

MULTIVARIATE SIMULATION
OF CHANNEL IRON ORE DEPOSITS
AT BUNGAROO AND YANDICOOGINA,
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Statement of Originality

The work presented in this thesis, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is original, except as acknowledged in the text, and the material has not been submitted, either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other university.

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Abstract

Geostatistical conditional simulation has wide potential applications in the iron ore industry and is the favoured tool to assess variability and risk. Multivariate relationships are important in such simulation, for example between Fe and impurities such as Al_2O_3 , SiO_2 and P.

Turning bands has been the main conditional simulation algorithm used in the Western Australian iron ore industry. In this thesis a more recent approach using minimum/maximum autocorrelation factors (MAF) and sequential Gaussian simulation (SGS) are used together and performance comparisons are made with turning bands at Yandicoogina, a channel iron ore deposit (CID) in Western Australia.

MAF-SGS and turning bands algorithms both performed well in simulating Fe, SiO_2 , Al_2O_3 and P at Yandicoogina. Extensive checking of simulations showed both approaches could reasonably reproduce multivariate statistics and spatial continuity of composites including means, variances, histograms, quantile-quantile plots, scatter plots and variography in normal scores and data space, as well as in MAF space for the MAF-SGS approach. MAF generated from transformed composites were largely uncorrelated and able to be considered independent for variography and simulation. Later back transformation from MAF space to normal scores space then to data space successfully reintroduced joint relationships seen in the conditioning data.

While the MAF-SGS approach needs additional transformations compared with turning bands, a linear model of coregionalisation and hence the modelling of cross semivariograms is not required. If there are a high number of variables then construction of a linear model of coregionalisation becomes more difficult and the MAF approach may be preferred. In this study four variables were considered and a linear model of coregionalisation could be built. Turning bands transformations are from data space to normal scores space only, with no need to calculate or check any decorrelated factors.

The two main methods currently used in the mining industry for determining optimum drillhole spacing with the use of conditional simulation were compared at the Test Pit area of the Bungaroo channel iron ore deposit, also in Western Australia. The "simulation-simulation" method generates precisions for various drillhole spacing using

two stages of simulation, whereas the "simulation-estimation" approach calculates expected relative errors for different spacings via a simulation stage followed by an estimation step.

Clear differences exist between the relative errors from the simulation-estimation method and the precisions calculated from the simulation-simulation method. The simulation-estimation method appears more insensitive to the grid spacing with only moderate improvements in relative error as the drillhole spacing is tightened. The simulation-simulation method shows more marked improvement in precision with closer spacing and appears more realistic in this study. Al_2O_3 is the main variable to consider at Bungaroo when choosing a suitable drillhole spacing. SiO_2 grades of composites are mainly below the SiO_2 cut off grade for ore whereas the mean Al_2O_3 grade is quite close to the Al_2O_3 cut off grade for ore. Hence although SiO_2 has higher variability, it is not as critical as Al_2O_3 for determination of drillhole spacing. Fe and P have greater spatial continuity than Al_2O_3 and SiO_2 and do not require such close drillhole spacing. Fifteen percent precision, based on a volume representing a quarter's production and using the simulation-simulation method, may be regarded as acceptable for mine planning purposes. A resource evaluation drilling spacing of 150m along strike and 50m across strike appears appropriate for a precision of less than 15% for a quarterly mining volume in determining Al_2O_3 grade at Bungaroo.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 General Introduction	1
1.1 Goal and Objectives	5
Chapter 2 Literature Review	6
2.1 Applications of conditional simulation to iron ore deposits	6
2.2 Turning Bands Joint Simulation	14
2.3 Conditioning joint simulations	15
2.4 LU Decomposition	17
2.5 Sequential Gaussian Simulation.....	19
2.6 Direct sequential joint simulation	21
2.7 Stepwise simulation	22
2.8 Factorisation Methods	23
Chapter 3 Methodology	29
3.1 Random Function Models.....	29
3.2 Stationarity.....	31
3.3 Multivariate Random Function Models	31
3.4 Normal score transformation	33
3.5 Minimum / maximum autocorrelation factors	35
3.6 MAF Simulation	40
3.7 Turning Bands Joint Simulation.....	43
3.8 Validation of conditional simulations	43
Chapter 4 Simulation at Yandicoogina by MAF and turning bands methods	44
4.1 Introduction	44
4.2 Geology	44
4.3 Statistics.....	48
4.4 MAF calculation	51

4.5 Variography at Yandicoogina	51
4.5.1 Introduction	51
4.5.2 Data space experimental semivariograms	52
4.5.3 Linear model of coregionalisation in normal scores space.....	54
4.5.4 MAF semivariograms	57
4.6 Simulation using MAF at Yandicoogina	58
4.6.1 Simulation	58
4.6.2 Validation.....	59
4.7 Simulation using turning bands at Yandicoogina	63
4.7.1 Introduction	63
4.7.2 Simulation	64
4.7.3 Validation.....	64
4.8 Comparison of simulation using MAF and turning bands at Yandicoogina..	68
Chapter 5 Conditional simulation at Bungaroo and optimum drillhole spacing	71
5.1 Introduction	71
5.2 Simulation-simulation method	73
5.3 Simulation-estimation method	74
5.4 Geology	75
5.5 Composites	77
5.6 Simulation grid	78
5.7 Normal Scores Transformation.....	79
5.8 Variography	79
5.9 Accuracy calculation using the simulation-estimation method at Bungaroo .	79
5.10 Precision calculation using simulation-simulation method at Bungaroo	82
5.11 Precision or accuracy of drillhole spacings	83
Chapter 6 Conclusions and recommendations.....	88
6.1 Conclusions	88

6.2 Recommendations	89
References	90
Appendix A Yandicoogina supplement.....	98
Appendix B Yandicoogina MAF calculation	122
Appendix C Bungaroo supplement	126

Table of figures

FIGURE 1-1 IRON ORE PROJECTS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.....	4
FIGURE 3-1 GRAPHICAL TRANSFORMATION FROM DATA SPACE TO NORMAL SCORES SPACE FOR A CUMULATIVE DISTRIBUTION FUNCTION	34
FIGURE 3-2 DBMAFSIM FLOW SHEET.....	42
FIGURE 3-3 DBMAFSIM CONDITIONING NEIGHBOURHOOD	42
FIGURE 4-1 GEOLOGICAL MAP OF THE HAMERSLEY PROVINCE.....	46
FIGURE 4-2 GEOLOGICAL SECTION OF YANDICOOGINA JUNCTION DEPOSIT	49
FIGURE 4-3 YANDICOOGINA COMPOSITE PLAN FOR IMA RESOURCE EVALUATION DRILLHOLES	49
FIGURE 4-4 YANDICOOGINA HISTOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF4 IN MAF SPACE (LEFT) AND MAF4 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE (RIGHT)	53
FIGURE 4-5 YANDICOOGINA MEANS AND VARIANCES OF MAF-SGS SIMULATIONS AND COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE.....	60
FIGURE 4-6 YANDICOOGINA MEANS AND VARIANCES OF TURNING BANDS SIMULATIONS AND COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE.....	66
FIGURE 5-1: BUNGAROO PRECISION / RELATIVE ERRORS FOR Al_2O_3	86
FIGURE 5-2: BUNGAROO PRECISION / RELATIVE ERRORS FOR Fe.....	86
FIGURE 5-3: BUNGAROO PRECISION / RELATIVE ERRORS FOR P.....	87
FIGURE 5-4: BUNGAROO PRECISION / RELATIVE ERRORS FOR SiO_2	87
FIGURE A-1 YANDICOOGINA HISTOGRAMS OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	98
FIGURE A-2 YANDICOOGINA SCATTER PLOTS OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	99
FIGURE A-3 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT AND CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAMS OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	100
FIGURE A-4 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT AND CROSS EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAMS OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF1 IN MAF SPACE, MAF2 IN MAF SPACE, MAF3 IN MAF SPACE AND MAF4 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	101
FIGURE A-5 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF1 IN MAF SPACE.....	101
FIGURE A-6 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF2 IN MAF SPACE.....	102
FIGURE A-7 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF3 IN MAF SPACE.....	102
FIGURE A-8 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR MAF4 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	102
FIGURE A-9 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR SIMULATED MAF1 IN MAF SPACE	103
FIGURE A-10 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR SIMULATED MAF2 IN MAF SPACE	103
FIGURE A-11 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR SIMULATED MAF3 IN MAF SPACE	103
FIGURE A-12 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR SIMULATED MAF4 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	104
FIGURE A-13 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAMS OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	104
FIGURE A-14 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAMS OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	105

FIGURE A-15 YANDICOOGINA HISTOGRAMS OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	106
FIGURE A-16 YANDICOOGINA QUANTILE-QUANTILE PLOT OF COMPOSITES AND MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	107
FIGURE A-17 YANDICOOGINA SCATTER PLOT OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	108
FIGURE A-18 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES AND EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION NUMBER 1 FOR MAF1 IN MAF SPACE	109
FIGURE A-19 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES AND EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION NUMBER 1 FOR MAF2 IN MAF SPACE	109
FIGURE A-20 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES AND EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION NUMBER 1 FOR MAF3 IN MAF SPACE	109
FIGURE A-21 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES AND EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MAF-SGS SIMULATION NUMBER 1 FOR MAF4 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	110
FIGURE A-22 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	110
FIGURE A-23 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 -Fe IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	111
FIGURE A-24 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 -P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	111
FIGURE A-25 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 - SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	112
FIGURE A-26 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Fe IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	112
FIGURE A-27 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Fe-P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	113
FIGURE A-28 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR Fe- SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	113
FIGURE A-29 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	114
FIGURE A-30 YANDICOOGINA CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR P- SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	114
FIGURE A-31 YANDICOOGINA DIRECT SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL OF COMPOSITES FOR SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	115
FIGURE A-32 YANDICOOGINA HISTOGRAM OF TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	116
FIGURE A-33 YANDICOOGINA QUANTILE-QUANTILE PLOT OF COMPOSITES VERSUS TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	117
FIGURE A-34 YANDICOOGINA SCATTER PLOT OF TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	118
FIGURE A-35 YANDICOOGINA EXPERIMENTAL SEMIVARIOGRAM OF TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	119
FIGURE A-36 YANDICOOGINA MAF-SGS SIMULATIONS ONE TO THREE OF Fe AT 475-480 RL.....	120
FIGURE A-37 YANDICOOGINA TURNING BANDS SIMULATIONS ONE TO THREE OF Fe AT 475-480 RL.....	121
FIGURE C-1 LOCATION MAP OF ROBE RIVER IRON ORE DEPOSITS	126

FIGURE C-2 COLLAR PLAN OF BUNGAROO CLOSE SPACED DRILLING STUDY AREA.....	126
FIGURE C-3 SCHEMATIC CROSS SECTION OF GEOLOGICAL UNITS AT THE BUNGAROO DEPOSIT.....	127
FIGURE C-4 DRILLHOLE COMPOSITE PLAN WITH SIZE RELATED TO WEIGHT	127
FIGURE C-5 ISATIS FORM WITH GAUSSIAN ANAMORPHOSIS MODELLING PARAMETERS FOR FE.....	128
FIGURE C-6 SEMIVARIOGRAM CALCULATION PARAMETERS FOR HORIZONTAL DIRECTIONS	128
FIGURE C-7 SEMIVARIOGRAM CALCULATION PARAMETERS FOR THE VERTICAL DIRECTION	129
FIGURE C-8 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	129
FIGURE C-9 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR FE IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	130
FIGURE C-10 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	130
FIGURE C-11 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	131
FIGURE C-12 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 -FE IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	131
FIGURE C-13 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 -P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	132
FIGURE C-14 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR Al_2O_3 - SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	132
FIGURE C-15 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR FE-P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	133
FIGURE C-16 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR FE- SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	133
FIGURE C-17 CROSS SEMIVARIOGRAM OF COMPOSITES FOR P- SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE	134
FIGURE C-18 NEIGHBOURHOOD SEARCH PARAMETERS FOR POINT SIMULATION	135
FIGURE C-19 NEIGHBOURHOOD SEARCH PARAMETERS FOR BLOCK SIMULATION	136
FIGURE C-20 SIMULATION PARAMETERS FOR POINTS.....	137
FIGURE C-21 KRIGING NEIGHBOURHOOD PARAMETERS	138
FIGURE C-22 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MODEL AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE FOR Al_2O_3 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	139
FIGURE C-23 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MODEL AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE FOR FE IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	139
FIGURE C-24 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MODEL AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE FOR P IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	140
FIGURE C-25 SEMIVARIOGRAM OF MODEL AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE FOR SiO_2 IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	140
FIGURE C-26 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR Al_2O_3 -FE IN DATA SPACE	141
FIGURE C-27 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR Al_2O_3 -P IN DATA SPACE.....	141
FIGURE C-28 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR Al_2O_3 - SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	141
FIGURE C-29 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR FE-P IN DATA SPACE.....	142
FIGURE C-30 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR FE- SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	142
FIGURE C-31 SCATTER PLOT OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND 5X5X4M SIMULATION ONE (RIGHT) FOR P- SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	142
FIGURE C-32 PLAN MAP OF SiO_2 COMPOSITES IN TEST PIT AREA.....	143

FIGURE C-33 HISTOGRAM OF SiO₂ IN ARTIFICIAL DRILLHOLES WITH 200M BY 100M GRID SPACING 143

FIGURE C-34 HISTOGRAM OF KRIGED SiO₂ CONDITIONED BY ARTIFICIAL DRILLHOLES WITH 200X100M GRID SPACING 143

FIGURE C-35 BUNGAROO PLANS OF FE GRADES FOR 160-164 RL (LEVEL 60) IN SIMULATIONS ONE TO THREE 144

FIGURE C-36 BUNGAROO CROSS SECTIONS OF FE GRADES AT 29300E LOOKING WEST IN SIMULATIONS ONE TO THREE 145

List of tables

TABLE 2-1 RANKED COMPARISON OF DECOMPOSITION ALGORITHMS CONSIDERED BY TERCAN.....	28
TABLE 4-1 YANDICOOGINA PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS (2005).....	48
TABLE 4-2 STATISTICS OF THE IMA COMPOSITES	50
TABLE 4-3 YANDICOOGINA PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR COMPOSITES.....	50
TABLE 4-4 YANDICOOGINA SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR COMPOSITES....	50
TABLE 4-5 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM CALCULATION PARAMETERS FOR DATA SPACE, NORMAL SCORES AND MAF.....	52
TABLE 4-6 YANDICOOGINA COMPOSITES NORMAL SCORES SPACE LINEAR MODEL OF COREGIONALISATION.....	56
TABLE 4-7 YANDICOOGINA SEMIVARIOGRAM MODEL PARAMETERS FOR MAF1, MAF2, MAF3 AND NORMAL SCORES OF MAF4	57
TABLE 4-8 YANDICOOGINA PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 (RIGHT) IN DATA SPACE	62
TABLE 4-9 YANDICOOGINA SPEARMAN (RANK) CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND MAF-SGS SIMULATION 1 (RIGHT) IN DATA SPACE	62
TABLE 4-10 YANDICOOGINA PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 (RIGHT) FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE.....	67
TABLE 4-11 YANDICOOGINA SPEARMAN (RANK) CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF COMPOSITES (LEFT) AND TURNING BANDS SIMULATION 1 (RIGHT) FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 IN DATA SPACE	67
TABLE 4-12 YANDICOOGINA COMPARISON OF MAF-SGS AND TURNING BANDS METHODS	70
TABLE 5-1: SUMMARY OF DECLUSTERED STATISTICS FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 FOR MINERALISED GEOZONES 51 AND 52 IN THE COMPOSITES OF THE TEST PIT AREA	78
TABLE 5-2: CORRELATION COEFFICIENT MATRIX FOR Al_2O_3 , Fe, P AND SiO_2 FOR MINERALISED GEOZONES 51 AND 52 IN THE COMPOSITES OF THE TEST PIT AREA	78
TABLE 5-3 STATISTICS OF 5X5X4M SIMULATION 1 FOR VARIABLES IN NORMAL SCORES SPACE.....	81
TABLE 5-4 STATISTICS OF 5X5X4M SIMULATION 1 FOR VARIABLES IN DATA SPACE.....	81