Analysis of Graphite Reinforced Cementitious Composites

Robert E. Vaughan  
Aerospace Engineer  
ED22/Structural Mechanics Team  
NASA, Marshall Space Flight Center  
MSFC, AL 35812

John A. Gilbert  
Professor of Mechanical Engineering  
Dept. of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering  
University of Alabama in Huntsville  
Huntsville, AL 35899

ABSTRACT

This paper describes analytical methods that can be used to determine the deflections and stresses in highly compliant graphite-reinforced cementitious composites. It is demonstrated that the standard transform section method fails to provide accurate results when the elastic modulus ratio exceeds 20. So an alternate approach is formulated by using the rule of mixtures to determine a set of effective material properties for the composite. Tensile tests are conducted on composite samples to verify this approach; and, when the effective material properties are used to characterize the deflections of composite beams subjected to pure bending, an excellent agreement is obtained.

The next step was to design, produce, instrument, and test a number of highly compliant graphite reinforced cementitious composite specimens.

A relatively flexible concrete was designed with the following mix proportions: Portland cement (393 kg/m³), latex (78.2 kg/m³), acrylic fortifier (24.3 kg/m³), micro-balloons (154 kg/m³), and water (247 kg/m³). The air content by volume in a standard compression test cylinder was 14 percent and the water to cement ratio of the mix was 1.19. Tension and compression tests revealed 28-day tensile and compressive strengths of 1.77 MPa and 4.80 MPa, respectively. The elastic modulus and Poisson’s ratio were 0.8 GPa and 0.28, respectively.

The composite samples were reinforced with a layer of a non-impregnated graphite mesh having 3k fibers per tow spaced at 3.18 mm intervals. Each tow was 0.19 mm thick by 1.07 mm wide. The fibers were held in place using 0.08 mm diameter Kevlar strands. The elastic modulus and tensile strength of the graphite were 231 GPa and 3.65 GPa, respectively.

A Plexiglas mold was used with a graphite tensioning device to produce a 2.54 mm thick “cookie” sheet of composite material having a single layer of mesh positioned in the center. Porosity was controlled by working with small amounts of cementitious material and floating it in the mold. The cookie sheet was cut into 5 cm wide by 35 cm long strips using a band saw. The strips were machined using a router and template into test specimens having geometries that matched ASTM composite standards. The specimens were sanded to adjust the thickness and polish their surfaces. Then, strain gages were attached to the front and back surfaces to account for bending and/or twist.

After “path-finder” specimens were used to verify the test procedure and instrumentation, tensile tests were conducted to determine the elastic modulus (2.8 GPa) and Poisson’s ratio (0.14). Josipescu specimens were used to determine the shear modulus (517 MPa).

The rule of mixtures was applied in an attempt to predict these effective material properties. As a result, it was demonstrated that a modified transform section approach could be used to analyze simple composite beams.

A MathCad solution sheet was developed to make the required calculations. When the material properties predicted by the rule of mixtures were compared to test data, it was found that the elastic modulus in the direction of loading, Ex, compared well to the test
data. However, Poisson's ratio, the shear modulus, and the transverse modulus, $E_y$, did not compare well. This result was somewhat anticipated, since other investigators have reported this trend while studying composite lay-ups made from traditional materials.

A modified transform section approach was developed using the $E_x$ value obtained from the rule of mixtures, and the approach was used to predict the deflection of a composite beam in pure bending constructed using a single layer of graphite reinforcement. Then, a similar approach was used to analyze a multiple layered beam subjected to pure bending. Finally, the approach was extended to include nonlinear material properties. All of the results obtained compared well to test data.

The next step in the test program was to apply laminated composite plate theory to highly compliant graphite reinforced lay-ups, and make comparisons with test data and finite element analyses.

A MathCad solution sheet was developed to perform the required calculations. When the method was applied to a composite plate with known material properties, the results were found to be more accurate than those derived using other well established solution methods. But the MathCad results agreed well with those obtained using a very reliable MSC/Nastran model. The method for analyzing beams with various ply angles and lay-ups is described below.

COMPOSITE LAMINATED PLATE THEORY

The constitutive equations for graphite reinforced cementitious laminated plates were derived from classical laminated plate theory. The resulting equations required the simultaneous solution of the following 6x6 matrix:

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
N_x & N_y & N_w & M_x & M_y & M_w
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
A_{11} & A_{12} & A_{13} & B_{11} & B_{12} & B_{13} \\
A_{21} & A_{22} & A_{23} & B_{21} & B_{22} & B_{23} \\
A_{31} & A_{32} & A_{33} & B_{31} & B_{32} & B_{33} \\
B_{11} & B_{12} & B_{13} & D_{11} & D_{12} & D_{13} \\
B_{21} & B_{22} & B_{23} & D_{21} & D_{22} & D_{23} \\
B_{31} & B_{32} & B_{33} & D_{31} & D_{32} & D_{33}
\end{bmatrix}
\begin{bmatrix}
\varepsilon_{xx} \\
\varepsilon_{yy} \\
\gamma_{xy} \\
K_x \\
K_y \\
K_w
\end{bmatrix}
$$

$N_i$, $N_j$, and $N_o$ = Force in $x$, $y$, and $xy$ direction, respectively.

$M_x$, $M_y$, and $M_w$ = Moment about $x$, $y$, and $xy$ axis, respectively.

$\varepsilon_{xx}$ = Midplane Strain in $x$ direction.

$\varepsilon_{yy}$ = Midplane Strain in $y$ direction.

$\gamma_{xy}$ = Midplane Shear Strain in $xy$ direction.

$K_x$ = Plate Curvature along the $x$ direction.

$K_y$ = Plate Curvature along the $y$ direction.

$K_w$ = Plate Curvature along the $xy$ direction.

A = Extensional Stiffness Matrix.

B = Coupling Stiffness Matrix.

D = Bending Stiffness Matrix.

The system represents six equations with six unknowns. The A, B and D matrix are derived from the orientation and the lay-up of the composite beam. The force and moment matrix are defined as limit loads in order to solve for the remaining unknowns. To find the effective elastic modulus in the $x$ direction, $E_{xx}$, for example, it is assumed that a unit force is applied in that direction. Then, the system of equations is solved for the mid-plane strains and curvatures.

Previous authors [2,3] have reduced this system of equations by eliminating terms that are not on the diagonal of the matrix. We achieved an increase in accuracy by including all the terms in a rigorous solution of the system. Our technique is applicable to both symmetric and non-symmetric composite lay-ups.

As mentioned previously, a MathCad [4] solution sheet was used to perform the calculations. The effective elastic moduli in the $x$ and $y$ directions are given from the constitutive equations:

$$
E_x = \frac{N_x}{t \varepsilon_{xx}} \quad \text{and} \quad E_y = \frac{N_y}{t \varepsilon_{yy}}
$$

where $t$ = beam thickness.

Similarly, the shear modulus is given by the equation:

$$
G = \frac{2 N_{xy}}{t \gamma_{xy}}
$$

The normal and shear strains in the above equations correspond to mid-plane values.

Three graphite reinforced cementitious beams were produced to verify the results of the solution technique. As illustrated in the schematic shown below, the beams consisted of two layers of mesh confined within the cementitious matrix.
The mesh has the same elastic modulus in the x and y directions. However, because of the very large difference in stiffness between the matrix and the graphite (~300), rotating the mesh changes the effective modulus of the composite significantly. A photograph of a typical specimen is shown below.

Incremental loads were applied to produce a load vs. deflection curve, and the load data corrected for the variation in thickness among the test articles.

As shown in the following plot, Beam 1 [90,90] is much stiffer than Beam 2 [45,45]. As expected, Beam 3 [45,90] has a stiffness value between Beam 1 and Beam 2. The fact that the 45° layer is on the tension side in Beam 3 may explain why the behavior is close to that of Beam 2.

The orientation of the graphite reinforcement is [90,90] in the first beam, [45,45] in the second beam and [45,90] for the third beam. The dimensions of a beam after sanding are 22.86 cm long, 2.84 cm wide and approximately 0.635 cm thick. Since the construction process was not exact, small variations in orientation and thickness were present.

As illustrated in the following photograph, each beam was subjected to four-point bending. The ends of the beams were placed on rollers to produce the desired boundary conditions. Beam deflection data was measured using a dial gage located at the center of each beam.

The results of the composite beam tests were compared to analytical results based on the effective elastic modulus values calculated from the constitutive equations presented previously. To achieve this, an elastic beam equation was developed to calculate the beam deflections corresponding to loading and geometry at hand. A MathCad solution sheet was used to determine the integration constants and perform the calculations required to solve the elastic beam equation. The following is an example of a typical calculation.
\[ y_i(x) = \frac{1}{EI} \left( \frac{P}{ax^3} + C_i x + C_s \right) \]

\[ E = 3.44 \text{ GPa}, \quad P = 17.2 \text{ N} \]

\[ l = \frac{bh^3}{12} = \frac{(0.302)(0.006731)^3}{12} = 7.67 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}^4 \]

\[ x = 0.111 \text{ m} \]

\[ C_s = -0.07289 \frac{\text{kg m}^3}{s^2}, \quad C_s = 0.00063 \frac{\text{kg m}^4}{s^3} \]

\[ y_s = -1.29 \text{ mm} \]

As shown in the following plot, the predicted deflections for Beam 1 [90,90] are in good agreement with the test results. The effective elastic modulus used in the predictions, \( E_s = 2.84 \text{ GPa} \), adequately predicted the behavior of this two-layer composite.

The test data for Beam 2 [45,45] also compared very well with the test results.

The effective elastic modulus calculated for this beam, \( E_s = 1.72 \text{ GPa} \), indicates that the solution methods for the constitutive equations remain accurate regardless of the orientation of the composite layers.

The test data for Beam 3 [45,90] also compared very well with the test results. This is significant, since the lay-up is non-symmetrical. The effective elastic modulus calculated for this beam, \( E_s = 2.29 \text{ GPa} \), was computed using the same method applied to obtain those corresponding to the symmetric cases.

CONCLUSION

Highly compliant graphite reinforced composites can be produced by placing a relatively flexible concrete over a stiff mesh. The stress can be driven from the cementitious matrix to the reinforcement by adjusting the geometry and the system designed to absorb or store large amounts of strain energy. Although the structural behavior of these composites is somewhat different from that of traditional composites, it can be studied by using a modified transform section method or composite laminated plate theory.

REFERENCES


