIPT and siRNA genes with correlation	250
C.5	Compare mtSLIPT and siRNA genes with siRNA viability	251
D.1	Pathway metagene expression profiles	254

D.2	Expression profiles for estrogen receptor related genes	255
F.1	Synthetic lethal expression profiles of stomach samples	261
F.2	Comparison of SLIPT in stomach to siRNA	263
G.1	Synthetic lethality in the PI3K/AKT pathway	268
G.2	Synthetic lethality in the PI3K/AKT pathway in cancer	269
G.3	Synthetic lethality in the Extracellular Matrix	270
G.4	Synthetic lethality in the GPCR Downstream	271
G.5	Synthetic lethality in the Translation Elongation	272
G.6	Synthetic lethality in the Nonsense-mediated Decay	273
G.7	Synthetic lethality in the 3' UTR	274
H.1	Synthetic lethality and vertex degree	275
H.2	Synthetic lethality and centrality	276
H.3	Synthetic lethality and PageRank	276
I.1	Structure of synthetic lethality resampling	278
J.1	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles	280
J.2	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles	282
J.3	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with more genes	284
J.4	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with query correlation	286
J.5	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with query correlation	288
J.6	Performance of χ^2 and SLIPT across quantiles with query correlation and more genes	290
K.1	Performance of simulations on a simple graph	292
K.2	Performance of simulations on an inhibiting graph	293
K.3	Performance of simulations on a constructed graph with inhibition	294
K.4	Performance of simulations on a constructed graph with inhibition	295
K.5	Detection of synthetic lethality within a graph structure	296
K.6	Detection of synthetic lethality within an inhibiting graph	298
K.7	Detection of synthetic lethality within an inhibiting graph	299
K.8	Performance of simulations on a branching graph	300
K.9	Performance of simulations on a complex graph	301
K.10	Performance of simulations on a large graph	302
K.11	Performance of simulations on a branching graph with inhibition	303
K.12	Performance of simulations on a branching graph with inhibition	304
K.13	Performance of simulations on a complex graph with inhibition	305
K.14	Performance of simulations on a complex graph with inhibition	306
K.15	Performance of simulations on a large constructed graph with inhibition	307
K.16	Performance of simulations on a large constructed graph with inhibition	308
K.17	Performance of simulations on the $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling pathway	309
K.18	Performance of simulations including the $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling pathway	310

List of Tables

1.1	Methods for predicting genetic interactions	23
1.2	Methods for predicting synthetic lethality in cancer	23
1.3	Methods used by Wu <i>et al.</i> (2014)	25
2.1	Excluded samples by batch and clinical characteristics.	43
2.2	Computers used during thesis	53
2.3	Linux utilities and applications used during thesis	54
2.4	R installations used during thesis	55
2.5	R Packages used during thesis	55
2.6	R packages developed during thesis	57
4.1	Candidate synthetic lethal gene partners of <i>CDH1</i> from SLIPT	98
4.2	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT	99
4.3	Pathways for clusters of <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT	104
4.4	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and correlation with <i>CDH1</i>	107
4.5	Comparison of Synthetic Lethal Interaction Prediction Tool (SLIPT) genes against secondary siRNA screen	111
4.6	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT and siRNA	112
4.7	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT	115
4.8	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT and siRNA primary screen .	116
4.9	Examples of candidate metagenes synthetic lethal for <i>CDH1</i> from SLIPT	120
5.1	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and vertex degree	138
5.2	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and information centrality	139
5.3	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and PageRank centrality	140
5.4	Resampling for pathway structure of synthetic lethal detection methods	145
B.1	Complete list of R packages used during this thesis	233
C.1	Candidate synthetic lethal gene partners of <i>CDH1</i> from mtSLIPT . . .	242
C.2	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from mtSLIPT	243
C.3	Pathways for clusters of <i>CDH1</i> partners from mtSLIPT	245
C.4	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from mtSLIPT and siRNA	247
C.5	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from mtSLIPT	248
C.6	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from mtSLIPT and siRNA primary screen	249
D.1	Candidate synthetic lethal metagenes against <i>CDH1</i> from mtSLIPT . .	256

E.1	Comparison of intrinsic subtypes	257
F.1	Synthetic lethal gene partners of <i>CDH1</i> from SLIPT in stomach cancer	259
F.2	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT in stomach cancer	260
F.3	Pathways for clusters of <i>CDH1</i> partners in stomach SLIPT	262
F.4	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT and siRNA	264
F.5	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT in stomach cancer	265
F.6	Pathways for <i>CDH1</i> partners from SLIPT in stomach and siRNA	266
F.7	Synthetic lethal metagenes against <i>CDH1</i> in stomach cancer	267
H.1	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and vertex degree	277
H.2	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and information centrality	277
H.3	ANOVA for synthetic lethality and PageRank centrality	277
I.1	Resampling for pathway structure of synthetic lethal detection methods	279

Glossary

bioinformatics	Statistical or computational approaches to biological data or research tools.
centrality	A network metric which identifies important vertices .
edge or link	A relationship connecting a pair of elements of a graph structure or network, may be weighted or directional.
essential	A gene which is required to be functional or expressed for a cell or organism to be viable, grow or develop.
gene expression	A measure of the relative expression of each gene from the mRNA extracted from (pooled) cells.
graph or network	A mathematical structure modelling or depicting the relationships between elements.
hub	A central or highly connected component of a network.
induced essentiality	A gene becoming essential to viability under certain conditions, including inactivation of a synthetic lethal partner.
information centrality	A network centrality metric which uses the impact of removing a vertex or node on connections in the network.
metagene	A consistent signal of expression for a collection of genes such as a biological pathway, derived from singular value decomposition.
mutation	A change in DNA sequence that disrupts gene function.

non-oncogene addiction	The dependence of a cancer cell on functioning non-mutant genes.
oncogene	A gene that potentially causes cancer, typically by over-expression or mutant gene variants.
oncogene addiction	The dependence of a cancer cell on a specific oncogenic pathway.
PageRank centrality	A network centrality metric which uses eigenvectors with a scaling factor (Brin and Page, 1998).
pathway	A series of biomolecules that produces a particular product or biological function.
scale-free	A property of a network which has a power law vertex degree distribution, that is several highly connected hub genes and many with very few connections.
shortest path	A path with the fewest possible edges which connects two particular vertices .
synthetic lethal	Genetic interactions where inactivation of multiple genes is inviable (or deleterious) which are viable if inactivated separately.
targeted therapy	Cancer treatment that specifically acts against a molecular target, in contrast to standard chemotherapy.
tumour suppressor	A gene potentially causes cancer, typically by disruption of functions which protect the cell from cancer.
vertex degree	A network metric of connectivity of vertices which uses the number of edges connected to each vertex or node .
vertex or node	An element of a graph structure or network.

Acronyms

AMP	Adenosine Monophosphate.
AMPK	AMP -activated Protein Kinase.
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance.
BioPAX	Biological Pathway Exchange.
BMP	Bone Morphogenic Protein.
CXCR	Chemokine Receptor.
EMT	Epithelial-Mesenchymal Transition.
GPCR	G Crotein Coupled Receptor.
JAK	Janus Kinase.
mtSLIPT	Synthetic Lethal Interaction Prediction Tool (against mutation).
NMD	Nonsense-Mediated Decay.
PDE	Phosphodiesterase.
PI3K	Phosphoinositide 3-kinase.
RGS	G-protein Signalling.
RHO	Ras Homolog Family.
RNA	Ribonucleic Acid.
siRNA	Short Interfering RNA.
SLIPT	Synthetic Lethal Interaction Prediction Tool.
TCGA	The Cancer Genome Atlas (genomics project).
TGF β	Transforming Growth Factor β .
UTR	Untranslated Region (of mRNA).

Chapter 5

Synthetic Lethal Pathway Structure

Having identified key [pathways](#) implicated in [synthetic lethal](#) genetic interactions with *CDH1* (in Chapter 4), these were investigated in this Chapter for the [synthetic lethal](#) genes within them, and for their relationships to [pathway](#) structure. This chapter will focus on the Reactome biological [pathways](#) detected across analyses in Chapter 4. Specifically, investigations were performed to determine whether [synthetic lethal](#) candidates, detected by [SLIPT](#) or [siRNA](#), exhibited differences with respect to metrics of [pathway](#) structure of network connectivity and importance (as described in Sections 2.4.4 and 3.5.3). The relationships between [synthetic lethal](#) candidates, detected by either approach, were also examined to determine whether [SLIPT](#) candidate genes were upstream or downstream [siRNA](#) candidate genes. These directional relationships were tested by resampling (as described in Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.1.1) and comparisons to the [pathway](#) hierarchical score based on biological context (as derived in Section ??). Together these investigations into structural relationships demonstrate how a combination of network biology and statistical techniques can be performed with genes identified by a [bioinformatics](#) analysis.

5.1 Synthetic Lethal Genes in Reactome Pathways

The [graph](#) structure for Reactome [pathways](#) was obtained from Pathway Commons via [Biological Pathway eXchange \(BioPAX\)](#) (as described in Section 2.4.2). The [pathways](#) describe the (directional) relationships between biomolecules, including genes that encode proteins in biological [pathways](#). These relationships include cell signalling (e.g., kinase phosphorylation cascades), gene regulation (e.g., transcription factors, chromatin modifiers, [RNA](#) binding proteins), and metabolism (e.g., the product of an enzyme being the substrate of another). Together these relationships describe the

known functional [pathways](#) in a human cell with a reasonable resolution, from a curated database supported by publications documenting [pathway](#) relationships.

Pathway structures from the Reactome network (as described in Section 2.4.3) were used to derive the [graph](#) structure of each biological [pathway](#). The [synthetic lethal](#) candidate genes for notable [pathways](#) discussed in Chapter 4, including candidate [synthetic lethal pathways](#) of *CDH1*, were examined to show the [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) candidates within these [pathways](#). The [synthetic lethal](#) genes considered here are those candidates detected by [SLIPT](#) (as described in Section 3.1) in [The Cancer Genome Atlas \(TCGA\)](#) breast cancer [expression](#) and [mutation](#) data ([Koboldt et al., 2012](#)) in comparison to the candidate gene partners from the [siRNA](#) screening in breast cell lines ([Telford et al., 2015](#)).

5.1.1 The PI3K/AKT Pathway

The [phosphoinositide 3-kinase \(PI3K\)](#) cascade signalling [pathway](#) is important in cancer because it is involved in mediating signals between the [G protein coupled receptors](#) and regulation of protein translation, which have both been strongly implicated to be [synthetic lethal pathways](#) with loss of *CDH1* function (Chapter 4). These [pathways](#) are all subject to dysregulation in cancer ([Courtney et al., 2010](#); [Dorsam and Gutkind, 2007](#); [Gao and Roux, 2015](#)). Thus the PI3K cascade will be examined along with the most supported [synthetic lethal pathways](#) (as identified in Chapter 4).

The [phosphoinositide 3-kinase \(PI3K\)](#) [pathway](#) is well characterised and has an established direction of signal transduction from extracellular stimuli (and membrane bound receptors) to the inner mechanisms of the cell, namely, the regulation of protein translation. The production of proteins is necessary for the growth of the cell so it is reasonable to suggest that these processes may be subject to (non-[oncogene](#)) addiction in some cancer cells which rely upon them for sustained protein production and cell growth. This is also supported by the [oncogenes](#) *PIK3CA* and *AKT1* being involved with the PI3K cascade and the related PI3K/AKT [pathway](#), which may be subject to [oncogene addiction](#) when these proto-oncogenes are activated.

The [PI3K](#) cascade was not supported across [SLIPT](#) in [TCGA](#) breast [expression](#) data and the [siRNA](#) primary screen by over-representation (in Section 4.2.5) or resampling (in Section 4.2.5.1) but genes within this [pathway](#) were detectable by either approach (as shown in Figure 5.1). While few genes were identified by both approaches, they include genes that are highly connected in the PI3K cascade and are hubs to information transmission such as *FGF9*, *PDE3B*, and *PDE4A*. The key upstream genes *PIK3CA* and

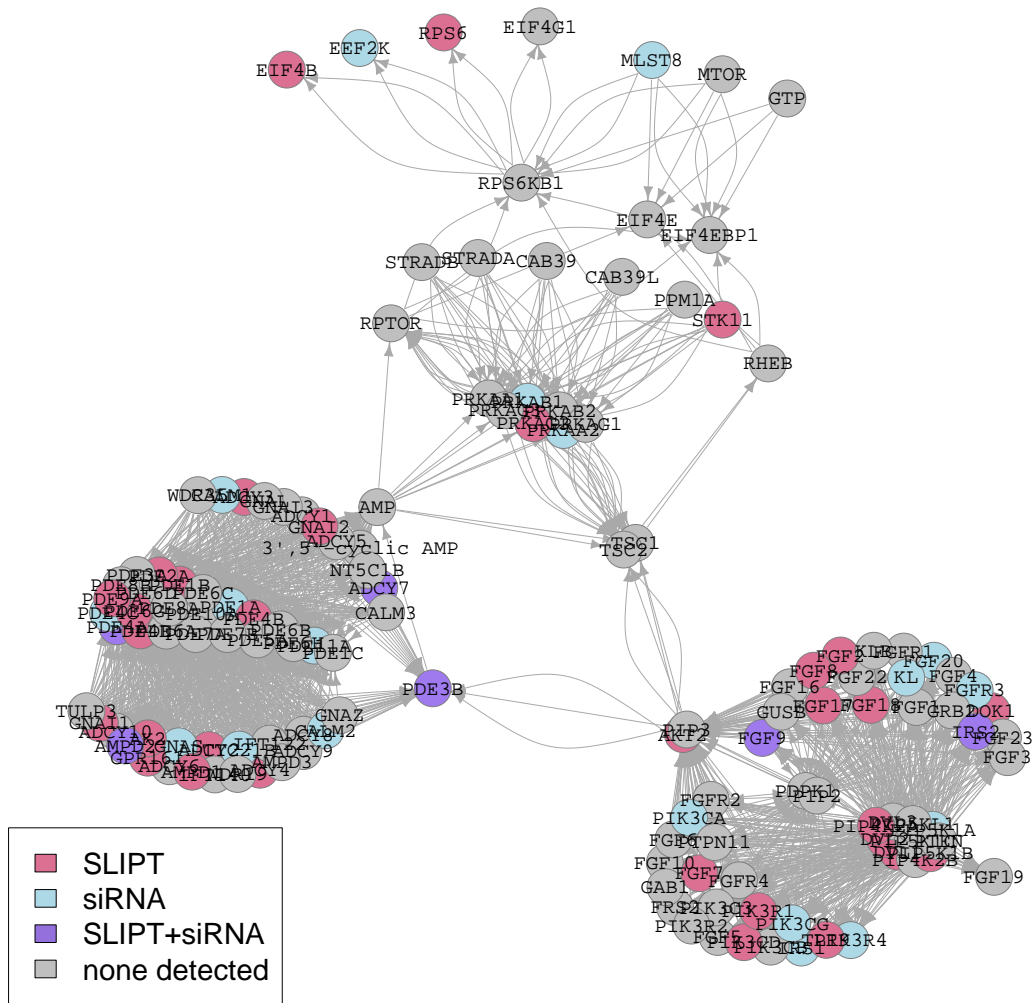


Figure 5.1: **Synthetic lethality in the PI3K cascade.** The Reactome [PI3K](#) Cascade pathway with [synthetic lethal](#) candidates coloured as shown in the legend.

PIK3CG were detected by [siRNA](#) whereas the downstream *PIK3R1* and *AKT2* genes were detected by [SLIPT](#). Genes detected by either method were also prevalent in the [PI3K](#), [phosphodiesterase \(PDE\)](#), and [AMP-activated protein kinase \(AMPK\)](#) modules, in addition to the downstream translation factors and ribosomal genes (*EIF4B*, *EEF2K*, and *RPS6*). Together these suggest that there may be further structure between the [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) candidate partners of *CDH1* in [pathways](#) as illustrated by [PI3K](#). As such, [pathway](#) structure will be investigated to detect differences in the upstream and downstream gene candidates detected by either method. Pathway structure may

account for the disparity between SLIPT and siRNA genes, even in pathways such as PI3K where they did not significantly intersect. For instance, SLIPT gene partners may be downstream of siRNA candidates rather than replicating them directly.

This disparity between SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates synthetic lethal partners of CDH1 (i.e., a high number of genes detected by either approach with few detected by both) was replicated in the related PI3K/AKT pathway and the “PI3K/AKT in cancer” pathway (shown in Appendix Figures G.1 and G.2). Many synthetic lethal candidates were at the upstream core of these pathway networks and the downstream extremities. It is particularly notable that many genes important in cell signalling and gene regulation were detected by either synthetic lethal detection approach. These include *AKT1*, *AKT2*, and *AKT3*, the Calmodulin signalling genes *CALM1* and *CAMK4*, and the forkhead family transcription factors *FOXO1* (a tumour suppressor) and *FOXO4* (an inhibitor of EMT).

5.1.2 The Extracellular Matrix

The extracellular pathways “elastic fibre formation” and “fibrin clot formation” (shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3 respectively) were both supported across analyses (in Chapter 4). These pathways were identified by both SLIPT (for TCGA breast cancer) and siRNA gene candidates as they had significant over-representation and resampling analyses.

Particularly for elastic fibres (Figure 5.2), the vast majority of genes were detected by either approach, in addition to a significant proportion of genes detected by both approaches (as determined in Section 4.2.5). The genes detected by both approaches also appeared to have a non-random distribution in the network, with *TFGB1*, *ITGB8*, and *MFAP2* exhibiting high connectivity, and having a central role in their respective pathway modules. In addition to a structural role in the extracellular matrix and connective tissue (including the tumour microenvironment), these proteins including Furin, transforming growth factor β (TGF β), and the bone morphogenic proteins (BMPs), are also involved in responses to endocrine signals and interact with the cellular receptors for signalling pathways. Therefore it is plausible that *CDH1* deficient tumours will be subject to non-oncogene addiction to the extracellular environment and growth signals arising from this pathway. The pathway structure also indicated that the genes detected by siRNA (or by both approaches) may be downstream of those detected by SLIPT, in addition to whether connectivity or centrality is higher for synthetic lethal candidates than other genes in the pathway.



Figure 5.2: **Synthetic lethality in Elastic Fibre Formation.** The Reactome Elastic Fibre Formation [pathway](#) with [synthetic lethal](#) candidates coloured as shown in the legend.

Genes detected as [synthetic lethal](#) partners of *CDH1* by [SLIPT](#) or [siRNA](#) screening were also common in the Fibrin clot formation [pathway](#) (shown in Figure 5.3). This is consistent with the established pleiotropic role of *CDH1* in regulating fibrin clotting. It is also notable that the genes detected by either method appear to be highly connected such as *C1QBP*, *KNG1*, *F8*, *F10*, *F12*, *F13A*, and *PROC* (including many of the coagulation factors). [Synthetic lethal](#) candidates also include *SERPINE2* and *PRCP*, which only affect downstream genes, in addition to *PROCR* and *VWF*, which are only affected by upstream genes.

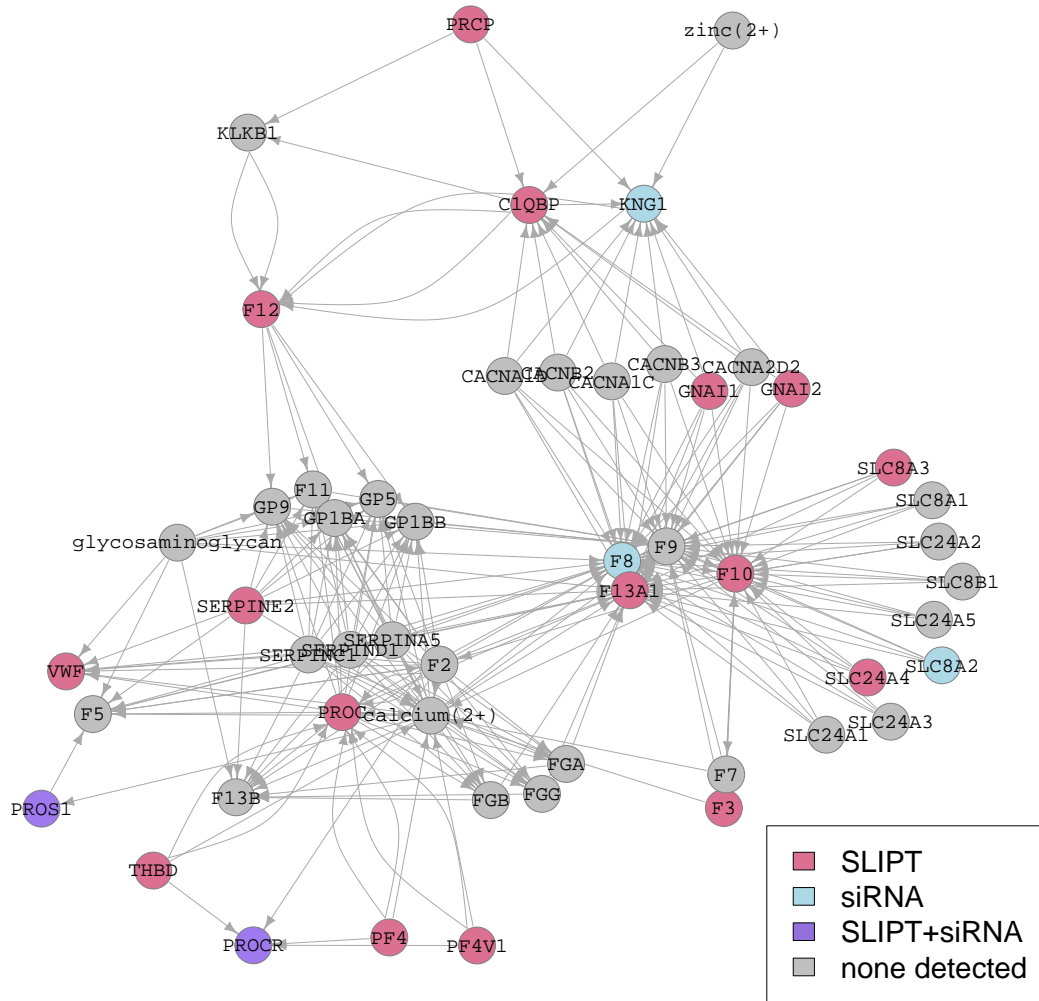


Figure 5.3: **Synthetic lethality in Fibrin Clot Formation.** The Reactome Fibrin Clot Formation pathway with synthetic lethal candidates coloured as shown in the legend.

Many of these genes are involved in the larger Extracellular Matrix pathway (shown in Appendix Figure G.3), including many of the synthetic lethal candidates discussed for elastic fibres. The number of SLIPT candidate genes outnumbers those identified by siRNA, as expected from an isolated cell model. However, the endocrine response genes (e.g., *TGFB1* and *LTBP4*) which are potentially artifacts of the cell line growth process were replicated with SLIPT analysis in patient tumours (TCGA breast cancer data). There is also additional support for synthetic lethal genes (e.g., *ITGB2*, *MFAP2*, and *SPARC*) being highly connected networks hubs of the pathway. The complexity

of the extracellular matrix [pathway](#) lends credence to the need for formal network analysis approaches to interpret the [pathway](#) structure of [synthetic lethal](#) candidates. Furthermore, statistical approaches are needed to determine whether the apparent structural relationships between [synthetic lethal](#) candidates could have occurred by chance

5.1.3 G Protein Coupled Receptors

G protein coupled receptor (GPCR) [pathways](#) are highly complex (as shown in Figure 5.4 and Appendix Figure G.4). Many of genes in these [pathways](#) were [synthetic lethal](#) candidates, detected by either SLIPT or siRNA screening, including genes frequently detected by both approaches, consistent with these [pathways](#) being supported by prior analyses (in Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.5.1). [Synthetic lethal](#) candidates include the PDE and Calmodulin genes (as discussed in Section 5.1.3) in addition to others such as the regulators of G-protein signalling (RGS), chemokine receptors (CXCR), Janus kinase (JAK), and the Ras homolog family (RHO) genes. These are important regulatory signalling [pathways](#) necessary for cellular growth and cancer proliferation. Thus the GPCR [pathways](#) (and downstream PI3K/AKT signals) are a potentially actionable vulnerability against *CDH1* deficient cancers, particularly since many existing drug targets are in these signalling [pathways](#), some of which have been experimentally validated (Telford *et al.*, 2015). While statistically significant numbers of genes in GPCR [pathways](#) were detected by both approaches (in Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.5.1), the complexity of GPCR networks (containing hundreds of genes) further support the needs for a rational network-based approach to the relationships between SLIPT and experimental candidates.

5.1.4 Gene Regulation and Translation

While very few [synthetic lethal](#) genes were detected in translational [pathways](#) in an experimental screen against *CDH1* (Telford *et al.*, 2015), these were highly over-represented in translational elongation (as shown in Appendix Figure G.5). These SLIPT genes include many ribosomal proteins and the regulatory “elongation factors” which may be subject to responses in the upstream signalling [pathways](#). This observation further indicates that [pathway](#) structure may be used to identify relationships between [synthetic lethal](#) candidates detected by SLIPT and siRNA. The computational approach with SLIPT may exhibit the ability to detect downstream genes in the core translational processes, which experimental screening did not identify. The experimental screening may similarly detect upstream regulatory genes less sensitive

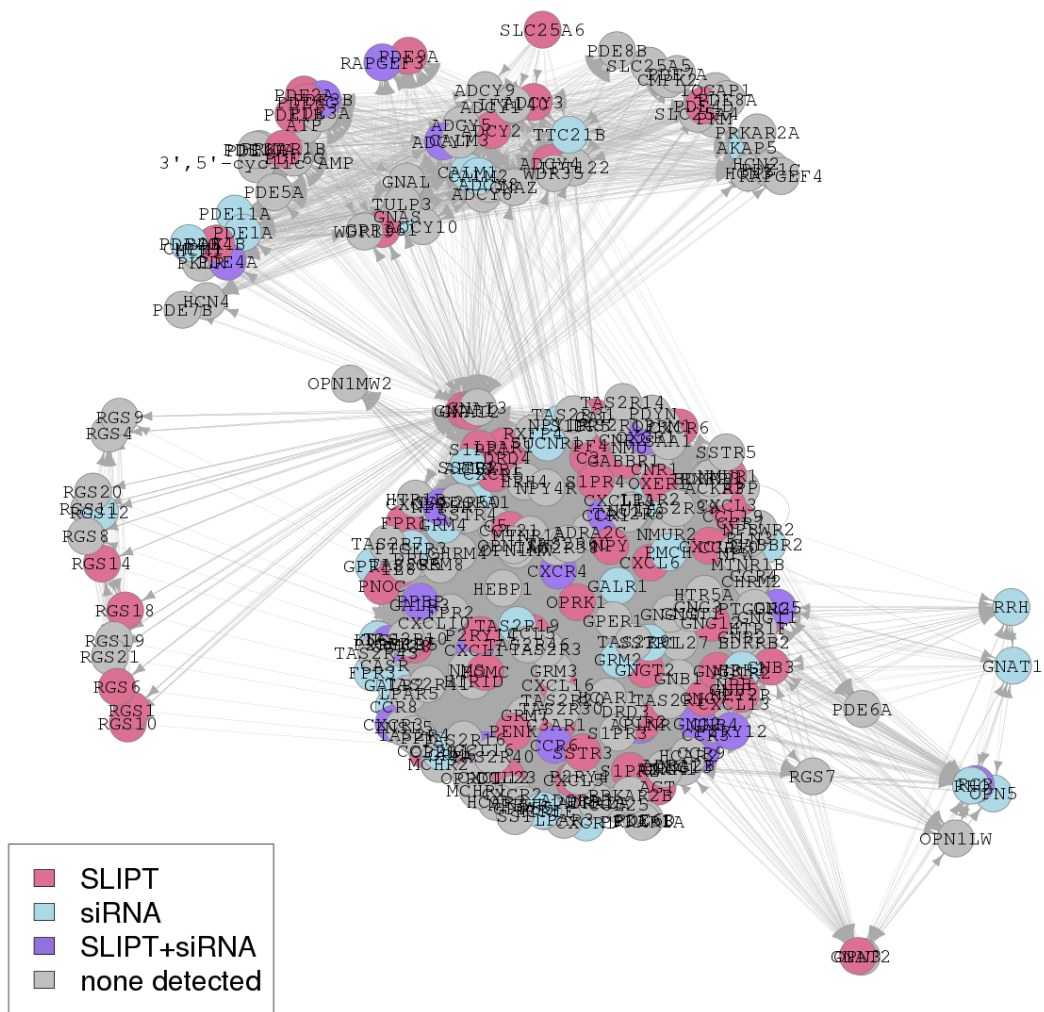


Figure 5.4: **Synthetic lethality in the GPCRs.** The Reactome $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway with **synthetic lethal** candidates, coloured as shown in the legend.

to inactivation, that is, genes that are less likely to be indiscriminately lethal to both genotypes at high doses of inactivation.

Many of these SLIPT candidate genes are also among the nonsense-mediated decay (NMD) pathway (shown in Appendix Figure G.6) or 3' untranslated region (UTR) mediated translational regulation (shown in Appendix Figure G.7). While genes in these pathways were also supported by experimental screening with siRNA, there were differences in which genes were detected within the pathway structures. In particular, *UPF1* was detected in the siRNA screen and is the focal downstream gene for the entire NMD pathway showing that (in this case) siRNA genes are downstream effectors of those detected by SLIPT. 3' UTR mediated translational regulation has a similar structure with two modules connected solely by *RPL13A*, giving an example of SLIPT candidate genes with high connectivity, although there were many ribosomal proteins detected by SLIPT. However, the detection of *EIF3K*, a regulatory elongation factor (not essential to ribosomal function) was replicated across SLIPT and siRNA screening, while the majority of the elongation factors were not detected by either approach. Regulatory genes, being more amenable to experimental validation, also support further investigation into pathway structure. The SLIPT candidates may support experimental candidates in biological pathways by detecting downstream genes, which may not be detectable by experimental screening with high dose inhibitors. This difference between the approaches may explain the greater number of SLIPT candidate partners of *CDH1* than those experimentally identified.

5.2 Network Analysis of Synthetic Lethal Genes

To demonstrate the network properties of synthetic lethal candidates in a pathway, a network analysis was performed on the genes detected as synthetic lethal partners of *CDH1* with the SLIPT computational approach and the siRNA screen (Telford *et al.*, 2015) in $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling, a GPCR pathway. This pathway was used to demonstrate deeper network analysis approaches to synthetic lethal candidates within complex pathways, as it was supported across analyses (in Chapter 4), with significant over-representation in both SLIPT and siRNA screening, and the genes differed considerably between synthetic lethal detection methods (shown in Appendix Figures 5.4). These network metrics were used to measure whether the network properties differed between groups of genes detected by either or both approaches. These analyses serve to test both whether synthetic lethal gene candidates had higher connectivity or importance in

a network and whether either detection approach is biased towards genes with different network properties.

5.2.1 Gene Connectivity and Vertex Degree

Vertex degree (the number of connections) for each gene is a fundamental property of a network. The vast majority of genes had a relatively modest number of connections, each with only a few genes in the $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway (shown in Figure 5.5) having pathway relationships with a high number of genes, consistent with the *scale-free* property of biological networks (Barabási and Oltvai, 2004). The number of connections was similar between gene groups (by *synthetic lethal* detection). Genes detected by *siRNA* included those with the fewest connections, despite there being fewer genes that were detected by either approach. There was no statistically significant effect of either computational or experimental *synthetic lethal* detection method on vertex degree, as determined by *analysis of variance* (ANOVA) (shown by Table 5.1).

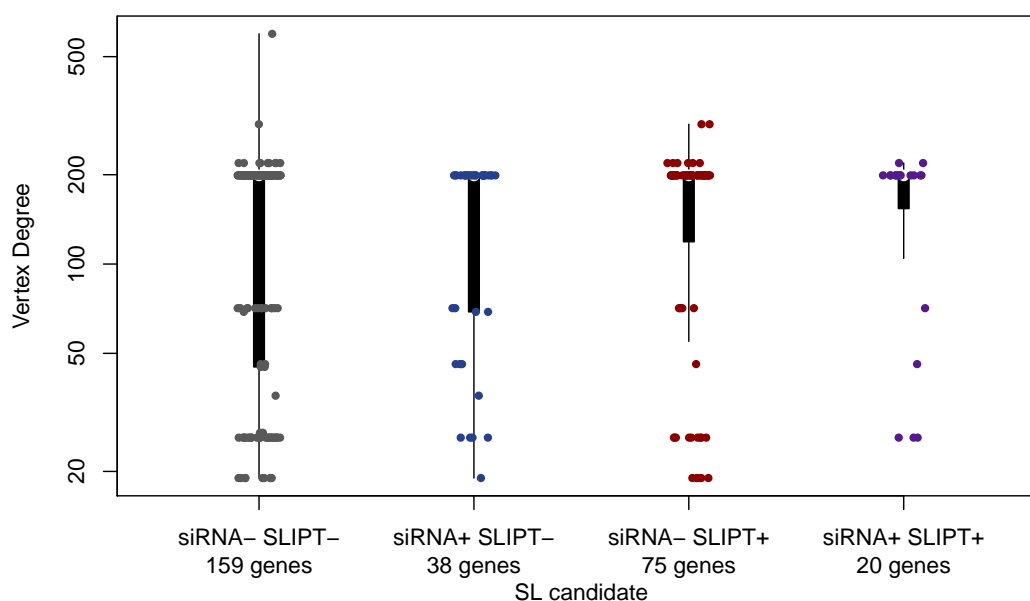


Figure 5.5: **Synthetic lethality and vertex degree.** The number of connected genes (*vertex degree*) was compared (on a log-scale) across genes detected by *SLIPT* and *siRNA* screening in the Reactome $G_{\alpha i}$ cascade pathway. There were no differences in *vertex degree* between the groups (shown in Table 5.1), although genes detected by *siRNA* included those with the fewest connections.

Table 5.1: ANOVA for synthetic lethality and vertex degree

	DF	Sum Squares	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value
siRNA	1	21	20.8	0.0030	0.9561
SLIPT	1	16215	16215	2.3722	0.1246
siRNA×SLIPT	1	17	17	0.0025	0.9603

Analysis of variance for **vertex** degree against **synthetic lethal** detection approaches (with an interaction term)

The results for the $G_{\alpha i}$ **pathway** were very similar when testing **synthetic lethality** against *CDH1* **mutation** (mtSLIPT). In either case, there was no significant evidence that SLIPT or mtSLIPT-specific genes had higher connectivity than those detected by siRNA screening (shown in Appendix Figure H.1 and Appendix Table H.1). Thus **synthetic lethal** detection does not discriminate among genes by their connectivity in this **pathway** network, nor is either approach constrained to detecting highly connected genes. Both approaches have been demonstrated to detect genes with many and very few connections in the $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling **pathway**.

5.2.2 Gene Importance and Centrality

5.2.2.1 Information Centrality

Information centrality is a measure of the importance of **nodes** in a network in terms of how vital they are to the transmission of information throughout the network. This applies well to biological **pathways**, particularly gene regulation and cell signalling. The **nodes** with the highest **information centrality** are not necessarily the most connected, as they may also include **nodes** that pass signals between highly connected network hubs. **Information centrality** therefore provides a distinct metric for the connectivity of a gene in a **pathway**, which has the added benefit of being directly related to the disruption of **pathway** function were it to be inactivated or removed. **Information centrality** has also been suggested to be indicative of the **essentiality** of genes or proteins (Kranthi *et al.*, 2013).

Within the $G_{\alpha i}$ **pathway** (shown in Figure 5.6), the **information centrality** across gene groups detected by either **synthetic lethal** approach did not differ significantly (shown by Table 5.2). Genes detected by SLIPT span the complete range of **PageRank centrality** values for this **pathway**. These findings were replicated (shown in Appendix Figure H.2 and Appendix Table H.2). Thus neither method was unable to detect

synthetic lethal genes in the $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway with particular centrality constraints but they were also not detecting genes with higher centrality than expected by chance.

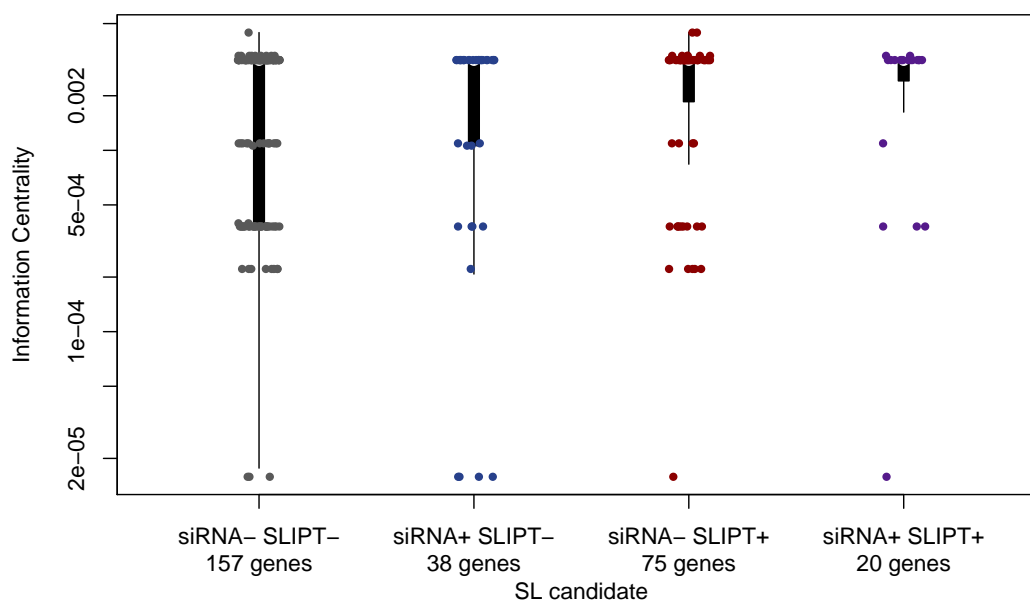


Figure 5.6: **Synthetic lethality and centrality.** The information centrality was compared (on a log-scale) across genes detected by SLIPT and siRNA screening in the Reactome $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway. Genes detected by SLIPT or siRNA did not have higher centrality than other genes (shown in Table 5.2). Genes detected by SLIPT spanned the range of centrality values.

Table 5.2: ANOVA for synthetic lethality and information centrality

	DF	Sum Squares	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value
siRNA	1	0.00000000	2.7000×10^{-9}	0.0016	0.96783
SLIPT	1	0.00000548	5.4831×10^{-6}	3.3253	0.06926
siRNA×SLIPT	1	0.00000002	1.8800×10^{-8}	0.0114	0.91511

Analysis of variance for information centrality against synthetic lethal detection approaches (with an interaction term)

5.2.2.2 PageRank Centrality

PageRank centrality is another network analysis procedure to infer a hierarchy of gene importance from a network using connections and structure (Brin and Page, 1998). In contrast to the information centrality approach of removing nodes, PageRank uses the eigenvalue properties of the adjacency matrix to rank genes according to the number of connections and paths they are involved in.

This distinction is immediately clear within the $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway (shown in Figure 5.7), which differs considerably from the information centrality scores (as shown in Figure 5.6). Genes detected by either synthetic lethal approach did not include those with the highest PageRank centrality. There was a significant association between genes detected by SLIPT (which had a lower median) with PageRank centrality (shown by Table 5.3).

The genes detected by SLIPT span the range of centrality values of siRNA showing that both approaches were capable of detecting genes of moderately high centrality (as shown for information centrality) and that the lower centrality of SLIPT candidates in the $G_{\alpha i}$ pathway may be due to synthetic lethal partners being less critical to the pathway, rather than a limitation of the methodology. While it is expected that some synthetic lethal genes will be important to the function of the pathway, it is possible that genes with high centrality were avoided if they are essential to cellular viability.

There was not a significant association between siRNA candidates and PageRank centrality. The significant result for SLIPT was not replicated when testing synthetic lethality against *CDH1* mutation (shown in Appendix Figure H.3 and Appendix Table H.3). However, this may be due to fewer genes being detected by mtSLIPT and siRNA.

Table 5.3: ANOVA for synthetic lethality and PageRank centrality

	DF	Sum Squares	Mean Squares	F-value	p-value
siRNA	1	0.0001059	1.0589×10^{-4}	2.1021	0.14818
SLIPT	1	0.0002881	2.8808×10^{-4}	5.7188	0.01743
siRNA×SLIPT	1	0.0000477	4.7704×10^{-5}	0.9470	0.33131

Analysis of variance for PageRank centrality against synthetic lethal detection approaches (with an interaction term)

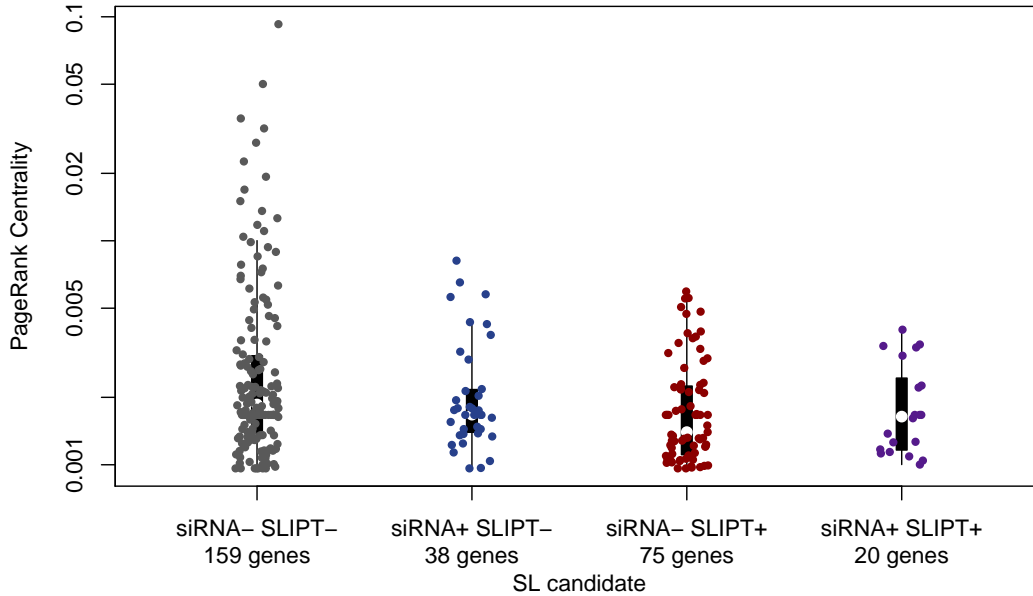


Figure 5.7: **Synthetic lethality and PageRank.** The [PageRank centrality](#) was compared (on a log-scale) across genes detected by [mtSLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) screening in the Reactome $G_{\alpha i}$ [pathway](#). Genes detected by with either [synthetic lethal](#) detection approach had a more restricted range of [centrality](#) values but only [SLIPT](#) genes had a significant association with [centrality](#) (shown in Table 5.3).

5.3 Relationships between Synthetic Lethal Genes

The network analyses so far have tested whether [synthetic lethal](#) candidate genes were more connected or important within a [pathway](#) structure, such as the $G_{\alpha i}$ [pathway](#). However these metrics do not ascertain whether there were relationships between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) candidate partners of *CDH1*. In particular, it is plausible that they may be upstream or downstream of one and other within a [pathway](#).

The direction of a biological [pathway](#) is important, particularly those involved in cell signalling which respond to extracellular stimuli and transmit these signals via intermediary proteins to regulate core functions and responses of the cell. These [pathways](#) regulate process such as [gene expression](#) and protein translation, which are important in the proliferation of cancers (Gao and Roux, 2015). Therefore it is important to determine which [synthetic lethal](#) candidates were upstream or downstream in the con-

text of a biological [pathway](#). In particular, [pathway](#) structure may be used to identify relationships between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates.

A [pathway](#) structure method was devised to use [network](#) structures to identify directional relationships between individual [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) genes. This [pathway](#) structure methodology was applied (as described in Section 3.4.1) to detect the direction of [shortest paths](#) between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates. This is used to demonstrate the methodology on the [PI3K](#) and $G_{\alpha i}$ [pathways](#), to develop a statistical test for [pathway](#) structure between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates using resampling (as described in Section 3.4.1.1), and to apply this test for [pathway](#) structure among [synthetic lethal](#) gene candidates to the [pathways](#) identified in Chapter 4 and discussed in Section 5.1.

5.3.1 Detecting Upstream or Downstream Synthetic Lethality

Shortest paths in a [pathway](#) network were used to devise a strategy to detect [pathway](#) structure between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates partners of *CDH1* (as described in Section 3.4.1). Thus we can determine whether individual [SLIPT](#) genes have upstream or downstream [siRNA](#) candidates (scored as “up” or “down” events respectively). This procedure enables the detection of directional relationships between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates (e.g., if genes detected by [siRNA](#) are more likely to be downstream of genes detected by [SLIPT](#) in the same pathway).

The total number of gene candidate pairs in either direction can be compared within a [pathway](#) network to assess the overall directional relationships in a [pathway](#). This directionality is detectable by the difference between the number of [SLIPT](#) candidate genes with upstream and downstream [siRNA](#) gene partners. However, this measure alone is not sufficient to determine whether there is evidence of [pathway](#) structure between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates partners of *CDH1* in a [pathway](#) network. Nevertheless, it does serve to measure the magnitude (and direction) of the consensus of directional relationships (upstream and downstream) between [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates partners. This measure of [pathway](#) structure can be used for testing for statistical significance of [pathway](#) structure by resampling, using a permutation procedure to test whether these relationships are detectable among randomly selected gene groups rather than the detected [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene candidates partners (as described in Sections 2.3.6 and 3.4.1.1).

This resampling procedure was performed for the $G_{\alpha i}$ and [PI3K pathways](#) to generate a null distribution for the difference in the number of “up events” and “down

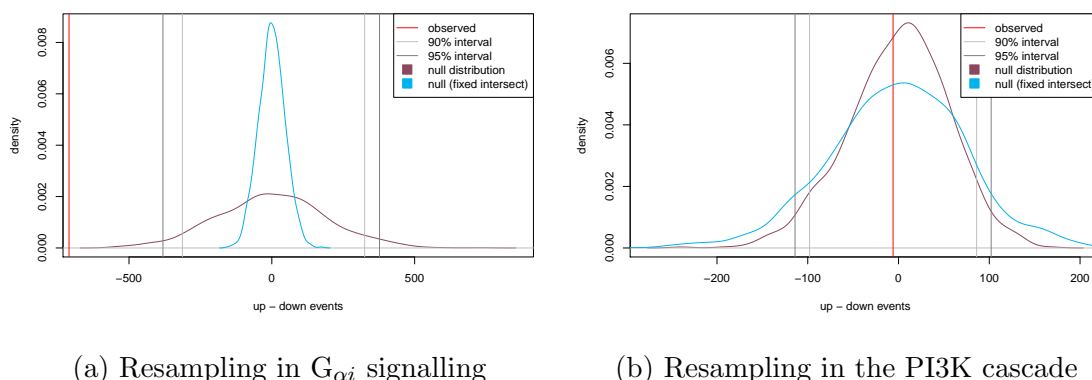


Figure 5.8: **Structure of synthetic lethality resampling.** A null distribution with 10,000 iterations of the number of **siRNA** genes upstream or downstream of **SLIPT** genes (depicted as the difference of these) in each **pathway**. To assess significance, the observed events (with **shortest paths**) were compared to the 90% and 95% intervals for the null distribution (shown in blue). Genes detected by both methods were not fixed to the same number as observed for the alternative null distribution (shown in red), although the significance of the observed number of events (red) was changed in either case. The genes detected by both approaches were included in computing the number of **shortest paths** (in either direction) between **SLIPT** and **siRNA** genes. The permutations show (a) a significant **pathway** relationship for $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling and (b) and non-significant relationship for the **PI3K** cascade.

events” for these **pathway** structures (as shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.4). The resulting null distributions (as shown in Figure 5.8) were used to detect whether genes detected by **SLIPT** had significantly more upstream or downstream **siRNA** candidates in either **pathway**. It can be seen that **siRNA** genes were significantly downstream of **SLIPT** candidate genes by resampling for the $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling **pathway** (Figure 5.8a). This demonstrates that **pathway** relationships can be detected between **synthetic lethal** candidates by this procedure and that **siRNA** genes were downstream of gene detected by **SLIPT** in an example of GPCR signalling expanding on support for **synthetic lethality** in this **pathway** (as shown in Chapter 4). These structural relationships may also account for why each the computational and experimental approaches did not detect many of the same specific genes because they are detecting different parts of the **pathway**.

In contrast, there was not significant evidence of such **pathway** structure between **siRNA** and **SLIPT** candidate genes when resampling within the **PI3K** cascade **pathway** (as shown in Figure 5.8b). This indicates that such relationships may be **pathway** specific rather than a general property of these **synthetic lethal** detection methods. These

results were robustly reproducible, with similar findings (as shown in Appendix Figure I.1) for each [pathway](#) when testing for [synthetic lethality](#) against *CDH1* mutation (mtSLIPT).

The number of genes detected by both approaches was fixed (to the number observed) for deriving p-values for pathway relationships (as described in Section 3.4.1.1). These genes were included in the analysis because they can be disproportionately upstream (or downstream) of more [siRNA](#) genes than [SLIPT](#) genes, which may lead to them having different proportions of genes detected by either approach upstream (or downstream) of them. However, allowing the number of jointly detected genes to vary during resampling (as shown in Figure 5.8 and Appendix Figure I.1) or excluding these jointly detected genes did not alter the findings of this approach. Furthermore, expanding the range of [shortest paths](#) to consider [links](#) in related [pathways](#) (using the “meta-[pathways](#)” constructed in Section 2.4.3) also had little effect on the null distribution generated, despite increasing the computational complexity of the procedure.

5.3.2 Resampling for Synthetic Lethal Pathway Structure

The permutation procedure (as described in Section 3.4.1.1) that was performed in Section 5.3.1 for the $G_{\alpha i}$ and [PI3K pathways](#) was also applied to other [pathways](#) identified in Chapter 4 and discussed in Section 5.1. In addition to the cell signalling [pathways](#) ([PI3K/AKT](#) and [GCPRs](#) demonstrated in Section 5.3.1), the [pathways](#) tested include extracellular matrix (with constituent elastic fibre and fibrin [pathways](#)), and translational [pathways](#) (with [NMD](#) and [3'UTR](#) regulation).

The resampling results across these [pathways](#) (as shown in Table 5.4) had limited support for association between [pathway](#) structure and detection of [synthetic lethal](#) genes, with the majority of these being non-significant (as shown for [PI3K](#) in Figure 5.8b), with the exception of $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling (as shown in Figure 5.8a). However, the exact distribution for these [pathways](#) will differ depending on their structure, the number of genes they contain, and the proportion of [synthetic lethal](#) candidates among them (including a higher frequency of genes detected by both methods for the [pathways](#) identified in Section 4.2.5.1). This resampling is therefore an appropriate procedure to use to detect structural relationships across [pathways](#) as it does not assume an underlying test statistic distribution.

Pathway structure was supported for the [NMD pathway](#) (which is consistent with [siRNA](#) being downstream in Appendix Figure G.6). However, this observation rests upon a single gene and was not replicated when testing [synthetic lethality](#) (mtSLIPT)

against *CDH1* mutation (as shown in Appendix Table I.1) nor was it supported by the related 3'UTR regulation and translational elongation pathways.

Table 5.4: Resampling for pathway structure of synthetic lethal detection methods

Pathway	Graph		Candidates		Observed				Permutation p-value		p-value (FDR)
	Nodes	Edges	SLIPT	siRNA	Up ¹	Down ²	Up-Down	Up/Down	Up-Down	Down-Up	Down-Up
PI3K Cascade	138	1495	38	25	122	128	-6	0.953	0.5326	0.4606	0.6734
PI3K/AKT Signalling in Cancer	275	12882	98	44	779	679	100	1.147	0.3255	0.6734	0.6734
G_{αi} Signalling	292	22003	95	58	836	1546	-710	0.541	0.9971	0.0029	0.0145
GPCR downstream	1270	142071	312	160	9755	9261	494	1.053	0.3692	0.6305	0.6734
Elastic fibre formation	42	175	24	7	1	2	-1	0.500	0.5461	0.3865	0.6734
Extracellular matrix	299	3677	127	29	547	455	92	1.202	0.3351	0.6636	0.6734
Formation of Fibrin	52	243	18	5	12	17	-5	0.706	0.6198	0.3564	0.6734
Nonsense-Mediated Decay	103	102	74	2	0	74	-74	0	1.0000	< 0.0001	< 0.0010
3' -UTR-mediated translational regulation	107	2860	77	1	0	0	0		0.4902	0.5027	0.6734
Eukaryotic Translation Elongation	92	3746	76	0	0	0	0		0.4943	0.4933	0.6734

Pathways in the Reactome network tested for structural relationships between SLIPT and siRNA genes by resampling. The raw p-value (computed without adjusting for multiple comparisons over pathways) is given for the difference in upstream and downstream paths from SLIPT to siRNA gene candidate partners of *CDH1* with significant pathways highlighted in bold. Sampling was performed only in the target pathway and shortest paths were computed within it. Loops or paths in either direction that could not be resolved were excluded from the analysis. The genes detected by both SLIPT and siRNA (or resampling for them) were included in the analysis and the number of these were fixed to the number observed.

¹ The number of paths where the siRNA candidate was upstream of a SLIPT candidate

² The number of paths where the siRNA candidate was downstream of a SLIPT candidate

There does not appear to be a consensus on the directionality of SLIPT and siRNA candidates across pathways as distinct pathways showed stronger tendency for siRNA genes to be either upstream or downstream. Even related pathways such as PI3K and PI3K/AKT signalling showed directional events in opposite directions. The strongest pathway (among those tested) with support for directional pathways structure is G_{αi} signalling (as shown in Figure 5.8a). In contrast to the other pathways G_{αi} signalling showed significant downstream siRNA genes for SLIPT from a large number of shortest paths (in Table 5.4). This would indicate that SLIPT detects upstream regulators of genes experimentally validated by siRNA in this pathway. This result was pathway was also the strongest result in mtSLIPT results (Appendix Table I.1), although it was not significant after adjusting for multiple testing in this case.

There is insufficient evidence to determine whether there is pathway structure, that genes were detected upstream or downstream by either method, between the SLIPT and siRNA candidates in many of the synthetic lethal pathways (identified in Chapter 4). In particular, directional structure among synthetic lethal candidates for *CDH1* was not strongly supported in most of the signalling pathways (with the exception of G_{αi} signalling) upon which the rationale for pathway structure hypotheses were based. While there is statistically significant over-representation of many of these pathways in genes detected by both SLIPT and siRNA (as described in Chapter 4), many of these did not show relationships with respect to pathway structure. Despite the de-

sign of a robust resampling approach to test relationships between gene groups, the detection of structural relationships between SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates did not generalise across pathways (and was specific to a few). Such structural relationships may apply more broadly to gene networks as different biological pathways were more over-represented among SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates. Furthermore, pathway structure did not account for the discrepancy between SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates which did not significantly intersect, such as the PI3K cascade.

5.4 Discussion

These investigations used a functional pathway network that encapsulates protein complexes and functional modules. The Reactome network uses curated, experimentally identified pathways to determine relationships between genes and does not have the limitation of relying solely on protein binding or text-mining which are prone to false positives (Croft *et al.*, 2014). While it is not documented whether these relationships are activating or inhibitory, the Reactome network (Croft *et al.*, 2014) is sufficient to test pathway relationships with directional information.

Synthetic lethal genes and pathways (for *CDH1* loss in cancer) were identified across gene expression and mutation datasets in Chapter 4. The investigations presented here extend those findings to consider synthetic lethal gene candidates within pathway structures, including exploring whether the discrepancy between individual SLIPT and siRNA candidate genes can be accounted for within a synthetic lethal pathway. Pathways with replicated synthetic lethal genes across these detection methods, breast and stomach cancer data, were investigated, including pathways from the extracellular microenvironment to core translational pathways and the signalling pathways between them.

Examining synthetic lethal gene candidates in the context of pathway structures may also provide additional mechanisms by which the function of particular genes is subject to induced essentiality and support for them belonging to a synthetic lethal pathway. Gene candidates with characterised functions important to cellular viability are ideal for triage of targets specific to *CDH1* deficient tumours and for further experimental validation in preclinical models. This chapter presents computational methods to use pathway structure in an attempt to detect genes with importance in a pathway and reconcile the differences between SLIPT and siRNA candidate genes with pathway relationships (e.g., one group being downstream of the other).

Many genes were detected by either [SLIPT](#) or [siRNA](#). The differences between these computational and experimental screening approaches could feasibly lead to differences in which genes within a [synthetic lethal pathway](#) are identified. Genes detected by [synthetic lethal](#) detection strategies included those of biological importance within [synthetic lethal pathways](#), those which are actionable drug targets, and those with functional implications for the biological growth mechanisms or vulnerabilities of *CDH1* deficient tumours. It appeared that genes detected by both approaches were highly connected (or of importance) in the [network](#) structure of some [pathways](#), and that there may be some structure with [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) candidates tending to appear upstream or downstream of each other.

The complexity of biological [pathways](#) meant that relationships between gene candidates were difficult to discern without formal mathematical and computational approaches, and thus these were used to analyse large biological networks. Network analysis techniques were applied to formalise and quantify the connectivity and importance (centrality) of genes within [pathways](#) (using $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling as an example). However, these network techniques were unable to identify distinct differences in many of the network properties of genes between those detected as [synthetic lethal](#) candidates by computational or experimental methods. These network metrics support the application of [synthetic lethal](#) detection across [pathways](#) (and the findings using [pathways](#) as gene sets in Chapter 4) as neither [synthetic lethal](#) detection approach was pre-disposed towards genes of higher importance or connectivity and neither approach was insensitive to genes of lower importance or connectivity. [SLIPT](#) did not detect genes with a significantly more crucial role in the $G_{\alpha i}$ [pathway](#), as inferred by [pathway](#) connectivity and [centrality](#) measures. However, [SLIPT](#) genes had significantly lower centrality in the $G_{\alpha i}$ [pathway](#) by [PageRank centrality](#) (as shown in Section 5.2.2.2), and so the highest scoring genes may be too [essential](#) to cellular viability to be [synthetic lethal](#).

A measure of [pathway](#) structure between individual [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) candidate genes within a [pathway](#) was devised using the direction of [shortest paths](#) in a directed [graph](#) structure. This is amenable to detecting the consensus directionality of the [pathway](#) across pairs of genes detected by either method. The [pathway](#) structure methodology developed here is generally applicable to comparison of [node](#) groups (which may intersect), including genes in biological [pathways](#) and their detection by different methodologies. While the [pathway](#) structure measure alone is not able to detect structural relationships between gene groups (e.g., [SLIPT](#) and [siRNA](#) gene can-

didates), it is amenable to resampling to determine whether these relationships are statistically significant. This approach successfully detected a statistically robust relationship between SLIPT and siRNA candidate genes on the $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling pathway, despite there being few differences between these genes with respect to network metrics of connectivity or centrality.

5.5 Summary

Together these analyses of biological pathways, network metrics, and statistical procedures devised specifically for this purpose were applied to Reactome pathway structures to test whether structural relationships existed between synthetic lethal candidates. Of particular interest was whether these relationships related to the differences between the computational (SLIPT) and experimental (siRNA) synthetic lethal candidate partners of *CDH1* (in the pathways discussed in Chapter 4).

While biologically relevant relationships were observed in specific pathways, there were few detectable structural relationships between SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates, apart from structural relationships specific to $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling. In this pathway, synthetic lethal candidates did not exhibit significant differences in network connectivity or centrality measures. These network analyses were also unable to ascertain whether the candidates detected by either method stratified into upstream and downstream genes on the pathway.

A statistical resampling procedure was applied to shortest path analysis to test whether pairs of SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates were more likely to be upstream or downstream of each other. This approach did not detect many structural relationships in the synthetic lethal pathways identified in Chapter 4. Overall, support for pathway structure between SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates was weak and the direction was inconsistent across pathways. Therefore pathway structure does not appear to generally account for the differences between the SLIPT and siRNA gene candidates, although it may apply in specific pathways as demonstrated with $G_{\alpha i}$ signalling. It was possible to detect some pathway relationships between candidate genes in synthetic lethal pathways, in addition to the significantly over-represented genes shared between SLIPT and siRNA (as identified in Chapter 4).

Furthermore, the resampling procedure demonstrated in this chapter is more widely applicable to gene states in network structures and may be of further utility in the analysis of biological pathways or networks. This approach was able to quantify structural relationships that were otherwise difficult to interpret and to conclusively exclude many

potential relationships. In this respect, the network resampling methodology may also be applicable to triage of [therapeutic targets](#) for experimental validation.

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