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Walter R. Schwarm

Randall Jackson West Virginia University, randall.jackson@mail.wvu.edu

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Examining and Evaluating Aggregation Scale Effects on Interregional Commodity by Industry Trade Flow Estimates

RESEARCH PAPER 2006-4

Walter R. Schwarm and **Randall W. Jackson**

Regional Research Institute, West Virginia University Morgantown, WV 26506-6825, USA Email: Walter.Schwarm@mail.wvu.edu

Abstract: This study tests the implementation of interindustry transaction flows in a national system of economic regions derived from an interregional accounting framework and initial information on interregional shipments. The interregional flows connecting states are estimated using a method based on the Commodity Flow Survey data published by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, which adjusts the estimated interregional SAM to insure the integrity of intraregional and system-wide, national accounts. The resulting US interregional framework describes flows within and among the 51 regions We examine results of a series of trials testing the validity of the resulting interregional trade-flow data versus other data sources and estimates such as Liu and Vilain (2004). The overall difference in estimation accuracy arising from differences in the base aggregation level is a quantity that has attracted little prior attention. To address this issue this paper, in addition to estimating and comparing trade flows using aggregated sectors, also estimates the flows using the 509 disaggregated IMPLAN sectors applies aggregation only in the final comparison steps. This allows us to comment on the additional role sectoral aggregation scale may play in the relative accuracy of trade flow estimation results.

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Introduction

The importance of accurately estimating commodity imports cannot be overemphasized. With deregulation and structural change economic interactions among industries, governments, and households become more closely tied and complex. Recent studies have found in both the US and Japan that interregional trade within a country is growing more rapidly than intra-regional and international trade, and that regions have become tied very closely together (for example, Hewings *et al*., 1998, and Hitomi *et al*., 2000). As the volume of interregional trade increases it is likely that the trading patterns also become more complex and investigating economic relationships in further detail, identifying, for example, which industries in one state have the strongest and the closest relationships with a given industry in another, can provide a better understanding of how policy changes in one region create impacts other regions.

Given the importance of such interregional estimates, the challenges to estimation are reflected in the relative dearth of examples in the literature. Notable studies include the recent Liu and Vilain (2004) who compare forecasts of interregional trade flows with commodity flow survey (CFS) values for a six region model of the U.S. Canning and Zhi (2005) employ IO numerical optimization methods to construct an interregional Commodity by Industry flow matrix for the United States. Jackson et. al. (2005) present an export distribution estimation method, and describe the steps necessary to generate the interregional trade flow portions of an ISAM, to insure the consistency of both the individual SAM accounts and the system as a whole.

Using the Jackson et al. (2005), method of determining interregional trade flows we attempt to determine the relative effectiveness and efficiency of the estimation method. We examine results of a series of trials testing the validity of the resulting interregional

trade-flow data versus other data sources and estimates such as Liu and Vilain (2004). Additionally, the overall difference in estimation accuracy arising from differences in the base aggregation level is a quantity that has attracted little prior attention. Therefore, we will examine the relative differences in the overall estimation accuracy resulting from changes in the level of data aggregation.

The paper is organized as follows: After data construction definition we present a brief summary of the methods used to generate interregional trade characteristics by commodity and the adjustments used to insure the integrity of the intra-regional and system wide accounts. This summary is followed by a discussion of some of the aspects of the validation problem and comparisons of other trade estimates with those provided by our method, finally we present discussion of the relevant differences in aggregation and analysis of the validation exercise.

Organization and Data:

The Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) framework details interactions among economic agents (industries, governments, households, etc.). The SAM framework describing the full circular flow of income, establishing separate accounts for production, consumption, and transaction with other regions, was originally pioneered by Stone (1961), and applied at the regional and interregional level by Pyatt and Round (1983), Round (1985), and Bell *et al.* (1982).

The procedure used in this paper produces a current database for interindustry activities among regions but also generates a more extensive and complete database for the US state economies. Moreover, the interregional SAM described in Jackson et.al. (2005), specifies interregional relationships, more comparable to Isard's (1951)

interregional input-output framework, thereby providing more detailed information regarding economic interactions across regions than the multiregional framework in Polenske's model.

SAMs and Data

The interregional trade estimates are constructed from IMPLAN single-region generated data partitions for a single region SAM, with imports treated separately (import ridden as opposed to import laden). The IMPLAN SAM data are reported in this format to assist GAMS users in constructing single region CGE models from IMPLAN data. Industry sectors were defined in such a way as to correspond closely with the commodity codes used by the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics. The modeled framework encompasses fifty-one regions and 54 industry and commodity sectors, along with four factors of production and 18 institutions.

 The general structure of the *interregional* SAM is shown in Figure 1, which depicts a 3-region SAM, but which generalizes straightforwardly to our 51-region case. The challenge in constructing the interregional SAM lies in the estimation of values for the shaded and labeled partitions of the off-diagonal blocks in the diagram in Figure 1, and the necessary adjustments to other sectors to ensure a balanced table consistent with the accounting identities of the SAM.

Figure 1. General Structure of the Interregional SAM

TIO TCO Total Total Fac. Pmts. Inst. Exp.

Row and Column Totals
Industry Row - Total Regional Industrial Output (make)
Industry Column - Total Regional Industry Input (use) (Output)
Commodity Row - Total Regional Commodity Supply (Disposition) Commodity Column - Total Regional Commodity Supply all sources Factor Row - Total factor receipts (payments to factors) of production Institutions Row - Total Institutional Receipts (payments to institutions) Factor Column - Total factor payments to institutions (and trade) Institutions Column - Total Regional Institutions Expenditures (use)

Export Distributions

The US Bureau of Transportation Statistics collects data through its commodity flow survey (CFS). Although these state-to-state commodity flow estimates are published and available from the BTS, their usefulness is limited for a number of reasons. Foremost among these reasons is that for almost all listed commodities, state-to-state origin-destination tables are dominated by disclosure codes or other annotations. The most common of these codes indicates that the estimate is not published due to an unacceptably high statistical variability, and thus, little confidence in the estimate. A second problem for model construction is that the CFS data report shipment origin and destination rather than manufacturing origin. An alternative approach which has the effect of generalizing the distance-volume relationships embedded in the BTS data, smoothing out irregularities observed in the more specific origin-destination commodityspecific shipments data, and enabling application to regions whose boundaries do not coincide with states is used in this paper.

The method operates roughly as follows: We assume that the *distribution of exports* from one region to all others is fixed, while *export levels* vary with regional production. Hence, our estimating equation need only be a function of transportation costs (as measured by interregional distances) and region-specific commodity demand. For each commodity *i*, let the predicted value of the flow from region *m* to region *n* be computed as

(2.1)
$$
\hat{y}_{i}^{mn} = \frac{(w_{i}^{n})^{\phi_{i}} \exp(-\delta_{i}d^{mn})}{\sum_{n} (w_{i}^{n})^{\phi_{i}} \exp(-\delta_{i}d^{mn})} y_{i}^{m}
$$

where (w_i^n) is a weight reflecting region *n*'s demand for imports of commodity *i*,

 d^{mn} is the distance separating region *m* from region *n*,

$$
y_i^{m\bullet} = \sum_{n \neq m} y_i^{mn}
$$
 is total domestic commodity *i* exports from region m.

Where the y_i^{mn} , ideally, are actual shipments derived from observed values published in the 1997 BTS Commodity Flow Survey (CFS). δ_i and φ_i are elasticities on distance and commodity demand, respectively. Commodities with larger φ values are more sensitive to demand variations, while those with smaller values for δ are more sensitive to shipment distances.

Ideally, to estimate the values of the elasticities for each commodity, δ_i and φ_i would be selected to minimize the absolute difference between estimated and observed flows, or $\min Z = \left| \hat{y}_i^{mn} - y_i^{mn} \right|$. Because of the gaps in the BTS CFS data however, we do not use observed interregional flows. We do make use of the BTS commodity-specific summary data to generate an observed flow estimate by using a Box-Cox regression specification to estimate the distance decay function for each commodity. The coefficient values derived from estimates of these functions are then used to generate synthetic "observed" flows corresponding to state centroid interregional distances:

$$
(2.2)\frac{F_i^{mn}}{\left[\hat{\beta}_1 + \hat{\beta}_2 \frac{(\left|d_{mn} - str_m + \min(s, str_n)\right|)^{\lambda-1}}{\lambda}\right]^{\frac{\lambda+1}{\lambda}}}{\left[-\left(\hat{\beta}_1 + \hat{\beta}_2 \frac{(\left|d_{mn} - str_m - \min(s, str_n)\right|)^{\lambda-1}}{\lambda}\right)^{\frac{\lambda+1}{\lambda}}\right]^{\frac{\lambda+1}{\lambda}}}
$$

where F_i^{mn} is the regression-generated (synthetically observed) commodity flow from region *m* to region *n*, *dmn* represents interregional distance, *str* is the distance from the population centroid to the region border (essentially, state radius), *s* is the size of buffer around interregional "point-to-point" distances, and *Xr* represents domestic export shares derived from IMPLAN.

With this first step complete, δ_i and φ_i can be calibrated by minimizing the squared percentage error between logit-predicted and regression-generated flows:

(2.3)
$$
\underset{\delta,\varphi}{\text{Min}} \sum_{m} \sum_{n} \left(\frac{\hat{Y}_{i}^{mn} - F_{i}^{mn}}{F_{i}^{mn}} \right)^2
$$

where \hat{Y}^{mn} is the predicted flow of commodity *i* from region *m* to region *n*, and F_i^{mn} is the regression-generated commodity flow from region *m* to region *n*.

Having calculated commodity-specific values for δ_i and φ_i , the aggregate commodity trade flow distributions in the interregional SAM can be derived by applying the generalized function (2.1) to IMPLAN domestic export estimates from the singleregion SAMs. The procedure described generates considerable variation in interaction parameters across commodities. Depending on the commodity, both population and distance can be very important flow determinants or have virtually no effect on flow determination.

Sector Specific Interregional Commodity Flows

The export distributions for each commodity are first used to apportion the IMPLAN generated domestic export matrices to destination regions. This apportionment is applied equally to commodities exported by institutions and by industries. The export

distributions are then unstandardized by IMPLAN export estimates, and normalized by column sum. The result is a set of commodity specific import distributions by region. That is, entries in the new table correspond to the proportion of regional domestic imports that originate in each other region. This new table is then used to apportion aggregate commodities imported by industries and institutions to regions of origin. Because it was derived from the actual export distributions, its use assures consistency between exports from region r to region s and imports by region s from region r (which appear in two separate partitions in the interregional SAM).

Foundational Framework

Having presented a general summary of the data and method used in constructing the interregional trade estimates we turn now to examining the overall motivation for this study. We are attempting to further establish a validation framework for the estimates provided by the method. This would allow for the determination of the relative weaknesses of the estimation technique and identify areas for improvements. In addition, we seek to examine the output with an eye towards potentially finding consistent patterns that might either aid in developing the method further or identify areas of weakness.

Besides examining validation issues we are interested in a further issue, namely the effect that levels of data aggregation have upon the results. It is generally accepted in modeling that estimates arising from aggregated data are not fully consistent with estimates from more disaggregated data. Given this general tendency, we are interested in determining what role the level of aggregation potentially plays within our modeling framework and how it affects the results.

Interregional Trade Estimates

General attempts to validate the estimates of interregional trade flows is difficult as there are few other data sets or methods for comparison. Among those that we may examine are the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) itself, but as mentioned previously it is a difficult data set to work with due to the large number of suppressed values in various sectors. In addition since there is at least some relationship between our method and the CFS, it does not serve well as a comparative data set. We may also consider the estimates obtainable within the Bureau of Transportation Statistics Freight Analysis Framework (FAF), which are the result of a REBEE proprietary estimation/collection method with limited documentation. We could examine the model results against purely theoretical estimators such as Regional Purchase Coefficients (RPC), however these have clearly documented shortcomings and would therefore serve as less than adequate validation instruments. Finally we could compare our estimates to those obtainable from other methods in the literature. Our validation attempts therefore will focus on a comparison our estimates with which is in essence a weighted and balanced LQ transformation of commodity by industry IO model, with the advantage that the framework is flexible enough to model sub-state regions. We will also provide comparison with those regional overlaps where FAF data is available. There are several limitations within this proposed structure, however there seems little better alternative.

The most egregious consequence of the validation method's limitations is an inability to directly compare the effects of data disaggregation across the various methods, as neither of the alternative specifications are either able to estimate, or available in, disaggregated form. Our comparison will therefore necessarily take the

following form: we produce trade estimates starting with aggregated data and starting with disaggregated data followed by post estimation aggregation. These estimates will then be compared to the reference estimates at the aggregated level. In this way we may compare not only the relative accuracy of our estimation method, but also the role that levels of aggregation play in the outcome.

Scope and Results

The first consideration is the availability of data for comparison. The FAF is currently available on 2001-2002 database, our model estimates are currently available for the year 2001 as well. Liu and Vilain originally estimated and compared their values to the 1993 CFS, however for this paper their data was re-estimated using most recent CFS. Additionally. Liu and Vilain's method is based on tonnage not dollar value. This is not a problem for FAF comparisons as tonnage values are provide within the dataset. Our method however produces dollar values of goods, which were converted to tonnage using CFS commodity-value per metric-ton relationships.

Three respective areas were chosen as representative of several types of trading areas. California was chosen as a relatively balanced economy with trade in most sectors, but with particular strength in agriculture and the intangible knowledge based sectors. Ohio was chosen as an example of a manufacturing and consumer good warehousing and distribution heavy trading partner. Finally, Pennsylvania was selected as a state with blended components of both previously selected states, namely agriculture, manufacturing and intangible services. In addition these states were also ones that Lui and Vilain modeled in their paper using 1993 CFS data, thus we could compare our

ability to reproduce their estimates before updating them to the most recent data for comparison with our ISAG method.

Error in ISAG Estimates

The results for the validation exercise can be seen in Tables 1-4. The first three present comparisons for each of the states chosen between the FAF, Lui and Vilain's method the Jackson et al. ISAG method with estimation entirely in the aggregated sectors and finally the ISAG method, labeled ISAG-D, where the interregional estimates were carried out using the 509 IMPLAN disaggregated sectors and only aggregated into those show at the very end for comparison. Percentage difference is given for each of the estimates as well as an overall average difference rate and an absolute overall difference value. Finally Table 4 presents a summary of the difference values between the various ISAG variations and the FAF.

Several results present themselves as one examines the tables. Given the effect of cross hauling we would expect a method that employs LQ to form a relative upper bound on the estimates of interregional trade. As can be observed, our estimates of trade flows fall comfortably within this expectation. Comparing ISAG estimates with Liu and Vilain(2004) we see that overall our estimates are reasonably smaller magnitude than the ones they calculate. This is true for almost all sectors and examined states. ISAG method we employ is cost/time effective- produces results that are an improvement over the less complex and more straightforward estimation technique they employ.

When examining Table 4 we observe that the overall error of the ISAG method vs. the FAF is not too bad. Sectors that over/under estimate severely are relatively consistent and are characterized by unique final demand such as Ordnance, specialized use/make

such as Electrical and machining equipment, or high transportability and cross hauling, such as Apparel. We may also note that for the most part the estimates derived from the disaggregated estimated trade relationships have smaller errors relative to the FAF than those that are estimated using the aggregated data. Comparisons with the FAF are unfortunately the only benchmark that we have at this point so the question naturally arises about the relative reliability of the FAF estimates. Given that the data and method that is used to construct those estimates is an unknown quantity we are left concluding that either the FAF or the ISAG estimates are reasonably close to argue that either one may represent a more realistic estimate of the true interregional trade of these three states.

Summary and Discussion

This paper has examined the relative effectiveness of an approach to the construction of an interregional SAM for the US, using IMPLAN data as a foundation and incorporating commodity flow data from the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics. The export distribution method provides a generalized function for each commodity, and in so doing, overcomes major obstacles in the use of the CFS data while still taking advantage of the information that is available. The method generates an interregional SAM that is consistent from an accounting perspective, both within each regional SAM and for the interregional modeling system as a whole.

 The overall comparison of this method with others in the literature is largely a positive one. The ISAG method yields results that are theoretically consistent with expectations when compared to the methods of Lui and Vilian. The ISAG method also provides reasonable estimates in relation to the FAF, however it is impossible to really

say which one of the estimates are actually true as there is no known baseline for comparison. Therefore the fact that the ISAG estimates are close to the FAF estimates which are derived using methods that are unclear due to their proprietary nature might be considered a reasonably positive outcome. This is particularly true considering that the ISAG method allows for sub-state region estimation unavailable within the FAF.

An additional aspect that can be seen as favorable is the ability of the ISAG model to estimate interregional trade using data at a very disaggregated level. As was shown in this paper, estimates using a high level of disaggregation yielded results that were better and seemed to overcome some of the issues of sector inconsistency which are a feature of the estimates derived from the more aggregated data.

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					FAF _{vs}	FAF _{vs}	FAF _{vs}
CA	FAF	Lui & Vilain	ISAG	ISAG-D	L & V	ISAG	ISAG-D
Apparel	775.00	811.90	589.88	613.4752	4.76%	$-23.89%$	$-20.84%$
Chemicals	12163.58	13081.72	12060.03	12542.4312	7.55%	$-0.85%$	3.11%
Clay, Conc, glass	2754.47	4312.71	2060.44	2142.8576	56.57%	$-25.20%$	$-22.20%$
Elec, mach, eqp.	1365.89	1978.83	952.35	990.444	44.88%	$-30.28%$	$-27.49%$
Fab Metal	6585.64	4253.96	5815.16	6047.7664	$-35.41%$	$-11.70%$	$-8.17%$
Farm	6138.08	9413.82	5901.116	6137.16064	53.37%	$-3.86%$	$-0.01%$
Food	30209.38	32673.53	31425.17	32682.1768	8.16%	4.02%	8.19%
Forest+Fish	47.42	10.44	51.87	53.9448	$-77.98%$	9.38%	13.75%
Furniture	1002.43	886.30	913.56	950.1024	$-11.58%$	$-8.87%$	$-5.22%$
Inst, optics, clocks	406.09	438.58	381.66	396.9264	8.00%	$-6.02%$	$-2.26%$
Leather	121.55	127.92	115.87	120.5048	5.24%	$-4.67%$	$-0.86%$
Lumber, wood	3085.23	4131.27	2808.23	2920.5592	33.90%	$-8.98%$	$-5.34%$
Machinery	1235.17	1553.31	1182.74	1230.0496	25.76%	$-4.25%$	$-0.41%$
Misc Manuf.	609.37	749.24	659.92	686.3168	22.95%	8.30%	12.63%
Ordnance	105.75	6.53	62.98	65.4992	$-93.83%$	$-40.44%$	$-38.06%$
Primary Metal	8421.05	6367.25	8532.21	8873.4984	$-24.39%$	1.32%	5.37%
Pulp paper	5782.41	6916.78	5569.22	5791.9888	19.62%	$-3.69%$	0.17%
Rubber	1670.66	2203.35	1728.74	1797.8896	31.88%	3.48%	7.62%
Textiles	1429.71	1272.67	1421.2	1478.048	$-10.98%$	$-0.60%$	3.38%
Tobacco	15.47	24.80	14.21	14.7784	60.35%	$-8.12%$	$-4.45%$
Transport	4448.82	3444.69	4547.37	4729.2648	$-22.57%$	2.22%	6.30%
Waste/Scrap	151.95	452.94	197.3	205.192	198.08%	29.84%	35.04%
AVG.					13.83%	$-5.58%$	$-1.81%$
Mean Absolute							
Difference					38.99%	10.91%	10.49%

Table 1: California Trade with US Estimates

* Values in thousands of metric tons.

* Values in thousands of metric tons.

					FAF _{vs}	FAF _{vs}	FAF _{vs}
PA	FAF	Lui & Vilain	ISAG	ISAG-D	L & V	ISAG	ISAG-D
Apparel	230.01	302.83	170.667	162.54	31.66%	$-25.80%$	$-29.33%$
Chemicals	5761.35	7595.54	5605.2045	5338.29	31.84%	$-2.71%$	$-7.34%$
Clay, Conc, glass	2746.32	3366.37	2660.511	2533.82	22.58%	$-3.12%$	$-7.74%$
Elec, mach, eqp.	484.98	788.40	684.0183	651.446	62.56%	41.04%	34.32%
Fab Metal	2024.79	2241.47	1545.76905	1472.161	10.70%	$-23.66%$	$-27.29%$
Farm	4382.00	4944.48	4737.768	4512.16	12.84%	8.12%	2.97%
Food	12272.12	13223.99	14418.0435	13731.47	7.76%	17.49%	11.89%
Forest+Fish	110.73	80.93	121.66035	115.867	$-26.91%$	9.87%	4.64%
Furniture	533.06	496.01	457.0545	435.29	$-6.95%$	$-14.26%$	$-18.34%$
Inst, optics, clocks	110.15	127.92	95.592	91.04	16.14%	$-13.21%$	$-17.35%$
Leather	43.05	30.02	46.1265	43.93	$-30.26%$	7.15%	2.05%
Lumber, wood	1796.62	5316.49	1782.7215	1697.83	195.92%	$-0.77%$	$-5.50%$
Machinery	814.77	728.36	835.023	795.26	$-10.61%$	2.49%	$-2.39%$
Misc Manuf.	331.29	319.80	262.1535	249.67	$-3.47%$	$-20.87%$	$-24.64%$
Ordnance	32.82	0.00	16.989	16.18	-100.00%	$-48.23%$	$-50.69%$
Primary Metal	7389.26	8360.45	7888.314	7512.68	13.14%	6.75%	1.67%
Pulp paper	3154.37	5758.98	3640.6335	3467.27	82.57%	15.42%	9.92%
Rubber	1632.29	1200.88	1754.823	1671.26	$-26.43%$	7.51%	2.39%
Textiles	400.27	681.37	457.0545	435.29	70.23%	14.19%	8.75%
Tobacco	17.06	19.58	19.5405	18.61	14.78%	14.55%	9.09%
Transport	1822.82	1869.19	1906.2435	1815.47	2.54%	4.58%	$-0.40%$
Waste/Scrap	358.72	917.63	434.1435	413.47	155.81%	21.03%	15.26%
AVG					23.93%	0.80%	-4.00%
Mean Absolute							
Difference					42.53%	14.67%	13.36%

Table 3: Pennsylvania Trade with US Estimates

* Values in thousands of metric tons.

Table 4: Comparison of Estimation Differences vs. FAF values