

Residual Stress in Metal Parts Produced by Powder-Bed Additive Manufacturing Processes

Xiaoqing Wang and Kevin Chou

Mechanical Engineering Department
The University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

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Abstract:

In this study, residual stresses from the electron beam additive manufacturing (EBAM) and selective laser melting (SLM) processes, due to repeated thermal cycles, were investigated. Residual stresses play a crucial role in part performance, and thus, it is critical to evaluate the process-induced residual stresses in AM parts. Ti-6Al-4V and Inconel 718 parts produced by EBAM and SLM, respectively, were studied in residual stresses using the methodology established by Carlsson et al., a mechanical instrumented indentation technique, which is based on the experimental correlation between the indentation characteristic and the residual stress. The results show that the Ti-6Al-4V EBAM parts have a compressive residual stress in both Z-plane and X-plane, while the Inconel 718 SLM parts show a tensile stress and a compressive stress in the Z-plane and X-plane, respectively. Besides, the Ti-6Al-4V parts have lower absolute value of residual stress than the Inconel 718 parts. Moreover, the Vickers hardness values of the parts built using SLM and EBAM are comparable to the literature data.

Keywords: Ti-6Al-4V, residual stress, Vickers indentation, microindentation, Electron Beam Additive manufacturing

Introduction:

Additive manufacturing (AM) is currently one of the rapidly developing advanced manufacturing techniques in the world [1, 2]. As one of the family of AM technology, Electron beam additive manufacturing (EBAM), is one of a few AM technologies capable of making full-density metallic parts and has drastically extended AM applications for direct digital manufacturing of structural components [3]. In industries, Ti-6Al-4V is the most common titanium alloy being used due to its outstanding mechanical properties, such as high strength, high strength-to-weight ratio, good formability and heat treatability. The EBAM technology on Ti-6Al-4V has wide application in the industry, especially for aerospace components and medical implants. Besides, Selective laser melting (SLM), has been recognized as a promising AM technology, due to its flexibility in feedstock and shapes [4]. In SLM, a computer controlled scanning laser beam is applied as the energy source to melt the pre-spread powder particles selectively in a layer-by-layer manner [5, 6]. The geometrically complex components with high dimensional precision and good surface integrity can be obtained precisely by the SLM process without post-processing, which the conventional methods cannot keep pace with [7]. However, the repeated rapid heating and cooling processes will also result in the residual thermal stresses in the parts, which has a remarkable influence on the finish machining and the geometric resolution of the parts [8].

Residual stresses can be introduced into mechanical components during various thermal or thermo-mechanical processes such as heat treatment, forming, and welding [9-12]. Accurate evaluation of residual stresses is important because they play a crucial role in performance, integrity, and lifetime of the components. In other words, the residual stresses can strongly affect the mechanical performance (such as the static and fatigue strengths, fracture toughness, corrosion/wear resistance) and thus the reliability and lifetime of components and devices in a negative or positive way. Accordingly, various techniques for measuring residual stresses have been developed, such as X-ray and neutron diffractions, ultrasonic velocity, hole drilling, and layer removal techniques [13]. The sharp indentation or hardness testing is a well-known experimental method used for determination of the constitutive properties of conventional materials such as metals and alloys. Many studies have been undertaken to develop new ways to measure residual stress using instrumented indentation, because this non-destructive/mechanical technique may overcome the limitations of conventional methods including both the destructive/mechanical and nondestructive/ physical methods [14, 15].

Among all these methods, the instrumented indentation technique (IIT), has attracted intensive interest due to its simplicity, convenience and applicability at various scales. Tusi et al. [16] established a bilinear relation between hardness and residual stress. Numerous studies have also indicated that various indentation characteristic parameters, such as indentation depth (h), loading curvature (C), contact stiffness (S), and indentation work (W) present nonlinear relationship with residual stresses [17-20]. Based on experimental correlation between the indentation characteristic parameters and residual stress, several models for calculating the residual stresses based on the indentation characteristic parameters have been proposed, among which the models proposed by Suresh and Giannakopoulos [17], Carlsson and Larsson [18, 19], Lee and Kwon [21] and Wang et al. [22] are most representative and widely used.

The distribution of residual thermal stress in EBAM and SLM processes has been studied by many researchers, such as Denlinger et al. [23], Cao et al. [24] and Liu et al. [25]. Many of these methods are complicated, expensive or time consuming, and they cannot measure residual stress at microstructure scale interested. Comparatively, the residual stress measurement by Vickers micro-indentation [17, 26] is possibly an appropriate method for the rapid evaluation of residual stress in microstructure scale. Cao et al. [24] has studied the effect of overlap rate on the residual stress in as-deposited LSF Inconel 718 samples, and he found that the overlap area possesses higher residual stress compared with the inner-pass area, and the position of peak residual stress is closer to previous pass. Besides, increasing of the overlap rate will broaden the variation range of the residual stress. According to the results of Liu et al. [25], there is an alternative distribution between high residual stress regions and low residual stress regions within a single deposited layer. In the present study, the residual stress in as-deposited Ti-6Al-4V and Inconel 718 samples prepared by EBAM and SLM, separately, have been investigated. The microstructure of them also have been analyzed.

2. Methodology

According to the studies of Carlsson and Larsson [18, 19], the residual strain fields can be accurately correlated with the hardness value, and residual stresses can be related to the size of the

contact area. In the Vickers test, even though it is assumed that elastic recovery does not occur once the load is removed, elastic recovery does occur and sometimes its influence is quite remarkable. As shown in the Figure 1, the impression shape is distorted due to elastic recovery, which is very common in anisotropic materials.

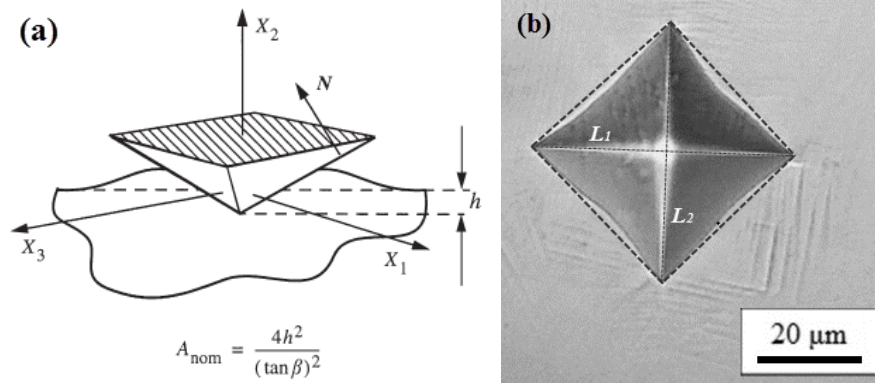


Figure 1. (a) Schematic of the geometry of the Vickers indentation tests, and (b) Schematic of the nominal projected contact area A_{nom}

In order to establish a correlation between the equibiaxial residual stress/strain fields and the contact area/indentation hardness, a new indentation parameter (c^2) was introduced in their model to calculate the residual stress for a sharp indentation,

$$c^2 = \frac{A_{real}}{A_{nom}} \quad (1)$$

where A_{real} represents the real contact area of a sample showing sink-in or pile-up, and A_{nom} is the nominal contact area directly calculated from the indentation depth (h_{max}) without consideration of sink-in or pile up along the contact boundary,

$$A_{nom} = \left(\frac{2h_{max}}{\tan 22^\circ} \right)^2 = 24.5h_{max}^2 \quad (2)$$

Carlsson et al.'s model can be expressed as the following form,

$$c^2 = c_0^2 - 0.32 \ln \left(1 + \frac{\sigma_{res}}{\sigma(\epsilon_{res})} \right) \quad (3)$$

where ϵ_{res} is the residual plastic strain that can be deduced from the changes of hardness according to Tabor's equation [7], $\sigma(\epsilon_{res})$ is the flow stress when the effective plastic strain equals to ϵ_{res} . c^2 and c_0^2 are the area ratios for the case with both residual stresses and residual strains and original material, respectively. The detail of the methodology can be seen in the former study [27].

3. Experiments

With Arcam S12 EBAM machine and Concept Laser M2 SLM machine, the Ti-6Al-4V parts and Inconel 718 parts used in this study were manufactured, respectively, at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center (Huntsville, AL). The Ti-6Al-4V parts were built with the pre-alloyed Ti-6Al-4V powders as the raw material, the chemical compositions of which are 6.0% Al, 4.0% V, 0.03% C, 0.1% Fe, 0.15% O, 0.01% N, 0.003% H and the remains is Ti. The major diameter of the powder is around 30 to 50 μm [28]. With CAD software, the model of the parts with dimension of 60 mm \times 5.5 mm \times 25mm (L \times W \times H) was built and imported into the machine. The detail of the manufacturing can be found in the previous studies [25, 29, 30]. In this study, the

Ti-6AL-4V parts were built with four different beam scanning speeds, which is achieved by control the speed function (SF=20, 36, 50 and 65) in the Arcam EBAM systems.

The Inconel 718 part, which is a block with length of 40 mm, width of 40 mm and height of 6 mm, were first modeled by CAD software and then fabricated layer by layer. The weight percent of elements in the fine pre-alloyed Inconel 718 powder are 54.7% Ni, 18.3% Cr, 18.9% Fe, 4.6% Nb, 2.0% Mo, and 0.83% Ti. The detail of the manufacturing process can be seen in former studies .

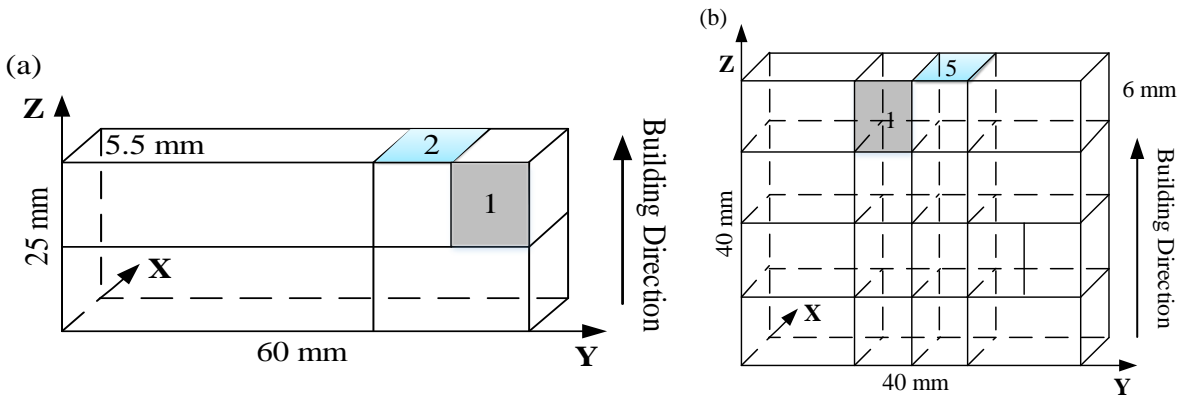


Figure 2. Samples location on the parts: (a) Ti-6Al-4V, and (b) Inconel 718

The specimens used for Vickers indentation test and microstructural analysis were cut directly from the as-deposited parts, respectively, by electrical discharge machining (EDM), the position of them in the parts are illustrated in Figure 2. The size of the specimens for the Ti-6Al-4V and Inconel 718 are $12 \times 11 \times 5.5$ and $6 \times 10 \times 6$ cm, respectively. Specimens of different cross-sections (scanning surface: Z-plane, build side surface: X-plane) were prepared to examine the anisotropic conditions in microstructures. Then, they were processed with standard metallographic procedures, such as mounting, grinding with SiC papers up to the grit size of 1200. In order to decrease the effect of the EDM cutting on the residual stress, all the test surfaces of specimen are grinded to the central surface of them. After that, they were polished with diamond suspension down to $0.5 \mu\text{m}$. After finishing polishing, the specimens were cleaned by ultrasonic oscillator with distilled water about 1 minute to reduce the influence of surface work hardening.

The microindentation test were run on each surface of specimens with a pattern of 3 by 3 matrix, and each element has run 4 by 4 tests. To reveal the microstructures, polished specimens were then etched with an acid-based solution: 20 ml hydrochloric acid (37 wt. %) and 20 ml (60 wt. %) nitric acid, and 1 g copper chloride [29]. The etched metallographic samples were examined using a Leitz optical microscope (OM) and a JEOL 7000 scanning electron microscope (SEM).

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Microstructure analysis

The microstructure of Ti-6Al-4V on the X-plane (Side Surface) are shown in Figure 3-(b). Typically, Ti-6Al-4V samples from EBAM show an ordered lamellar microstructure, consisting of extremely fine grains due to small melt pool and rapid cooling in the EBAM process. It can be seen that the bulk microstructure in the side surface of the solid part is made up of columnar prior

β grains delineated by grain boundary α and growing along the build direction. The width of the columnar structure ranges from 25 to 50 μm in the current study.

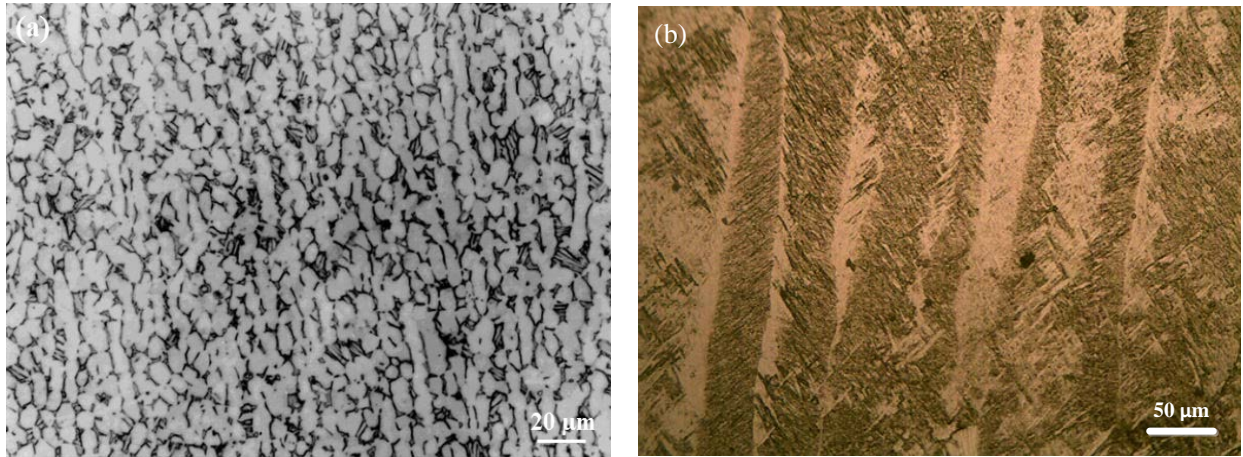


Figure 3. Microstructures of Ti-6Al-4V samples: (a) Casting [31] and (b) EBAM

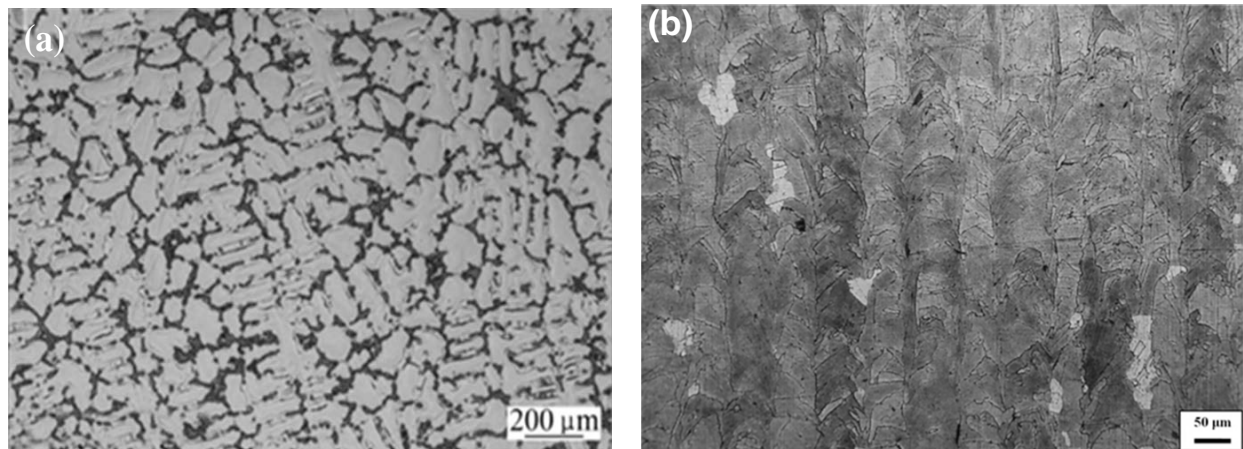


Figure 4. Microstructures of Inconel 718 samples: (a) Casting [7] and (b) SLM

For the cast specimen, as shown in Figure 3-(a), a typical α -case microstructure consisting of columnar α -crystals can be clearly observed, which is not as fine & ordered as that in EBAM specimens. Same case has been observed in Inconel 718. Take casting, one of the traditional manufacturing methods, as an example, the components present coarse grain size, heavy dendritic segregation, which is caused by the low cooling rate during solidification, as shown in Figure 4 (a) [7]. Besides, solidification defects, such as shrinkage cavities and porosity, also form in the castings at the same time. Thus, homogenization treatment and hot isostatic pressing (HIPing) are required to homogenize the microstructure, to close the internal pores and to improve the casting quality [32]. However, with the new AM technologies, such as SLM, the specimen shows fine microstructure due to rapid cooling rate. Figure 4 (b) demonstrates the detailed microstructures of the as-deposited Inconel 718 sample. It can be seen that fine dendrites are formed within the column grain.

From the microstructure in the Z-plane (scanning surface), as shown in Figure 5, the grain size of the “equiaxed” type grains which represents the head of the columnar grains formed in the

side surface. The grain size of equiaxed structure is comparable to the width of the columnar grains. Such equiaxed grains in the scanning surface are also found by other researchers [33]. It could demonstrate that the columnar structure is generally rod-shaped. Besides, for the Inconel 718, the repeating unit of the pattern could also be seen in the Z-plane, which is based on a square with the length of the side around 100 μm .

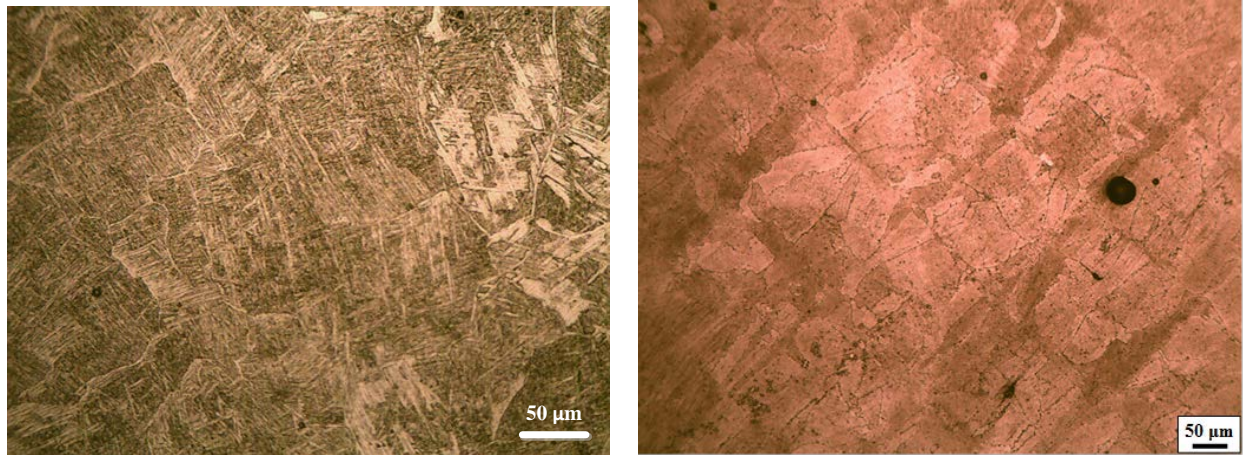


Figure 5. Microstructures on X-Plane of samples: (a) Ti-6Al-4V (L) and (b) Inconel 718 (R)

3.2 Residual Stresses

Generally, the residual stress is unevenly distributed in the parts based on the results calculated. For the as deposited Ti-6AL-4V specimens, some test points almost have none residual stress, while some other test points have very big compressive stress and the maximum absolute value is around 180 MPa, which is about 20 percent of the yield strength (~ 860 MPa) of Ti-6Al-4V. The average value of the residual stresses in the Z-plane and X-plane both are compressive stress, as shown in Figure 6. As to the Inconel 718 samples, some test points have an maximum absolute value around 350 MPa, which is about 30 percent of the yield strength of Inconel 718 (~ 900 MPa [34]). The average value of the residual stresses in the Z-plane and X-plane samples are compressive and tensile stress, respectively, as shown in Figure 7.

It is known to all that the all the parts were built layer by layer, which means the latter melting layer will re-melt or reheat the former layers. During this process, the latter layer will give the former layers a compressive residual stress, which can be seen from the Figure 6(a) and Figure 7(a). The exception is the residual stress in the Z-plan of the Inconel 718 parts, which is contributed to the special designed scanning pattern. During the manufacturing process, the deposited powder layer will be melted selectively according to the predefined scanning path with the pattern of repeating unit of a 100 μm square, as can be seen in Figure 5 (b), which will minimize the residual stress in the part. In this way, the latter solid patterns will have a tensile stress on the former melt solid patterns on the same layer and the former layer will also have a tensile stress on this latter melt layer, which will excess the compressive stress exerted by the following melting layer. Therefore, the residual stress in the Z-plane will be tensile stress in general.

Besides, it is also can be seen that there is no significant changing trend along the building direction of the Inconel 718 parts. Even through there is a little bit increasing trend for the average

value in the Z-plane, it has a pretty high standard deviation, which also has been mentioned by Liu et al. [25] and Cao et al.[24]. It was caused by the inhomogeneity of properties in the microstructure as the parts produced. In the study of Sebastiani et al.[35], the author said that the big standard deviation of the calculated residual stress (0.85 GPa) is likely to be caused by the real variation of residual stress from point to point, probably due to the nonhomogeneity of the WC–Co substrate. There are also some error introduced by the manual measurement in measuring the area and length of the diagonal lines.

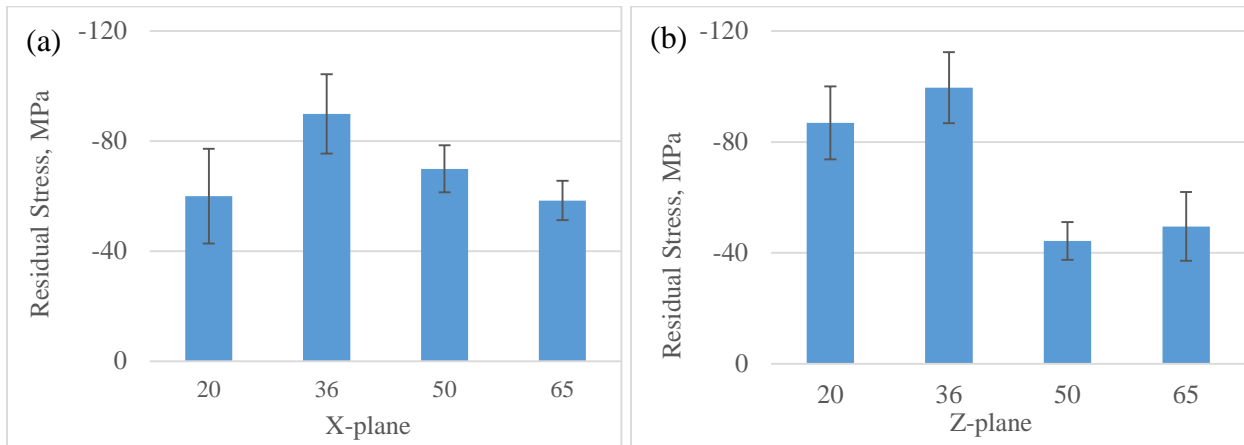


Figure 6. Residual stress in the Ti-6Al-4V parts (EBAM process)

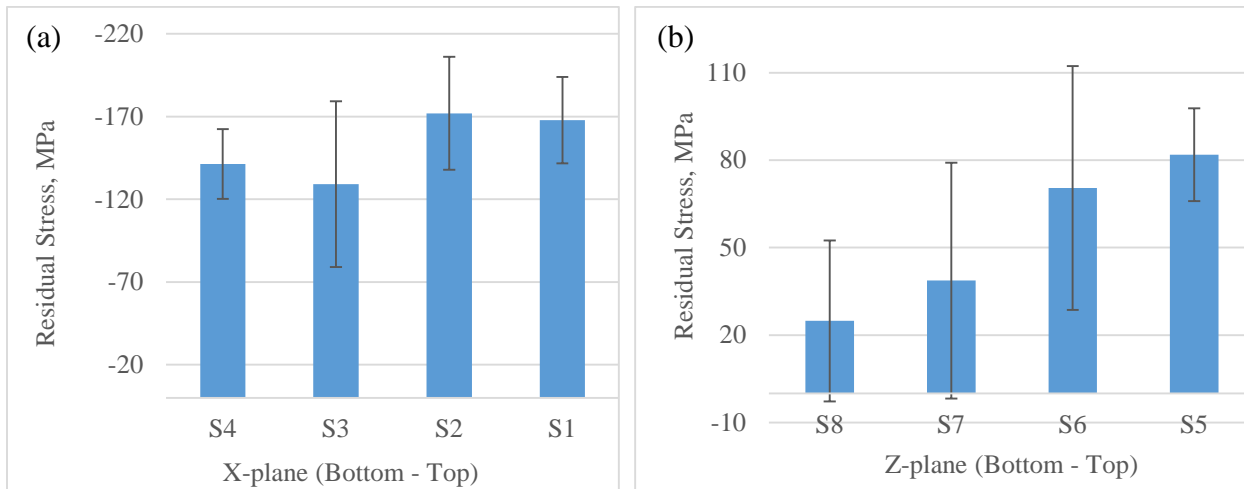


Figure 7. Residual stress in the Inconel 718 samples (SLM process)

There is another thing need to mention that the EBAM process produced parts have smaller residual stress than the parts made with SLM process, which can be seen by comparing of the Figure 6 and Figure 7. One of the reasons is the EBM process takes place in vacuum at high temperature. Thus, the EBM process has a slower cools down rate than that in SLM process, which will result in stress relieved components. The other one is the electron beam will preheat the base plate or the entire powder to an optimal ambient temperature before the melting process of the powder in the build. As a result, the parts produced with the EBAM process have less stress than the laser-beam produced samples.

3.3 Microhardness

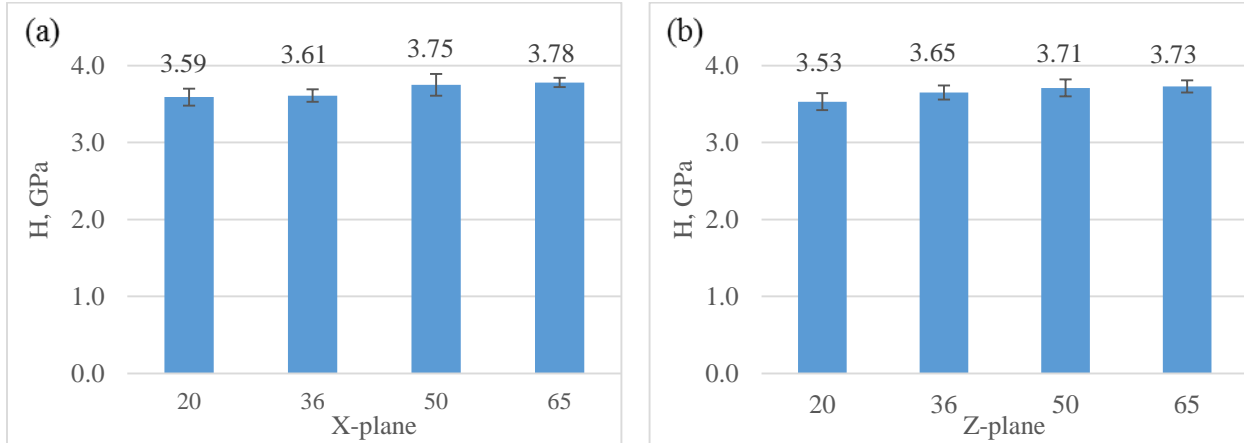


Figure 8. Hardness of Ti-6Al-4V specimens built with different SFs

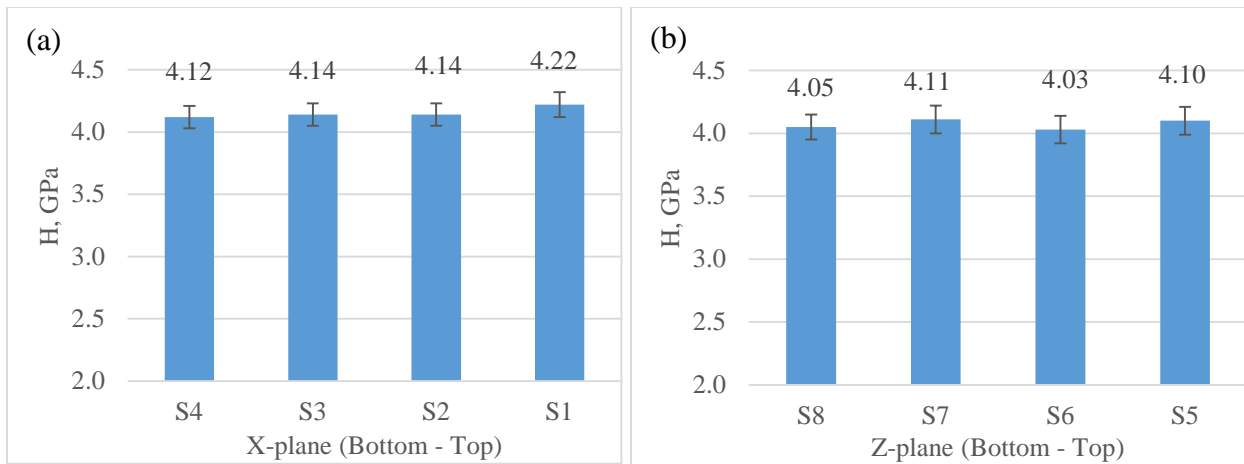


Figure 9. Vickers' hardness on the surface of the Inconel 718 samples

The microhardness values of as-deposited Ti-6Al-4V and Inconel 718 are shown in Figure 8 and Figure 9, respectively. It can be seen that the residual stress almost do not have influence on the micro-hardness of the parts. For the Ti-6Al-4V parts, the microhardness will increase with the increasing of electron beam scanning speed, but this changing trend is not very significantly if incorporating the standard deviation of the hardness. Generally, this test results are accord with our former results [36]. Besides, the EBAM samples also show higher micro-hardness than that of the cast or wrought specimens, which has also been mentioned by Koike et al. [37]. He said it is probably attributed to finer α/β lamellar microstructures. they are comparable/superior to the cast/wrought parts.

For the Inconel 718 parts, the Vickers hardness are comparable to the parts build with other technologies. According to Amato et al. [38], the micro-indentation (Vickers) hardness was 3.9 GPa for the as-fabricated materials, 5.7 GPa for the HIP material, and 4.6 GPa for the annealed material. This also has been reported by Zhao et al. [39], the average hardness for heat treated samples is HRC 41, which has increased remarkably from HRC17 for as-deposited samples. Thus,

the Vickers hardness of the parts built with the SLM process is comparable to other manufacturing methods.

4. Conclusion

With Vickers micro-indentation method, the residual stress in the Ti-6Al-4V parts and Inconel 718 parts manufactured by EBAM (Electron Beam Additive Manufacturing) and SLM (Selective Laser Melting), respectively, have been investigated with the methodology established by Carlsson et al., a mechanical instrumented indentation technique, which is based on the experimental correlation between the indentation characteristic and the residual stress.

The results show that the residual stress is unevenly distributed in the parts. For the Ti-6Al-4V parts, the average residual stress in both Z-plane and X-plane are compressive stress, while the Inconel 718 SLM parts show a tensile stress and a compressive stress in the Z-plane and X-plane, respectively. By comparing the residual stress results, the Ti-6Al-4V parts have lower absolute value of residual stress than the Inconel 718 parts. However, the residual stress almost do not have influence on the micro-hardness of the Ti-6Al-4V and Inconel 718 parts. Moreover, the Vickers hardness values of the parts built using SLM and EBAM are comparable to the literature data. Besides, the microstructure of the parts also has been studied and compared to that obtained with traditional methods.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully thanks NASA and CFDRRC for their support and also thanks Dr. Xibing Gong for the microstructure analysis work in this study.

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