

# Fracture Mechanics

Eighteenth Symposium

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# FRACTURE MECHANICS: EIGHTEENTH SYMPOSIUM

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
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## MICROMECHANISMS

<b>Metallurgical Aspects of Crack-Tip Failure Processes—</b> WILLIAM W. GERBERICH	5
<b>Cleavage Toughness Variability and Inclusion Size Distribution of a</b> <b>Weld Metal—</b> WILLIAM R. TYSON AND BERNARD MARANDET	19

## CRACK ARREST

<b>Application of Probabilistic Fracture Mechanics to the Pressurized-</b> <b>Thermal-Shock Issue—</b> RICHARD D. CHEVERTON AND DAVID G. BALL	35
<b>Crack Arrest Testing, Results, and Applications—</b> S. MACHIDA, H. YAJIMA, AND T. KANAZAWA	51
<b>High-Temperature Crack-Arrest Toughness Measurements Using</b> <b>Compact Specimens—</b> ALAN R. ROSENFELD, PAUL N. MINCER, AND CHARLES W. MARSCHALL	73
<b>Discussion</b>	83
<b>The Stress Field Surrounding a Rapidly Propagating Curving</b> <b>Crack—</b> ARUN SHUKLA AND RAVINDER CHONA	86

## ELASTIC-PLASTIC FRACTURE MECHANICS I

<b>Application of the <math>V_R</math> Resistance Curve Method to Fracture of</b> <b>Various Crack Configurations—</b> J. C. NEWMAN, JR., S. R. McNEILL, AND M. A. SUTTON	103
<b>The Failure of Aluminum Compact Shear Specimens Under Mixed-</b> <b>Mode Loading—</b> ROBERT A. RIDDLE, RONALD D. STREIT, AND IAIN FINNIE	118

<b>Investigation of Ductile Fracture Properties of Welded Type 304 Stainless Steel Pipe and Large Plan Compact Specimens—</b> RICHARD A. HAYS, MICHAEL G. VASSILAROS, AND JOHN P. GUDAS	134
<b>J-Integral Values for Small Cracks in Steel Panels—</b> DAVID T. READ	151
<b>A Study of Variability, Size, and Temperature Effects on the Fracture Toughness of an Arctic-Grade Steel Plate—</b> BERNARD FAUCHER AND WILLIAM R. TYSON	164
 ELEVATED TEMPERATURE FATIGUE	
<b>Overload Effects in Sustained-Load Crack Growth in Inconel 718—</b> TUSIT WEERASOORIYA AND TED NICHOLAS	181
<b>The Effect of Loading History on Closure Behavior in Rene' 95—</b> LARRY P. ZAWADA AND TED NICHOLAS	192
<b>Evaluation of Crack Growth Models for Elevated-Temperature Fatigue—</b> GEORGE K. HARITOS, THEODORE NICHOLAS, AND GERALD O. PAINTER	206
 POSTER SESSION—ANALYSIS	
<b>Crack Arrest Fracture Toughness of 7075-T6 Aluminum Alloy—</b> BISWAJIT MUKHERJEE AND DAVE McCLUSKEY	223
<b>Propagating Shear Fracture in Natural Gas Transmission Pipelines—</b> EIJI SUGIE, MASANORI MATSUOKA, TOSHIYA AKIYAMA, KIYOSHI TANAKA, AND MASAO TSUKAMOTO	237
<b>Stress-Intensity Factors for an Edge Crack in a Stiffened Sheet—</b> JIN C. YU	247
<b>Boundary Force Method for Analyzing Two-Dimensional Cracked Plates—</b> PAUL W. TAN, IVATURY S. RAJU, AND JAMES C. NEWMAN, JR.	259
<b>Prediction of Failure Loads of Adhesive Joints Using the Singular Intensity Factor—</b> HANS L. GROTH	278
<b>Stress-Intensity Factors and Displacements for Arc Bend Specimens Using Collocation—</b> JOSEPH A. KAPP	285

<b>Determination of Mixed Mode Stress-Intensity Factors Using Explicit Weight Functions—</b> GEORGE T. SHA AND CHIEN-TUNG YANG	301
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#### POSTER SESSION—ELASTIC PLASTIC FRACTURE MECHANICS I

<b>Single-Specimen Test Measurement of <math>J_i</math> and <math>J-\Delta a</math> with a Pulsed D-C Potential-Drop Technique—</b> CHRISTIAN THAULOW, MONS HAUGE, ÅSMUND GUNLEIKSRUD, AND ANTHONIUS JOHANNES PAAUW	333
<b>An Evaluation of J-R Curve Testing Using Three-Point Bend Specimens—</b> MARK T. KIRK AND EDWIN M. HACKETT	347
<b>Modifications of ASTM E 813-81 Standard Test Method for an Improved Definition of <math>J_{Ic}</math> Using New Blunting-Line Equation—</b> JUERGEN HEERENS, KARL-HEINZ SCHWALBE, AND ALFRED CORNEC	374
<b>Precracking and Computerized Single-Specimen <math>J_{Ic}</math> Determination for Irradiated Three-Point Bend Specimens—</b> FAHMY M. HAGGAG AND ANGELA K. RICHARDSON	390
<b>Evaluation of the Fracture Toughness of Ductile Iron Using Fatigue Precracked Charpy, Dynamic Tear, and Compact Tension Specimens—</b> G. MARK TANNER AND WALTER L. BRADLEY	405
<b>Determination of the Fracture Toughness of Irradiated Reactor Pressure Tubes Using Curved Compact Specimens—</b> C. K. (PETER) CHOW AND LEONARD A. SIMPSON	419

#### APPLICATIONS

<b>Fracture Mechanics in Failure Analysis—</b> JOHN M. BARSOM AND STANLEY T. ROLFE	443
<b>Developments in the Application of the CTOD Approach to Fracture Assessment of Welded Construction—</b> JOHN D. HARRISON AND TED L. ANDERSON	468
<b>The Significance of CTOD in Transversely Loaded Weldments with Weld Metal Overmatching in Strength—</b> RUDI M. DENYS	485

## DUCTILE/BRITTLE TRANSITION

- Effect of Crack and Plate Geometry on the Fracture Resistance of Wide Plates in Bending**—JON LEREIM 505
- Wide Plates in Bending: Application of CTOD Design Approach**—STIG BERGE, FERESHTEH EBRAHIMI, AND DAVID T. READ 516
- Specimen Thickness Effects for Elastic-Plastic CTOD Toughness of an A36 Steel**—GERALD W. WELLMAN, WILLIAM A. SOREM, ROBERT H. DODDS, JR., AND STANLEY T. ROLFE 535
- A Study of Crack Initiation in the Ductile-to-Brittle Transition Region of a Weld**—FERESHTEH EBRAHIMI 555

## J-INTEGRAL TEST METHODS

- J<sub>R</sub>-Curve Testing of Three-Point Bend Specimens by the Unloading Compliance Method**—PAULUS A. J. M. STEENKAMP 583
- Unloading-Compliance and Load-Drop Analysis of  $J_{Ic}$  Tests of Irradiated 348 Stainless Steel**—JOHN H. UNDERWOOD, FAHMY M. HAGGAG, AND WALTER G. REUTER 611
- Effects of Monotonic and Cyclic Prestrain on Fracture Toughness: A Summary**—PETER K. LIAW AND JOHN D. LANDES 622
- Development of a Criterion for the Effect on the J-R Curve of Elastic Unloadings**—JAMES A. JOYCE 647

## ANALYSIS

- An Elastic-Plastic Finite-Element Analysis of the J-Resistance Curve Using a CTOD Criterion**—J. C. NEWMAN, JR., B. C. BOOTH, AND K. N. SHIVAKUMAR 665
- A Study of Plasticity Effects on the Crack Geometry Correction Factors Used with the COD-Design Curve**—RONALD A. MAYVILLE AND PETER D. HILTON 686
- An Assessment of the Corresponding Stress-Intensity Factor for Accounting for Boundary Effects in Cracked Bodies**—C. WILLIAM SMITH, W. RANDOLPH LLOYD, AND OLEKAN OLAOSEBIKAN 699

POSTER SESSION—ELASTIC PLASTIC FRACTURE MECHANICS II

- A Review of Path-Independent Integrals in Elastic-Plastic Fracture Mechanics**—KWANG S. KIM AND THOMAS W. ORANGE 713
- Application of Direct Measurement of J-Integral on a Pressure Vessel with Axial Notch**—STOJAN SEDMAK AND BLAGOJ PETROVSKI 730
- A Comparison of J-Integral and CTOD as Fracture Toughness Parameters**—TED L. ANDERSON 741

POSTER SESSION—FATIGUE

- Elevated Temperature Fatigue Crack Growth of Single Crystal René N4 Superalloy**—SRIVATHSAN VENKATARAMAN, THEODORE NICOLAS, AND MOHAMMAD KHOBAIB 757
- Fatigue Crack Growth at Root Radii in Sheets with Variable Thickness**—MEHAN M. RATWANI, HAN-PIN KAN, AND SHENG-MING HSU 765
- Development of the NASA/FLAGRO Computer Program**—ROYCE G. FORMAN, VANKATARAMAN SHIVAKUMAR, JAMES C. NEWMAN, JR., SUSAN M. PIOTROWSKI, AND LEONARD C. WILLIAMS 781
- The Influence of Cracks on the Buckling Capacity of Axially Compressed Columns**—JON DAG EVENSEN, PER A. GRADIN, AND JON LEREIM 804

SUBCRITICAL CRACK GROWTH

- A Comparison of Fatigue Crack Propagation in Modes I and III**—ROBERT O. RITCHIE 821
- Evaluation of the  $K_{ISCC}$  Testing Procedure by Round Robin Tests on Steels**—TAKEO YOKOBORI, JURO WATANABE, TAKAO AOKI, AND TADAO IWADATE 843
- Long-Term Creep-Crack Growth Behavior of Type 316 Stainless Steel**—CARL E. JASKE 867



## FATIGUE I

- The Behavior of Short and Long Fatigue Cracks at Threshold and Near-Threshold Levels**—RALPH I. STEPHENS, HYUN W. LEE, REN BU, AND GREGORY K. WERNER 881
- Crack Opening Displacement Measurements on Small Cracks in Fatigue**—JAMES M. LARSEN, JAY R. JIRA, AND TUSIT WEERASOORIYA 896
- The Measurement of Crack Closure During Fatigue Crack Growth**—JOHN E. ALLISON 913
- Alterations in Crack-Tip Deformation During Variable-Amplitude Fatigue Crack Growth**—DAVID L. DAVIDSON AND STEPHEN J. HUDAK, JR. 934

## ELASTIC-PLASTIC FRACTURE MECHANICS II

- A Crack-Tip Opening Displacement Method for the Analysis of Ductile Materials**—STEPHEN J. GARWOOD 957
- Elastic-Plastic R-Curves for Large Amounts of Crack Growth**—MOHAMMAD R. ETEMAD, SABU J. JOHN, AND CEDRIC E. TURNER 986
- On the Accuracy of Ductile Failure Assessments**—LUDVIK HODULAK AND JOHANN G. BLAUDEL 1005

## FATIGUE II

- Fatigue Behavior of 5Ni-Cr-Mo-V Steel Weldments Containing Fabrication Discontinuities**—STEVEN J. GILL, JOSEPH A. HAUSER, II, THOMAS W. CROOKER, BRIAN J. KRUSE, RAVI MENON, AND CARL D. LUNDIN 1025
- Growth of Parabolic Fatigue Cracks from Flaws at Fastener Holes**—AVRAHAM BERKOVITS AND DAVID PRINZ 1050
- Computation of the Crack-Tip Energy Release Rate for Cyclic Crack Growth**—WELDON W. WILKENING 1070
- Calibration of a Mode II Test Specimen**—ROBERT J. BUZZARD AND BERNARD GROSS 1083

## SUMMARY

<b>Summary</b>	1091
<b>Author Index</b>	1093
<b>Subject Index</b>	1095

# Introduction

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This volume is based on the Eighteenth National Symposium on Fracture Mechanics, held in Boulder, Colorado, 25–27 June 1985, sponsored by ASTM Committee E-24 on Fracture Testing. The conference was held at the University of Colorado; the support of the CU Office of Conference Services for the conference arrangements was excellent.

The National Symposium on Fracture Mechanics has served as an annual state of the art review of current fracture research since its beginnings in 1965. The Eighteenth Symposium carried on this tradition creating an open forum for fracture researchers from the whole world. There were over eighty papers presented by formal talks and posters. Six speakers were specifically invited, including one from England, one from Japan, two from U.S. universities, one from U.S. industry, and one from a U.S. national laboratory. The submitted papers were grouped into 16 sessions. The papers on elastic plastic fracture mechanics made up four sessions, with one session on each of the allied areas of ductile-to-brittle transition and J-integral test methods. Four sessions on fatigue emphasized elevated temperature studies, including frequency and hold-time dependence, and effects of short cracks. Two sessions were held on analysis, including linear elastic and elastic-plastic analyses, and the remaining four sessions covered applications, crack arrest, micromechanisms, and subcritical crack growth.

Continuing the standard practice for ASTM Symposium publications, each paper in this volume has been peer-reviewed by knowledgeable researchers in relevant subject areas. The papers accepted for this volume have been revised and carefully edited to promote significance, technical accuracy, and relevance. It therefore truly represents a broad view of the current state of fracture mechanics research. It is recommended to stimulate and aid future research, to give design and failure analysis practitioners needed insight and new approaches, and to contribute to new and improved test standards through its record of advances in basic understanding and the latest test procedures and results.

*R. P. Reed*

National Bureau of Standards, Boulder, CO  
80303; symposium chairman and coeditor.



# **Micromechanisms**



# Metallurgical Aspects of Crack-Tip Failure Processes

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**REFERENCE:** Gerberich, W. W., "Metallurgical Aspects of Crack-Tip Failure Processes," *Fracture Mechanics: Eighteenth Symposium, ASTM STP 945*, D. T. Read and R. P. Reed, Eds., American Society for Testing and Materials, Philadelphia, 1988, pp. 5-18.

**ABSTRACT:** Process zone models for fracture of fiber-reinforced concrete, metal-particle reinforced glass, and polymer crazes have good experimental verification. This is because the microfracture process zone is often macroscopic in size or easily identifiable or both. Similar models have been proposed for metals and ceramic microstructures. This paper addresses how the microfracture process zone develops in such microstructures. Specifically, the microcrack evolution process may be controlled by chemistry and microstructure as well as localized stress distributions. The importance of this is that the microcrack distribution and the energy dissipation process in the remaining ligaments behind the advancing crack front control the R-curve and final fracture instability. Examples of R-curve behavior in ductile fracture and semibrittle composites are shown, and a model for brittle fracture of steel is proposed. The latter shows that a semi-cohesive process zone of variable size and strength may represent an approach to brittle fracture where weakest-link models are not applicable. Predictions of fracture toughness for ferrite/pearlite steels as a function of test temperature and grain size are obtained with such an approach.

**KEY WORDS:** fracture toughness, process zones, R-curves, microstructure, ductile ligaments, composites, brittle fracture, cleavage

The process zone concept was introduced two decades ago by Krafft [1] as a fundamental microstructural length parameter. Since then, there have been numerous applications of characteristic length parameters to ductile fracture [2], metal-metal composites [3], cleavage in the lower shelf region [4], and subcritical growth phenomena [5,6]. Although such process zones recently have been reviewed [7], the microscopic and macroscopic character of such zones will be addressed. This will then be applied to the ductile-brittle transition region of steels and, specifically, to classes of steel which range from the lower shelf to toughness levels where mixed modes may be becoming dominant. This is believed to be important because weakest-link hypotheses, for example, cleavage initiating at the largest carbide, cannot be applied to ductile fracture. In all probability, they are also not applicable to the upper shelf region near the transition temperature where a mixture of microvoid coalescence and cleavage or quasi-cleavage is found. In fact, the weakest-link hypothesis often might not apply to the lower shelf regime when a fine crack is present, but may be restricted to fractures emanating from blunt cracks or notches. The evidence for and treatment of multiple fracture origins rather than a single weakest link follows.

First, consider the process zone as a microscopic region where microcracks develop. This may be a single fractured carbide near the nil-ductility transition temperature (NDTT) which, as a weakest link, triggers cleavage in the surrounding grains. On the other hand, it may be a group of second-phase particles such as sulfides or oxides which nucleate multiple regions of void

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growth. This zone, containing a distribution of microcracks, has been designated a semicohesive zone [6] and is depicted in Fig. 1. Here, the crack-tip opening angle is approximately equal to the crack-tip "final stretch," displacement divided by the process zone, or  $\delta/\Delta$  [8-10]. Such a zone would have to develop, at least in a two-dimensional sense, in ductile fracture where microvoids nucleate and grow at multiple origins along a growing crack front. Other types of zones are depicted in Fig. 2, as taken from Ref 7. Brittle or semibrittle zones are depicted as being filled with a series of microcracks of varying sizes or spacings within  $\Delta$ . Such microstructural zones could include properly oriented cleavage microcracks or populations of the weakest intergranular facets or brittle regions between ductile ligaments in two-phase materials. Next, the theoretical concept will be illustrated and then it will be applied to microscopic and macroscopic composite data.

### Theoretical Model

The theoretical concept was first presented [7] and described as a series of traction forces in two zones, one a microcracked, semicohesive zone, and a second, monolithic, cohesive zone. A depiction of equilibrium is schematically shown in Fig. 3 where the "fishhooks" are trying to pull the imaginary crack open while the "springs" in the two zones are holding it together. Note that because of the voids in the semicohesive zone, the density of springs, that is, the traction force, is less. This was first applied to organic solvent-induced slow crack growth in glassy polymers where the larger semi-cohesive region was used to predict "equilibrium" craze lengths [11]. The microfibrils of the craze represented internal traction forces and in order to produce additional crazing at the crack tip, after equilibrium, greater applied stress intensities would be required.

With such a model as depicted in Fig. 3, integrating the stress field within each zone gives

$$K_I \left( \frac{\pi}{c} \right)^{1/2} - 2(\sigma_c - \sigma_{sc}) \cos^{-1} \left( \frac{b}{a} \right) - 2\sigma_{sc} \cos^{-1} \left( \frac{c}{a} \right) = 0 \quad (1)$$

Here,  $\sigma_{sc}$  is the strength of the semicohesive zone and  $\sigma_c$  is the strength of the cohesive zone. For a ductile material,  $\sigma_c$  is the flow stress, whereas for a truly brittle material it may approach the theoretical strength [7]. In a yielding situation for crack initiation in an elastic-perfectly plastic material, the parameters are

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma_c &= \sigma_{ys}; & b &= c + \Delta \\ \sigma_{sc} &= \sigma_{ys}(1 - f_v); & a &= c + \Delta + R_{p10} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

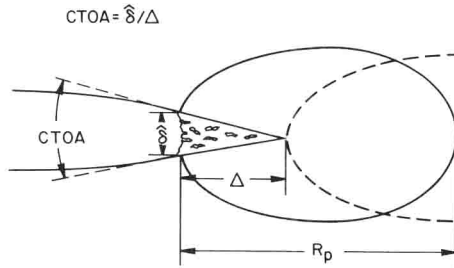


FIG. 1—Process zone model (Refs 8-10) for a growing crack. The crack-tip opening angle (CTOA) may be represented by the "final stretch" displacement,  $\delta$ , and the process zone,  $\Delta$ .



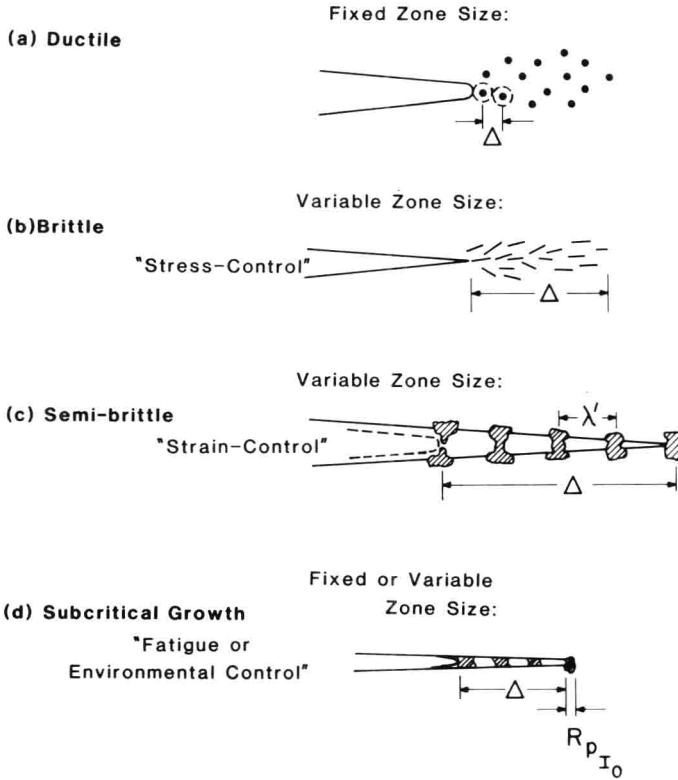


FIG. 2—Process zone size variations,  $\Delta$ , as a function of different controlling microstructural features. (Courtesy of Ref 7.)

where

$f_v$  = microvoid volume fraction,

$\Delta$  = process zone,

$c$  = half-crack length, and

$R_{p_{I_0}}$  = plastic zone size for nucleating the process zone.

The assumption here is that a minimum strain or stress for failure, as related to the size of  $R_{p_{I_0}}$ , is required to initiate microvoids or microcracks in the absence of the process zone. Since in plane stress,  $R_{p_{I_0}}$  is given by

$$R_{p_{I_0}} = \frac{\pi K_{I_0}^2}{8\sigma_{ys}^2} \quad (3)$$

there are three unspecified parameters  $K_{I_0}$ ,  $\Delta$ , and  $f_v$ . In principle,  $K_{I_0}$  is the initiation value for the onset of crack growth and may be estimated by sensitive crack-tip opening angle (CTOA) nonlinearities or acoustic emission. Both  $\Delta$  and  $f_v$  would be dictated by the microstructure and could be measured by either serial sectioning techniques or fractographic analysis or both. It is seen that once  $K_{I_0}$ ,  $\Delta$ , and  $f_v$  are either measured or estimated, all parameters are known from Eqs 1, 2, and 3 for a material with a given yield strength, containing a crack of length  $c$ . Although it appears as though  $K_I$  for equilibrium with the first crack jump through  $\Delta$  is strongly