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Automatic prediction of solar flares and super geomagnetic storms

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ABSTRACT

AUTOMATIC PREDICTION OF SOLAR FLARES AND SUPER GEOMAGNETIC STORMS

by
Hui Song

Space weather is the response of our space environment to the constantly changing Sun. As the new technology advances, mankind has become more and more dependent on space system, satellite-based services. A geomagnetic storm, a disturbance in Earth's magnetosphere, may produce many harmful effects on Earth. Solar flares and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) are believed to be the major causes of geomagnetic storms. Thus, establishing a real time forecasting method for them is very important in space weather study.

The topics covered in this dissertation are: the relationship between magnetic gradient and magnetic shear of solar active regions; the relationship between solar flare index and magnetic features of solar active regions; based on these relationships a statistical ordinal logistic regression model is developed to predict the probability of solar flare occurrences in the next 24 hours; and finally the relationship between magnetic structures of CME source regions and geomagnetic storms, in particular, the super storms when the D_{st} index decreases below -200 nT is studied and proved to be able to predict those super storms.

The results are briefly summarized as follows: (1) There is a significant correlation between magnetic gradient and magnetic shear of active region. Furthermore, compared with magnetic shear, magnetic gradient might be a better proxy to locate where a large flare occurs. It appears to be more accurate in identification of sources of X-class flares than M-class flares; (2) Flare index, defined by weighting the SXR flares, is proved to have

positive correlation with three magnetic features of active region; (3) A statistical ordinal logistic regression model is proposed for solar flare prediction. The results are much better than those data published in the NASA/SDAC service, and comparable to the data provided by the NOAA/SEC complicated expert system. To our knowledge, this is the first time that logistic regression model has been applied in solar physics to predict flare occurrences; (4) The magnetic orientation angle θ , determined from a potential field model, is proved to be able to predict the probability of super geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -200\text{nT}$). The results show that those active regions associated with $|\theta| < 90^\circ$ are more likely to cause a super geomagnetic storm.

**AUTOMATIC PREDICTION OF SOLAR FLARES
AND SUPER GEOMAGNETIC STORMS**

**by
Hui Song**

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New Jersey Institute of Technology and
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Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Physics
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
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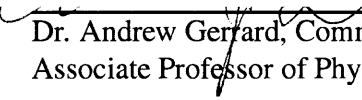
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To
My Family

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Elements of Space Weather	1
1.1.1 The Sun	1
1.1.2 The Interplanetary Space and Solar Wind	4
1.1.3 The Magnetosphere of the Earth	6
1.2 Solar Origins of Space Weather	10
1.2.1 Coronal Mass Ejections	10
1.2.2 Solar Flares	13
1.3 Consequences of Space Weather	14
1.3.1 Space Radiation Environment	14
1.3.2 Ionospheric Effects	15
1.3.3 Geomagnetic Effects	16
1.4 Space Weather Forecasting	17
1.5 The Goals and Structure of the Dissertation	19
2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAGNETIC GRADIENT AND MAGNETIC SHEAR OF SOLAR ACTIVE REGIONS	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Observation	24
2.3 Results	27
2.3.1 Bastille Day Flare on 2000 July 14	27
2.3.2 Summary of the other Five Events	30
2.4 Summary and Discussion	34

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(Continued)

Chapter	Page
3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOLAR FLARE INDEX AND MAGNETIC FEATURES	42
3.1 Introduction	42
3.2 Magnetic Parameters and Flare Index	43
3.3 Data Sets and Analysis	46
3.4 Results	48
3.5 Conclusion	51
4 STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT OF MAGNETIC FEATURES IN IMMINENT SOLAR FLARES PREDICTION	55
4.1 Introduction	55
4.2 Methods	57
4.2.1 Data Collection	57
4.2.2 Definition of the Predictive and Response Variables	58
4.2.3 Flares Statistical Characteristics	67
4.3 Ordinal Logistic Regression Model	68
4.3.1 Model Specification	68
4.3.2 Testing for Ordinality Assumption	71
4.3.3 Estimation Procedures	72
4.4 Results	73
4.4.1 Quantifying Predictive Ability of Fitted Models	73
4.4.2 Validating the Fitted Models	78
4.4.3 Describing the Fitted Models	80
4.4.4 Comparison with NOAA/SEC and NASA Solar Monitor Predictions	84
4.5 Conclusions	87

TABLE OF CONTENTS
(Continued)

Chapter	Page
5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAGNETIC ORIENTATION ANGLE AND GEOMAGNETIC STORM	91
5.1 Introduction	91
5.2 Data Sets	92
5.3 Methods of Data Analysis	94
5.3.1 Identification of possible CME source regions from high gradient neutral lines	94
5.3.2 Orientation of CMEs	101
5.3.3 The effect of interplanetary CMEs	105
5.4 Results	110
5.4.1 Effectiveness of HGNL method on identification of flaring active regions	110
5.4.2 Relationship between surface magnetic orientation θ , IMF B_z and the D_{st} index	115
5.5 Conclusions and Discussion	119
6 SUMMARY	121
REFERENCES	123

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
2.1 Comparison of Magnetograph Systems	26
2.2 Properties of Six Flares and the Active Regions	35
2.3 Effects of Projection Correction for the 2001 April 6 Flare	35
3.1 Correlation Coefficients between the Magnetic Parameters and the Natural Logarithm of Flare Index	51
4.1 List of Active Regions Associated with Flares	60
4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Solar Flares Data	68
4.3 Regression models for Different Combination of Predictive Parameters	73
4.4 Indexes to Evaluate the Predictive Ability of Models	76
4.5 Validation of Model With Predictive Variables L_{gnl} and T_{flux}	80
4.6 Validation Results of All Models	81
4.7 Effects of L_{gnl} , T_{flux} on Response Variable $Level$	84
4.8 Comparison between Three Prediction Approaches	87
5.1 List of Halo CME Events Associated with Large Flares	98
5.2 Comparison of Magnetic Gradient Thresholds in Source Regions Identification	101
5.3 Magnetic Orientation of Solar Source Regions and Geomagnetic Storms	117

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1 Interior structure of the Sun. Courtesy of NASA	2
1.2 Schematic of the solar wind showing radial outflow from the Sun and the spiral structure of the magnetic field. (Courtesy of J. Luhmann, University of California at Berkeley)	5
1.3 Schematic of the interplanetary magnetic field. (Courtesy of E. Smith, J. Geophys. Res., 83, 717, 1978)	7
1.4 Schematic of the interplanetary current sheet. Courtesy of J. Todd Hoeksema, Stanford University.	7
1.5 Schematic of Earth's magnetosphere. The solar wind flows from left to right.	9
1.6 Coronal mass ejections sometimes reach out in the direction of Earth, SOHO image and illustration. Courtesy: SOHO/LASCO/EIT (ESA and NASA).	12
1.7 The Sun as seen in X-rays (left panel). The upper atmosphere or corona of the Sun emits X-rays because it is very hot, with temperatures of a few million degrees. The Sun's magnetic field traps the ionized gas (plasma) in loops. On the right limb of the Sun is a loop that has been illuminated by the extraordinary heating associated with a solar flare (enlargement in right panel). Flares are powerful explosions, lasting minutes to hours, that produce strong heating and acceleration of particles (courtesy of Solar Data Analysis Center, Goddard Space Flight Center).	21
1.8 Space weather hazards, courtesy Lou Lanzerotti, Bell Laboratories.	22
2.1 HSOS Vector magnetogram obtained at 06UT on 2000 July 14 for AR 9077. Gray scale represents line-of-sight magnetic field strength which is also plotted as contours (red: positive field, blue: negative). Contour levels are $\pm 200, 400, 800$ and 1600 G. The green arrows indicate observed transverse fields. The longest arrow indicates a field strength of about 1800 G. The dark black lines are the magnetic neutral lines where the line-of-sight field is zero.	29

LIST OF FIGURES
(Continued)

Figure	Page	
2.2	Top: Scatter plot of magnetic shear vs. magnetic gradient in all the points along all the neutral lines identified for the active region 9077 on 2000 July 14. Bottom: Plot of averaged magnetic shear vs. magnetic gradient with a linear fit. The vertical bars present standard deviation of shear in each bin.	31
2.3	Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2000 July 14; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines; Flare emissions are also plotted as contours (thin solid lines) in the two middle panels. In this figure and other similar figures below, the shear and gradient are presented in negative images, i.e., darker points show stronger shear or gradient. Bottom left: TRACE WL image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.	32
2.4	Top left: magnetic gradient map of 1991 June 9; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: $H\beta$ image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.	36
2.5	Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2001 April 6; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.	37
2.6	Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2001 August 25; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE WL image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.	38
2.7	Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2003 October 28; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.	39

LIST OF FIGURES

(Continued)

Figure	Page
<p>2.8 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2003 October 29; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.</p>	40
<p>3.1 Left: the MDI line-of-sight magnetogram of active region NOAA9077 on 2000 July 14; Middle: the gradient distribution along the neutral line; Right: the map of magnetic energy dissipation. The values of parameters at each pixel are indicated by the corresponding color bars.</p>	48
<p>3.2 Scatter plots to compare flare index (in the form of logarithm) and magnetic parameters. The left panels are based on flare index of entire disk passages of active regions, right is based on one-day flare index. The magnetic parameters presented from top to bottom are: mean gradient on the magnetic neutral line; length of neutral lines with magnetic gradient larger than 50G Mm^{-1}; and total magnetic energy dissipation. The solid lines show the least-squares linear regression line to the data points. The dashed lines show the 95 % confidence intervals about the regression line.</p>	50
<p>3.3 Scatter plot of total magnetic energy dissipation vs. length of neutral lines with magnetic gradient larger than 50G Mm^{-1}. The solid line shows the least-squares linear regression line to the data points. The dashed lines show the 95% confidence intervals about the regression line.</p>	52
<p>4.1 Examination of the ordinality of <i>Level</i> for every magnetic parameter by accessing how is the <i>Level</i> related to the mean value of each predictor, and whether the trend in each plot is monotonic. Solid lines connect the simple stratified means, and dashed lines connect the estimated expected value of $X Y=j$ given that PO holds. The extend of closeness of two curves indicates the perfect condition to hold ordinal condition.</p>	76
<p>4.2 Checking PO assumptions separately for a series of predictive parameters. The circle, triangle, and plus sign correspond to $\text{Level} \geq 1, 2, 3$, respectively. PO is checked by examining the vertical constancy of distances between any two of these three symbols.</p>	77

LIST OF FIGURES

(Continued)

Figure	Page	
4.3	Estimated logistic calibration curves obtained by bootstrapping using the corrected intercept and slope. The logistic calibration model $P_c = [1 + \exp(-(\gamma_0 + \gamma_1 L))]$, where P_c is the bias-corrected probability. L is $\text{logit}(\hat{P})$, and \hat{P} is the predicted probabilities (labelled with 'Apparent'). The bisector line demonstrates excellent validation on an absolute probability scale.	81
4.4	Distribution of predicted occurrence probability of solar flares. Panel (a), (b) and (c) show the results when only L_{gnl} , T_{flux} and E_{diss} as the predictive parameter, respectively. The probabilities for C, M and X class flares are displayed by the black dots, red circles and green squares.	88
4.5	Comparison of three predictive methods for each level of solar flares. The results from Ordinal logistic method, NASA/SDAC and NOAA/SEC are indicated by black diamonds, red squares and blue circles, respectively. For comparison reasons, the actual probabilities of producing flares are shown by green dots. The horizontal dot line is the probability of 50% (One more 25% in X class panel). Vertical dot line represents the turning point of flare occurrence.	88
5.1	MDI high resolution magnetogram for AR 9077 taken on 2000 July 14 (top panel). Black contours are magnetic neutral lines. The middle panel (b) shows the corresponding magnetic gradient map. The bottom panel (c) is the gradient distribution along the neutral line. Dark line is a gradient neutral line.	97
5.2	The comparison of magnetic field NLFF extrapolation before and after bastille flare on July 14, 2000. (Courtesy of Thomas Weiglemann.)	103
5.3	The relationship between weighted mean shear angle and altitude. The blue and red lines indicate the shear angles before and after solar flare, respectively. Beyond 70,000 km, the magnetic field become potential.	104
5.4	Background is an MDI magnetogram taken at 0936UT on July 14 2000. Over plotted are potential field lines. The segment of a thick blue line indicates the position of the main magnetic neutral line. The field lines that cross the main neutral line are displayed with red color.	106
5.5	Definition of the magnetic orientation angle θ . Blue line N represents the main neutral line. $P'A'$ is projection of the field line L on the plane. Angle between $P'A'$ and the direction toward south pole is the orientation angle for this particular field line.	107

LIST OF FIGURES
(Continued)

Figure	Page
5.6 ACE measurements of IMF from July 26 to July 28 2004 (in GSE). From top to bottom are magnetic field strength (B), y and z component of magnetic fields (B_y , B_z), the latitude (θ) and longitude (ϕ) angles, proton temperature (T), density ratio (N_α/N_p), plasma pressure (β) and the D_{st} index.	111
5.7 ACE measurements of IMF from Nov. 07 to Nov. 09 2004 (in GSE). From top to bottom are magnetic field strength (B), y and z component of magnetic fields (B_y , B_z), the latitude (θ) and longitude (ϕ) angles, proton temperature (T), density ratio (N_α/N_p), plasma pressure (β) and the D_{st} index.	112
5.8 Distribution of the calculated length of magnetic gradient neutral line of 73 CME events. The width of the bar is 10 Mm.	114
5.9 Magnetic orientation angle, θ , versus the D_{st} index. The blue triangles represent super storms, green stars show intense storms and red diamonds are moderate storms. The label indicates the responsible interplanetary magnetic structure for the storm.	116
5.10 The magnetic orientation angle θ versus corresponding IMF B_z . In the case of super geomagnetic storms produced by strong negative B_z , the corresponding source regions also had southward oriented magnetic fields.	118

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, as new technology advances, mankind has become more dependent on the space systems, satellite-based services, and other ground-based technologies than ever before. Since these technologies are influenced by Sun-Earth interaction phenomena, in recent years a new field, namely the Space Weather, which was formerly known as solar-terrestrial physics has emerged. Space weather is the response of our space environment to the constantly changing Sun.

1.1 Elements of Space Weather

The space weather is involved in the following stages: the Sun and its atmosphere as the origin of the energy; the interplanetary space as the propagation medium; and the Earth's magnetosphere and upper atmosphere as the destination of energy deposit.

1.1.1 The Sun

The Sun is the primary energy source of the Earth. All of the energy that we detect as light and heat originates in nuclear reactions deep inside the Sun's high-temperature "core". This core extends about one quarter of the way from the center of Sun to its surface where the temperature is around 15 million kelvin (K). The Sun also gives off ultraviolet, X-ray, gamma-ray, and radio emissions that are much more variable than its visible emissions.

The hot ionized gases in the interior of the Sun called radiative zone (Figure 1.1) are constantly in motion as a result of the heat generated within, coupled with the Sun's

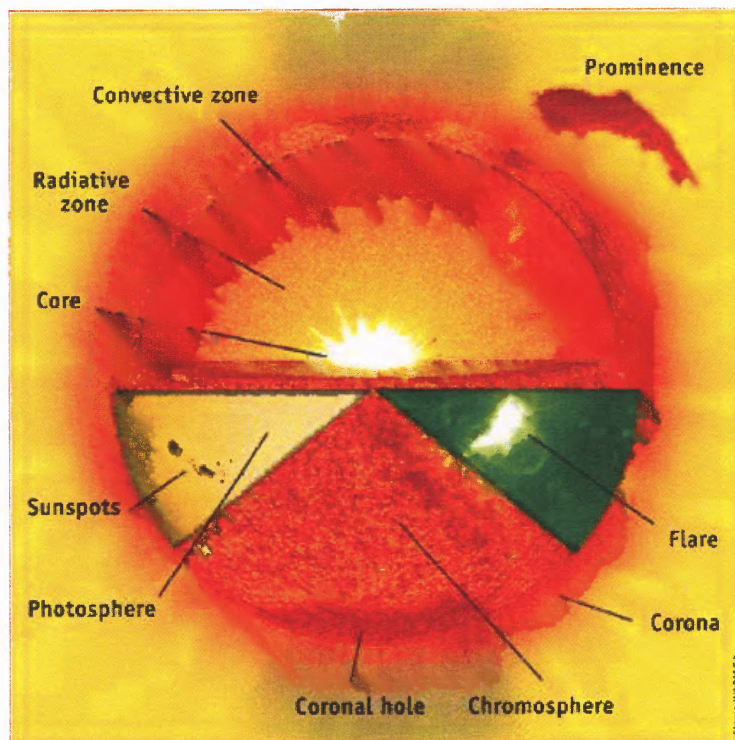


Figure 1.1 Interior structure of the Sun. Courtesy of NASA

rotation (one rotation every 27 days, approximately). In the outer regions, the high opacity make it difficult for proton radiation to continue outward, then establish a steep temperature gradients and lead to convective equilibrium (Convective zone). Observationally, the outer solar atmosphere following the convective zone has been divided into three spherically symmetric layers - the photosphere, chromosphere, and corona - lying successively above one another (Zirin 1988). Solar magnetic fields are generated below the photosphere. It plays a vital role in almost all kinds of solar activities. These fields are sometimes concentrated in sunspots, the largest compact magnetic concentrations on the surface of the Sun. Sunspots are “dark” because they are colder than the areas around them. A large sunspot might have a temperature of about 4,000 K, lower than the 5,800 K temperature of the bright photosphere surrounding it. The magnetic field of sunspots decreases gradually from the center, of about 3000 G, to the outer part, of about 800 G, and vanishes abruptly outside in the photosphere. Complexity of sunspots forms active regions. They are the usual sites of solar activities, which may occur when their complicated magnetic fields are suddenly rearranged.

Above the solar surface stretches the extended solar atmosphere, known as the solar corona. Propagating waves and/or processes associated with the constant rearrangement of the magnetic fields close to the Sun raise the temperature of the corona (to over 1,000,000 Kelvin), far above that of the solar surface (at about 6000 degrees Kelvin). Because of its temperature, the coronal gas is highly ionized and so its structure is affected by the solar magnetic field.

The Sun and its atmosphere are always changing, in a sense having weather of their own. The Sun undergoes long-term (decade or more) variations such as the roughly 11-year

solar cycle (Mursula and Ulich 1998). This cycle showed itself in the number of sunspots counted on the solar surface (above). The solar magnetic field evolves over the solar cycle along with the sunspot number. The field is more complicated at solar maximum when the simple solar minimum structure, which resembles Earth's field or that of a bar magnet, is disrupted by the strong fields of many active regions. Processes related to this evolution of the solar magnetic field are the ultimate causes of space weather.

1.1.2 The Interplanetary Space and Solar Wind

The high temperature of the solar upper atmosphere generates an outward flow of the ionized coronal gas or plasma away from the Sun at typical speeds ranging from 400 to 800 kilometers per second. This outflow is known as the "solar wind" (Parker 1958, 1959). At the Earth (1 astronomical unit (AU) or 150 million kilometers away from the Sun), 1 cubic centimeter of solar wind contains about 7 protons and an equal number of electrons (so there is no net electrical charge in the gas). Helium and heavier ions are also present in the solar wind but in smaller numbers (Wolfe et al. 1966; Neugebauer and Snyder 1966; Formisano et al. 1974; Barnes 1992).

The solar wind confines the magnetic field of Earth and governs phenomena such as geomagnetic storms and aurorae. Coronal magnetic fields are constantly being carried with the solar wind into interplanetary space. The solar rotation winds up the field into a spiral resembling the water streams from a rotating garden sprinkler because the source of the field keeps moving with the Sun (Figure 1.2).

At the Earth's distance from the Sun, the typical interplanetary magnetic field (IMF) strength is about 5 nano teslas, or about 1/10,000 the strength of the Earth's magnetic field

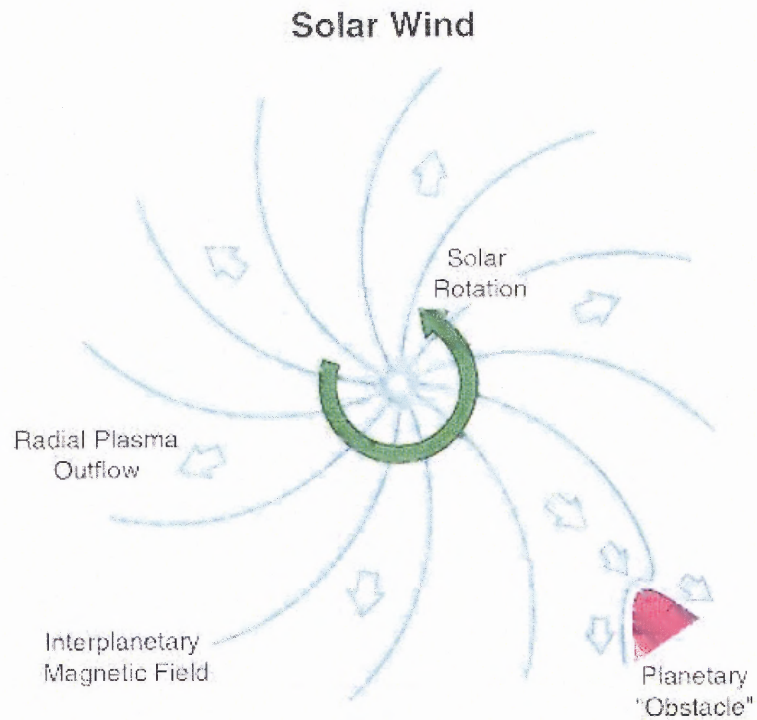


Figure 1.2 Schematic of the solar wind showing radial outflow from the Sun and the spiral structure of the magnetic field. (Courtesy of J. Luhmann, University of California at Berkeley)

at the surface. The “polarity” of the interplanetary magnetic field depends on the direction of the coronal field at its roots. As illustrated in Figure 1.3, the interplanetary field is typically organized into hemispheres of inward and outward field corresponding to the North and South magnetic poles of the solar field. The two hemispheres are separated by a sheet-like boundary carrying an electrical current (Smith et al. 1978). The sheet is not a flat plane. As the Sun rotates, the sheet is shaped into swirls (see Figure 1.4) so that sometimes the Earth is above the sheet and sometimes it is below it. The passage of this current sheet is an important marker for space weather.

1.1.3 The Magnetosphere of the Earth

The magnetosphere is the region of space above the atmosphere that is dominated by the Earth’s magnetic field. Figure 1.5 shows the major structural features of this complex, dynamical system derived from spacecraft observations in many different orbits.

The highly conducting solar wind gas is not able to penetrate Earth’s magnetic field at most locations, instead flowing around it. Before it is diverted, however, it slows down at a (shock) wave called the “bow shock” that stands upstream of Earth in the solar wind. It serves to slow the flowing ionized gas before it encounters the obstacle presented by the Earth’s magnetic field, analogous to air flow around a supersonic aircraft (Gold 1959; Beard 1964).

Earth’s magnetic field connects with the interplanetary magnetic field in the polar caps. This interconnection allows transfer of energy from the solar wind to the magnetosphere and ionosphere, as well as entry of charged particles from interplanetary space. This injection of energetic particles is known as geomagnetic storm. The amount of in-

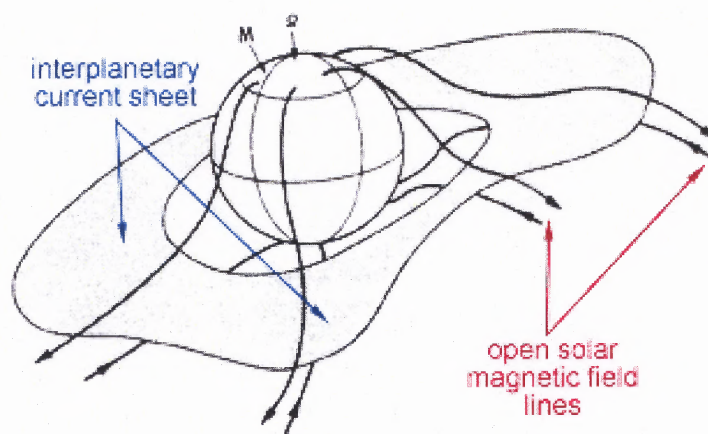


Figure 1.3 Schematic of the interplanetary magnetic field. (Courtesy of E. Smith, *J. Geophys. Res.*, 83, 717, 1978)



Figure 1.4 Schematic of the interplanetary current sheet. Courtesy of J. Todd Hoeksema, Stanford University.

terconnection is greatest when the interplanetary magnetic field has a southward direction. The Disturbance Storm Time (D_{st}) Index is a measure of the intensity of a geomagnetic storm. It is expressed in nano Tesla and is based on the average value of the horizontal component of the Earth's magnetic field measured hourly at four near-equatorial geomagnetic observatories. Large negative values of D_{st} indicate a strong geomagnetic storm. The following storm classification has been proposed by Gonzalez et al. (1994): (1) small storm, D_{st} is in the range between -30 and -50 nT; (2) moderate storms, D_{st} between -50 and -100 nT; (3) strong storms, D_{st} is -100 nT or stronger.

Another parameter that describes the intensity of geomagnetic storm is K -index. It has a range from 0 to 9 and is directly related to the maximum amount of fluctuation (relative to a quiet day) in the geomagnetic field over a three-hour interval. Due to the different locations of geomagnetic observatories, the official index that is used is K_p , which is derived by calculating a weighted average of K -indices from a network of geomagnetic observatories.

The magnetosphere is home to research, telecommunications, navigation, and weather satellites that are surrounded by the energetic particles and thin gases of the upper atmosphere. The Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites, used for navigation, surveying, and geophysical research, orbit the Earth at altitudes above most of the atmosphere. Disturbed space weather may cause increases in the intensities of hazardous energetic particles in these environments. All spacecrafts send and receive their signals through the ionosphere, which is sometimes dramatically altered by space weather events.

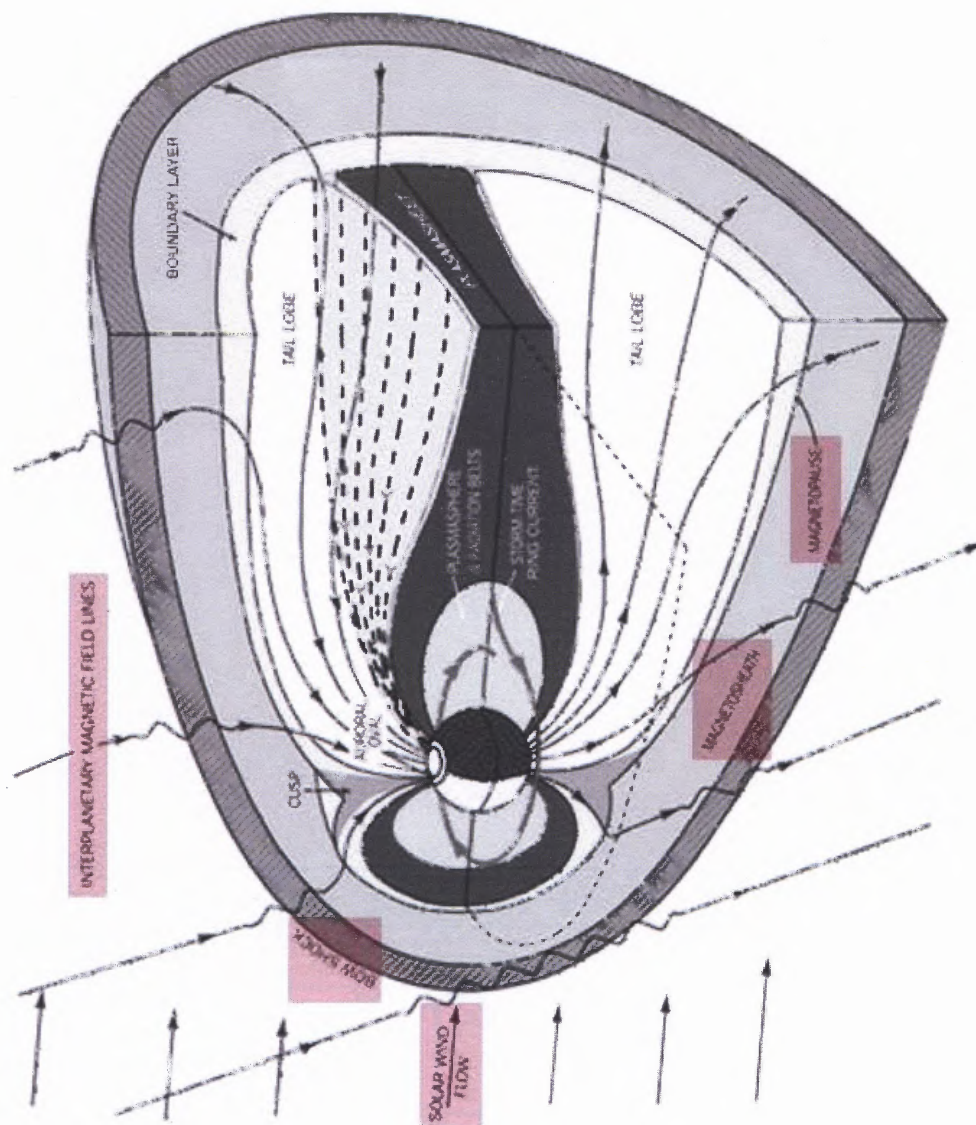


Figure 1.5 Schematic of Earth's magnetosphere. The solar wind flows from left to right.

1.2 Solar Origins of Space Weather

Most of the effects classified as space weather can ultimately be traced to changes occurring at the Sun. These include variations in both the solar electromagnetic radiation and the production of solar wind, plasma, and energetic particles. All of these are ultimately related to the evolution of the solar magnetic field. Large disturbances in the space weather, such as intense geomagnetic storms, shock waves and energetic particle events are mostly associated with two solar activity transient phenomena: solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs). These two events seem to be part of a single phenomenon, a solar magnetic eruption. Nowadays it seems that neither one is the cause of the other (Gosling 1993).

1.2.1 Coronal Mass Ejections

Figure 1.6 shows the release of a CME at the Sun. A large CME can contain 10^{13} kg of matter. The faster CMEs have outward speeds of up to 2000 kilometers per second, considerably greater than the normal solar wind speeds of about 400 kilometers per second. These produce large shock waves in the solar wind as they plow through it. Some of the solar wind ions are accelerated by the shock, which then becomes a source of intense and long-lasting energetic particle enhancements in interplanetary space. The rate of CMEs depends on the phase of the solar cycle. Events occur at a rate of roughly 0.5 per day at solar minimum and between two and three a day at solar maximum (Hundhausen 1993; Webb and Howard 1994; St. Cyr et al. 2000).

CMEs are monitored using coronagraphs, which produce artificial eclipses on the Sun by placing an “occluding disk” over the image of the Sun. CMEs directed along the Sun-Earth line can be detected as “halos” around the occluding disk in a white-light coron-

agraph. A CME is a full halo when it extends 360° around the Sun and a partial halo if the apparent width is greater than 120° (Howard et al. 1982).

Now it is well accepted that the front-side halo CMEs are the major causes for those severe geomagnetic storms (e.g., Brueckner et al. 1998; Cane et al. 2000; Gopalswamy et al. 2000; Webb et al. 2000; Wang et al. 2002; Zhang et al. 2003b). A halo CME may head either toward the Earth if it arises on the front-side of the Sun, or away from the Earth if it is on the backside. Cane et al. (2000) showed that only about half of front-side halo CMEs encounter the Earth and their associated solar events typically occur at longitudes ranging from 40° East to 40° West. According to Wang et al. (2002), about 45% of total 132 Earth-directed halo CMEs caused geomagnetic storms with $K_p \leq 5$, and almost 83% of events took place within $\pm 30^\circ$ of the central meridian of the Sun.

The interplanetary counterparts of coronal mass ejections (ICMES) at the Sun have been identified since the early years of solar wind observations. A subset of ICMEs are the magnetic clouds (MC), which seem to constitute around 1/3 of all the ICMEs. These structures are identified, near 1 AU, by their high magnetic field intensity, low proton temperature, low Beta (ratio between thermal and magnetic pressure), and a smooth and large scale rotation in one of the magnetic field components. ICMEs present dimensions around 0.2-0.3 AU and cross the spacecrafts or Earth in ~ 24 hours (Burlaga et al. 1981). Current models of these magnetic clouds consider them as giant magnetic flux ropes with field aligned currents. Other ICMEs are believed to be “complex ejecta”, with a disordered magnetic field (Burlaga et al. 2001). The geoeffectiveness of ICME ranges from 25% (Vennerstroem 2001) up to 82% (Wu and Lepping 2002).

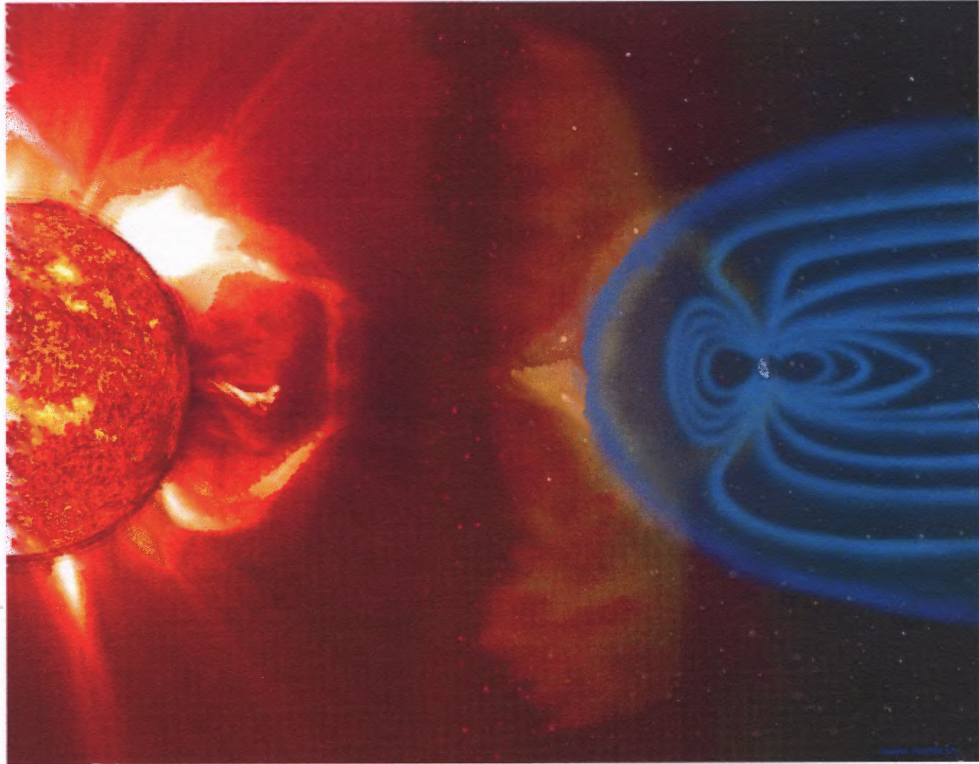


Figure 1.6 Coronal mass ejections sometimes reach out in the direction of Earth, SOHO image and illustration. Courtesy: SOHO/LASCO/EIT (ESA and NASA).

1.2.2 Solar Flares

Short periods of explosive energy release, known as solar flares, more frequently occur in active regions during the period around solar maximum. An example of a flare observed on the limb of the Sun is shown below (Figure 1.7). Flares have lifetimes ranging from hours for large gradual events down to tens of seconds for the most impulsive events. During a very strong flare, the solar ultraviolet and X-ray emissions can increase by as much as 100 times above even active-region levels. During solar maximum, approximately one such flare is observed every week. Flares heat the solar gas to tens of millions of degrees. The heated gas then radiates strongly across the whole electromagnetic spectrum from radio to gamma rays. The largest of these explosions are so bright that they can even be seen from Earth in continuum visible light, so called white-light flares.

Flares are important to space weather mainly because they appear in connection to some CMEs and also because they have an important role in particle acceleration. They can accelerate protons and electrons that travel to Earth directly from the Sun along the interplanetary magnetic field (which “channels” the charged particles). These contribute to the high-energy particle environment in the vicinity of the magnetosphere if Earth’s location is magnetically connected to the flaring region by the interplanetary magnetic field.

Solar flares are classified according to its X-ray emission in the band 1-8 Å in emission classes B (with peak $< 10^{-6} \text{Wm}^{-2}$), C (peak between 10^{-6} and 10^{-5}Wm^{-2}), M (with peak between 10^{-5} and 10^{-4}Wm^{-2}) and X (with peak $> 10^{-4} \text{Wm}^{-2}$). A number is also indicated after the letter which gives the intensity of emission, each category having nine subdivisions, e.g., C1-C9, C9 equivalent to a peak emission of $9 \times 10^{-5} \text{Wm}^{-2}$. Events of the X type are big events that can cause planetary radio blackouts and long lasting radiation

storms. Events of the M type are of medium size, which can cause minor radiation storms and brief radio-blackouts, mainly in the polar regions. Events of C and B types have very little effect on Earth.

Park et al. (2002) reported that the geoeffectiveness of solar flares is about 30-45%. Howard and Tappin (2005) performed a statistical analysis of CME/ICMEs events from January 1998 to August 2004 and concluded that only around 40% of the shock/storms at 1AU were associated either with an X-class or M-class flares.

1.3 Consequences of Space Weather

Electromagnetic emission from the Sun can degrade systems in space and radio systems on Earth. Changes in the spectrum and intensity of the radiation belts caused by high-speed solar streams and CMEs have affected the operation of spacecraft through vehicle damage, deterioration of solar cells, semiconductor damage, or through electric charging of the spacecraft. Changing fields in the magnetosphere can induce currents in the ionosphere and, at ground level, in terrestrial power systems and long pipe lines that may cause damage that is costly to industry. Variations in ionospheric conditions, subsequent to magnetospheric changes, influence the operation of radio systems such as short wave communications and radar. Figure 1.8 shows the numerous effects of space weather.

1.3.1 Space Radiation Environment

Geostationary satellites operate near the top of the outer radiation belt, low Earth orbiting satellites operate within the inner radiation belt. Both environments are populated by charged particles whose energy and number depend on space weather conditions.

Satellite systems can be impaired through direct penetration of the electronics by high velocity solar protons, by deep or surface-charging or by surface damage. Surface damage, such as degradation of solar cells, is caused by low energy particles and radiation. Effects on satellite hardware have been reviewed by Baker (2001) and described by the Geological Survey of Canada (2002).

Those working outside a space station or spacecraft beyond the protection of the Earth's atmosphere can experience harmful radiation doses during major solar events unless protected. Radiation hazards are less for most aircraft but as general aviation develops into the stratosphere, and to greater altitudes, the dosage experienced by passengers during a major space event can become significant, particularly over polar routes, where the protection of the Earth's magnetic field is lowest.

1.3.2 Ionospheric Effects

Shortwave radio communication at HF frequencies (3-30 megahertz), which is still extensively used for overseas broadcasting in various countries, depends upon the reflection of signals from Earth's ionosphere. These electromagnetic waves are attenuated as they pass through the lower ionosphere (below 100 km), where collisions between the electrons and air molecules are frequent. Ionosphere attenuation affects the usable radio communication frequencies. If it becomes especially strong due to an increase in the local electron density, it can cause a total communications blackout. Solar flare ultraviolet and X-ray bursts, solar energetic particles, or intense aurora can all bring on this condition.

The deep ionization produced by the solar protons also alters the path taken by the waves reflecting from the ionosphere. The ionospheric changes that occur during disturbed

times also increase the incidence of electron density irregularities, leading to sometimes severe variations or scintillations in the phase strength of signals sent from the ground to satellites at VHF and UHF frequencies (30 megahertz to 3 gigahertz).

Finally, solar radio bursts can directly interfere with communications in the frequency range between 245 MHz and 2.7 GHz, which is widely used. In summary, space weather-related disruptions to communication systems have wideranging effects—from social interactions to economic transactions on a global level to intelligence and surveillance activities.

Navigation systems, consisting of constellations of Earth-orbiting satellites, use the propagation delay from satellite-to-receiver to measure the range from several satellites to determine the position of the receiver. Unexpected changes in the ionospheric section of the propagation path cause errors in range, and hence in position. Such changes in electron density can be caused by a solar disturbance.

1.3.3 Geomagnetic Effects

A geomagnetic storm will induce electric currents in conductors at ground level. If power lines, railway lines, steel pipelines or telecommunication cables, are long in terms of east-west extent, the currents can be large enough to cause costly damage (Geological Survey of Canada 2002).

Induced currents flowing through power transformers can trip relays and take out power lines or burn out transformers. In heavily loaded systems it is possible to have a failure of the whole system, as happened in the Canadian Hydro-Quebec system during a magnetic storm in March 1989.

Long pipeline corrosion occurs through chemical reactions that take place through current leakage between pipe and earth. To prevent the electro-chemical corrosion, a voltage between the pipe and ground is maintained. If the back emf is not altered to counter the current induced by the geomagnetic storm, pipe corrosion is increased.

The principal space weather hazard to humans is radiation exposure to astronauts and passengers in high-altitude aircraft. Although the residual atmosphere above an aircraft provides a measure of protection from cosmic rays and solar energetic particles that enter the magnetosphere, there is still concern for flights on polar routes during major solar particle events. The primary means of reducing this hazard is to modify flight paths as necessary and to limit the flight time of personnel on high-altitude aircraft like the supersonic transport. It is clear that in this case early warnings of solar energetic particles are extremely desirable. While flares can be monitored at least on the visible disk of the Sun, solar indications of the shockproducing fast CME toward Earth are less apparent.

1.4 Space Weather Forecasting

To avoid or reduce the above mentioned space weather induced hazards, there is a growing request for reliable forecasts of hazardous space weather events for manned space activities, for unmanned spacecrafts, for space and ground-based industry, for the public and insofar for many aspect of daily life. The objective of space weather research is to understand in theory and practice the stormy and hostile interplanetary environment, in order to make possible procedures that turn it safe for human technological activities and for the human presence in space (Hargreaves 1992; Cole 2003).

The warning of a potential threat from space weather on terrestrial and space sys-

tems can be provided a few hours ahead on the basis of observations of CMEs and verified by in-situ data from spacecraft, but the specific severity of the effect requires further development of models of the solar wind and magnetosphere.

Recent data from satellites have increased progress on space weather prediction. The Advanced Composition Explorer (ACE) spacecraft, which orbits the L1 Lagrangian point of Earth-Sun gravitational equilibrium located about 1.5 million km from the Earth, performs measurements of the direction and magnitude of IMF. This excellent position enables ACE to conduct 24 hours monitoring of solar wind condition and to transmit interplanetary data in real time that can provide 1 hour advance warning of geomagnetic storms. The Solar & Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO), containing twelve scientific instruments, was launched in 1995. It currently becomes the main source of near-real time solar data for space weather prediction.

There are now models specifying the magnetospheric environment with local accuracy when used in conjunction with in-situ data; polar radars deliver realtime maps of magnetospheric and ionospheric currents and magnetic fields; and networks of ionospheric and geomagnetic monitors give constant information on ionospheric conditions. Much has been achieved in the last few years but the ability to forecast the total Sun-Earth event days, or even hours, ahead remains as a challenge. Some of other challenges are the automated definition, classification and representation of solar features and the establishing of an accurate correlation between the occurrence of solar activities (e.g., solar flares and CMEs) and solar features (e.g., sunspots, filaments and active regions) observed in various wavelengths.

1.5 The Goals and Structure of the Dissertation

As mentioned, comprehensive study of the solar activities, especially solar flares and CMEs, and the solar magnetic field is essential to space weather research. The goal of this study is to explore the relation between solar surface activities, such as flares and CMEs and the features of associated magnetic fields, e.g., magnetic orientation angle, length of magnetic gradient neutral line, magnetic energy dissipation, total magnetic flux, and the relation between them and geomagnetic storms. Both case and statistical studies are carried out. The dissertation is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: *Introduction.*

Chapter 2: *The relationship between magnetic gradient and magnetic shear of solar active regions.*

In this chapter, the magnetic structure of five well-known active regions that produced great flares (X5 or larger) are studied. Magnetic gradient of active region could be a better proxy than magnetic shear to predict where a major flare might occur.

Chapter 3: *The relationship between solar flare index and magnetic features.*

In this chapter, flare index, which characterizes the overall flare productivity of a given active region, is found to have significant correlation with the mean spatial gradient on the neutral line, the length of magnetic gradient neutral line and the total energy dissipation in a unit layer per a unit time.

Chapter 4: *Statistical Assessment of Photospheric Magnetic Features in Imminent Solar Flares Predictions.*

In this chapter, the ordinal logistic regression model is first time introduced into solar physics and proved to be a viable approach to the automated flare prediction. The

results are much better than those data published in NASA/SDAC service, and comparable to the data provided by NOAA/SEC complicated expert system.

Chapter 5: The relationship between magnetic orientation angle and geomagnetic storm.

In this chapter, the relationship between magnetic structures of coronal mass ejection (CME) source regions and geomagnetic storms, in particular, the super storms is investigated. The magnetic orientation angle is derived and used to predicted those super geomagnetic storms.

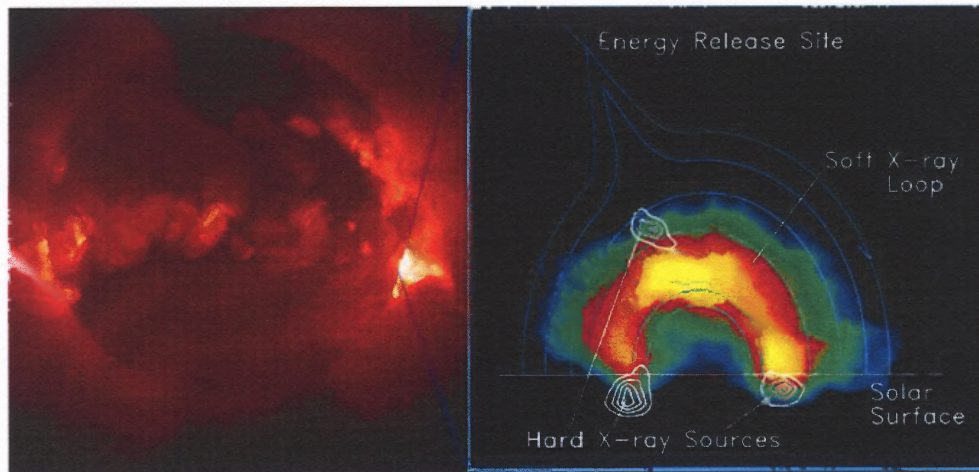


Figure 1.7 The Sun as seen in X-rays (left panel). The upper atmosphere or corona of the Sun emits X-rays because it is very hot, with temperatures of a few million degrees. The Sun's magnetic field traps the ionized gas (plasma) in loops. On the right limb of the Sun is a loop that has been illuminated by the extraordinary heating associated with a solar flare (enlargement in right panel). Flares are powerful explosions, lasting minutes to hours, that produce strong heating and acceleration of particles (courtesy of Solar Data Analysis Center, Goddard Space Flight Center).

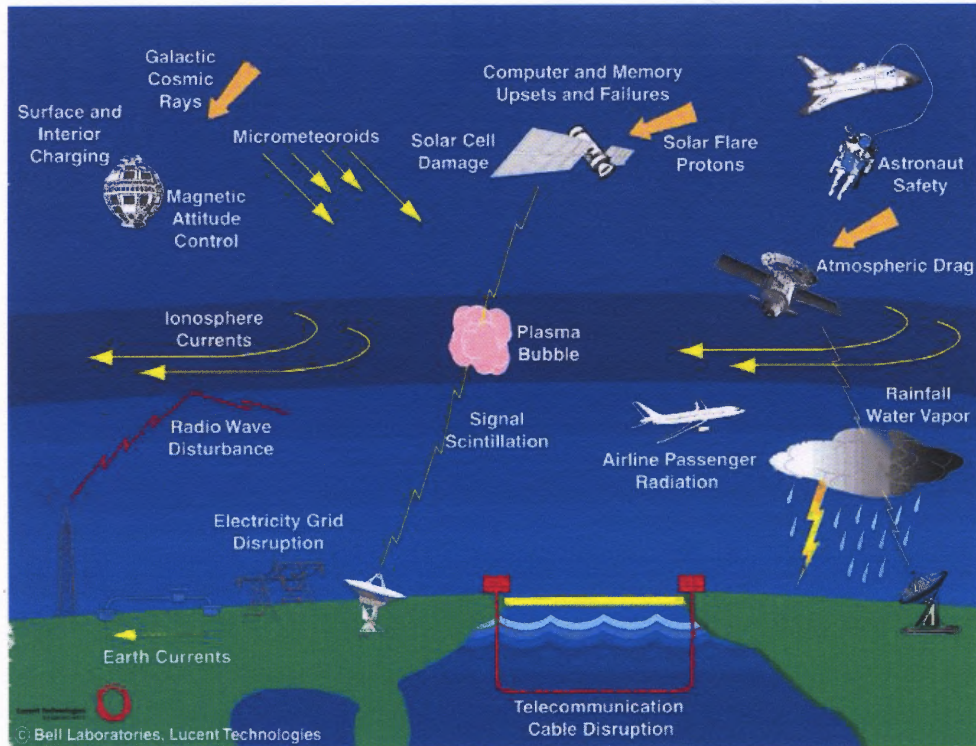


Figure 1.8 Space weather hazards, courtesy Lou Lanzerotti, Bell Laboratories.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAGNETIC GRADIENT AND MAGNETIC SHEAR OF SOLAR ACTIVE REGIONS

2.1 Introduction

Solar flares and CMEs are two related, and most important forms of explosive energy release from the Sun. It has been noticed long ago that non-potentiality of an active region's magnetic structure is vitally important in storing energy and triggering flares (Hagyard et al. 1984). The most notable indicator of non-potentiality is the δ sunspot that is defined as umbrae of opposite polarity lying in a common penumbra. For over three decades, the morphological evolution of δ configurations and their strong connection to intensive flare activity have been widely studied by many authors (e.g., Tang 1983; Hagyard et al. 1984; Zirin and Liggett 1987; Tanaka 1991). Using eighteen years of observations at Big Bear Solar Observatory (BBSO), Zirin (1987) summarized the development of δ spots and classified them in three categories, concluding that δ groups are responsible for almost all great flares.

Measurements of the global non-potentiality of an active region can be obtained from a vector magnetogram of the region regardless of the chirality of global magnetic shear or twist in chromospheric or coronal images. E.g., such a measurement has been used to evaluate the potential of producing CMEs of particular active regions (Falconer 2001). Zhang (2001) studied AR 6659 and found that the shear and gradient of the magnetic field are important and reflect a part of the electric current in solar active regions. However, the analysis of vector magnetograms has experienced great difficulties even as new instruments

have been developed. The most notable ones are calibration, resolution of 180 degree ambiguity and correction of the projection effect when the region is not close to the solar disk center.

From a sample of 17 vector magnetograms, Falconer et al. (2003) showed that there is a viable proxy for non-potentiality that can be measured from a line-of-sight magnetogram. This proxy is the strong magnetic gradient and it is correlated with active region CME productivity. Because gradients can be measured from line-of-sight magnetograms obtained from conventional magnetographs, it is a dependable substitute for magnetic shear for use in operational CME forecasting. Prasad (2000) also used the similar parameter of magnetic gradient to characterize the stressed magnetic fields in active regions. However, no study has been carried out to have detailed comparison of gradient and shear in active regions. In this chapter, two questions will be primary addressed: (1) Are magnetic shear and gradient correlated? (2) Do flares tend to occur in the high gradient and/or high shear locations?

2.2 Observation

The primary data sources are from four well-known vector magnetograph systems:

(1) Digital Magnetograph (DMG) at BBSO. The data were obtained by a filtergraph-based system. It uses the Ca I 6103 Å. The bandpass of the birefringent filter is 1/4 Å. The field-of-view of the instrument is $360'' \times 360''$ and the spatial resolution is 0.6'' per pixel (Spirock 2005).

(2) Vector magnetograph at Huairou Solar Observing Station (HSOS) in China. The data were obtained by a filtergraph-based system that was developed by Ai (1987). It uses

the Fe I 5324 Å. The bandpass of the birefringent filter is 1/8 Å. The field-of-view of the instrument is $360'' \times 240''$ and the spatial resolution is $0.6''$ per pixel.

(3) Vector magnetograph at Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC). The magnetograph is a filter-based instrument employing a tunable Zeiss birefringent filter with a 1/8 Å bandpass and an electro-optical modulator to obtain integrated Stokes profiles in the Fe I 5250 Å absorption line. The field-of-view of the instrument is $420'' \times 300''$ and the spatial resolution is $1.28''$ per pixel.

(4) Imaging Vector Magnetograph at Mees Solar Observatory: it consists of a 28-cm telescope and a tunable Fabry-Perot system with a pixel resolution of 1 arsec, FOV of $280'' \times 280''$ and polarization precision of 0.1% (Mickey et al. 1996). The data analysis procedures of IVM are more complicated than three other systems at BBSO, HSOS and MSFC. It requires full Stokes Inversion (LaBonte et al. 1999).

Table 2.1 compares the basic parameters of these vector magnetograph systems. According to the accuracy of each system, we estimated the probable errors when calculating the magnetic gradient and magnetic shear. The error in the azimuthal angle can only be estimated by inter-comparison of multiple instruments (Zhang et al. 2003a; Wang et al. 1992). A 10-degree error is believed to be a reasonable value. Most measurement errors on the various parameters are at least one order of magnitude smaller than the typical measured physical quantities themselves.

The magnetograms presented in this chapter were obtained between 1 and 6 hours before the flares, except that for the 2003 October 28 event, the first available magnetogram on that day was taken 4 hours after the flare. Because there is a sufficient gap between the time of observation and the time of the flare, possible contamination of magnetic signal

by flare emissions is of no concern. On the other hand, many of our previous studies showed that the changes of magnetic structure of the AR are relatively subtle (less than 5% in 5 hours), so that the difference between the times of the flare and the magnetogram observation should not affect our basic conclusions. The first five rows of Table 2.2 list the basic information of the six flares studied in this chapter. The flare morphological data are mainly given by TRACE white-light or 1600Å images for the five post-2000 events, and by an H β image for the 1991 event. The other parameters will be explained later.

The active regions were located not too far away from the disk center (maximum longitude is 34 degrees) when these large flares occurred. The measurement errors due to the projection effect of magnetic fields are comparable to the uncertainty levels presented in Table 2.1 (Li 2002). Furthermore, when the regions are within 45 degrees of the disk center, the 180-degree ambiguity can be resolved using the method developed by Moon et al. (2003). The basic assumption of this method is that the magnetic shear angle, which is defined as the difference between the azimuth of the observed and potential fields, approximately follows a normal distribution.

Table 2.1 Comparison of Magnetograph Systems

Magnetograph	BBSO	HSOS	MSFC	MSO
Wavelength	CaI 6103	FeI 5324	FeI 5250	FeI 6302
Bandpass(Å)	1/4	1/8	1/8	0.07
Pixel Resolution	0.6''	0.6''	1.28''	1.0''
Field of View	360'' × 360''	360'' × 240''	420'' × 300''	280'' × 280''
B Long. Accuracy (G)	5	10	25	20
B Trans. Accuracy (G)	100	200	75	200
Error in Gradient (G km ⁻¹)	0.012	0.024	0.026	0.030
Error in Shear (G × rad)	18	35	13	35

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Bastille Day Flare on 2000 July 14

The Bastille Day flare on 2000 July 14 was well observed by many space and ground-based observatories. Its magnetic structure and flare emissions in many wavelengths have been studied by many authors (Liu and Zhang 2001; Yan et al. 2001; Deng et al. 2001; Masuda et al. 2001; Fletcher and Hudson 2001; Kosovichev and Zharkova 2001). Wang et al. (2005a) found that this flare is one of many large flares that are associated with a very interesting evolutionary pattern: part of outer δ spot structure decays rapidly after a major flare, while central umbral and penumbral structure becomes darker. This event is used as an example to demonstrate the data analysis procedures and the significance of results.

In Figure 2.1, we show A vector magnetogram taken by HSOS 6 hours before an observed flare. Based on this vector magnetogram, we generate three images: a magnetic gradient map, a shear map and a masking map marking the location of magnetic neutral lines. The magnetic neutral lines are defined by thick black lines in Figure 2.1. In this masking map, the intensity is 1.0, if a particular point is part of neutral lines, otherwise, the pixel value of this point is set to 0. The magnetic shear is defined as the product of observed transverse field strength and the shear angle. The shear angle is the angular separation between the directions of observed transverse fields and extrapolated potential fields. Wang et al. (1994a) explained the reason of using this shear term instead of just the shear angle: (1) the stored magnetic energy through magnetic shear must be reflected by both field strength and shear angle; (2) the measurement of the direction of the transverse field sensitively depends on magnetic field strength: stronger fields would have lower measurement error. Consequently, the magnetic shear in the plot is in units of Gauss radian. The

magnetic gradient map is constructed based on line-of-sight magnetogram only. As magnetic gradient is proportional to the derivative of the measured fields, we need to be aware that the random noise might have been enhanced significantly in the gradient maps. We use the software developed by Gallagher that is being used in the Active Region Monitor (Gallagher et al. 2002), based on a finite difference scheme in which the derivatives at the borders are taken care of. To make the results more uniform and subject less to the variation in the seeing, we smooth the magnetograms with a kernel of $3''$ before doing the gradient calculation. As a consequence, the real gradient might be larger than the values presented in the chapter. The errors of the gradient calculation are shown in Table 2.1.

Next, we multiply the shear image by the mask image to generate an image of shear in the neutral lines only. Similarly, we multiply the gradient image by the mask image to generate an image of gradient in the neutral lines only. Figure 2.2 shows the scatter plot of magnetic shear versus magnetic gradient for all the points along all the magnetic neutral lines in the active region. The plus signs represent points in the section of flaring neutral line. Apparently, these points (plus signs) have both higher magnetic shear and gradient than other points (dots) in the active region. More quantitative comparison is presented in Table 2.2 and will be discussed in next Section. Furthermore, it is evident that there is a positive correlation between the magnetic gradient and the magnetic shear. Although a large scatter is present in the plot, the linear relationship between the two parameters (gradient and shear) is still obvious. The correlation coefficient (C.C.) is 76% if using all the points in the active region. However, if only the points at the flaring neutral line are used, the C.C. increases to 89%. Comparable C.C. values between 87% and 96% are found for the other events. The fitted slope is $3993 \text{ km} \times \text{radian}$, which is in between 2444 and

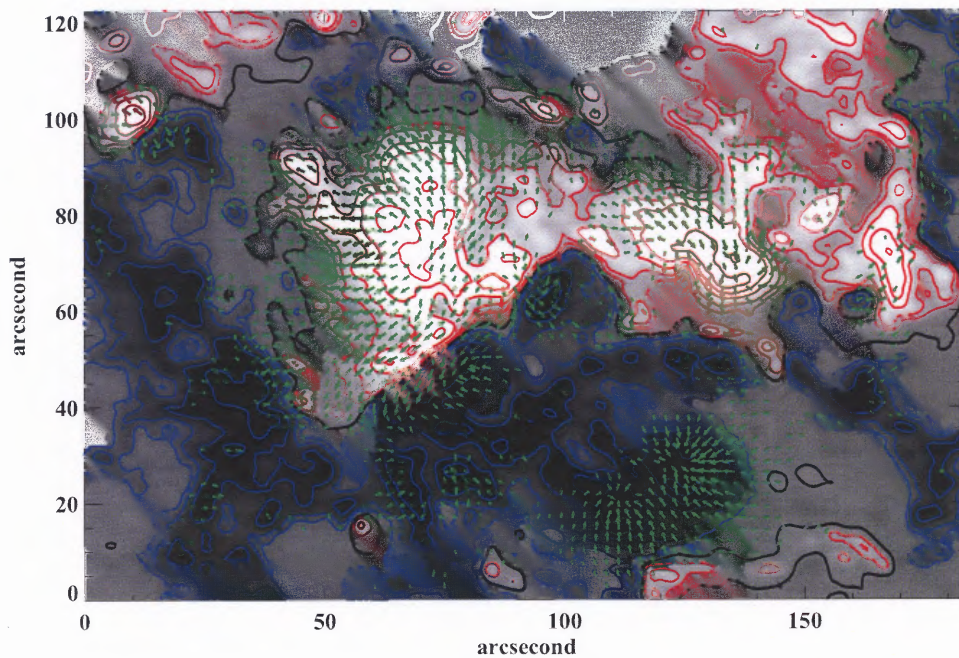


Figure 2.1 HSOS Vector magnetogram obtained at 06UT on 2000 July 14 for AR 9077. Gray scale represents line-of-sight magnetic field strength which is also plotted as contours (red: positive field, blue: negative). Contour levels are ± 200 , 400, 800 and 1600 G. The green arrows indicate observed transverse fields. The longest arrow indicates a field strength of about 1800 G. The dark black lines are the magnetic neutral lines where the line-of-sight field is zero.

5769 km \times radian for all the other events. The figure also includes an average plot with a bin size of 0.04 G km $^{-1}$ to show up the trend better. The fitted line is flatter due to the fact that there are fewer points in the high shear/gradient area.

In Figure 2.3 we show maps of magnetic gradient, gradient at the neutral lines, magnetic shear and shear at the neutral lines. In addition, the flare emissions are shown by a TRACE WL image. Obviously, the flare neutral line has both strong magnetic gradient and magnetic shear. Either the magnetic gradient or the magnetic shear can be used to identify correctly the flaring neutral line.

2.3.2 Summary of the other Five Events

We present a comparison of shear and gradient maps in Figures 2.4-2.8 for the other five events. The parameters concerning the shears and gradients are listed in Table 2.2. There are four derived parameters for each: maximum value along all the neutral lines in the active regions, maximum value along the flare neutral line, mean value along all the neutral lines and mean value along the flare neutral line. The flare neutral line is defined by the extent of flare ribbons at the emission maximum. From this table, it is obvious that for all the six events, the maximum gradient along the flare neutral lines is the maximum gradient for the entire active region; the ratio of mean gradient along the flare neutral line to that of entire active region is between 2.3 and 8.0. The two lowest values of this ratio belong to the 2003 October 28 and 29 events. It is not difficult to explain such a low ratio for these two events: two flares occurred in the same active region but at two different locations. Both locations have high gradient (and shear as well). Therefore, either one of these two flare neutral lines can not be uniquely dominant in having high mean gradient (or shear). Based

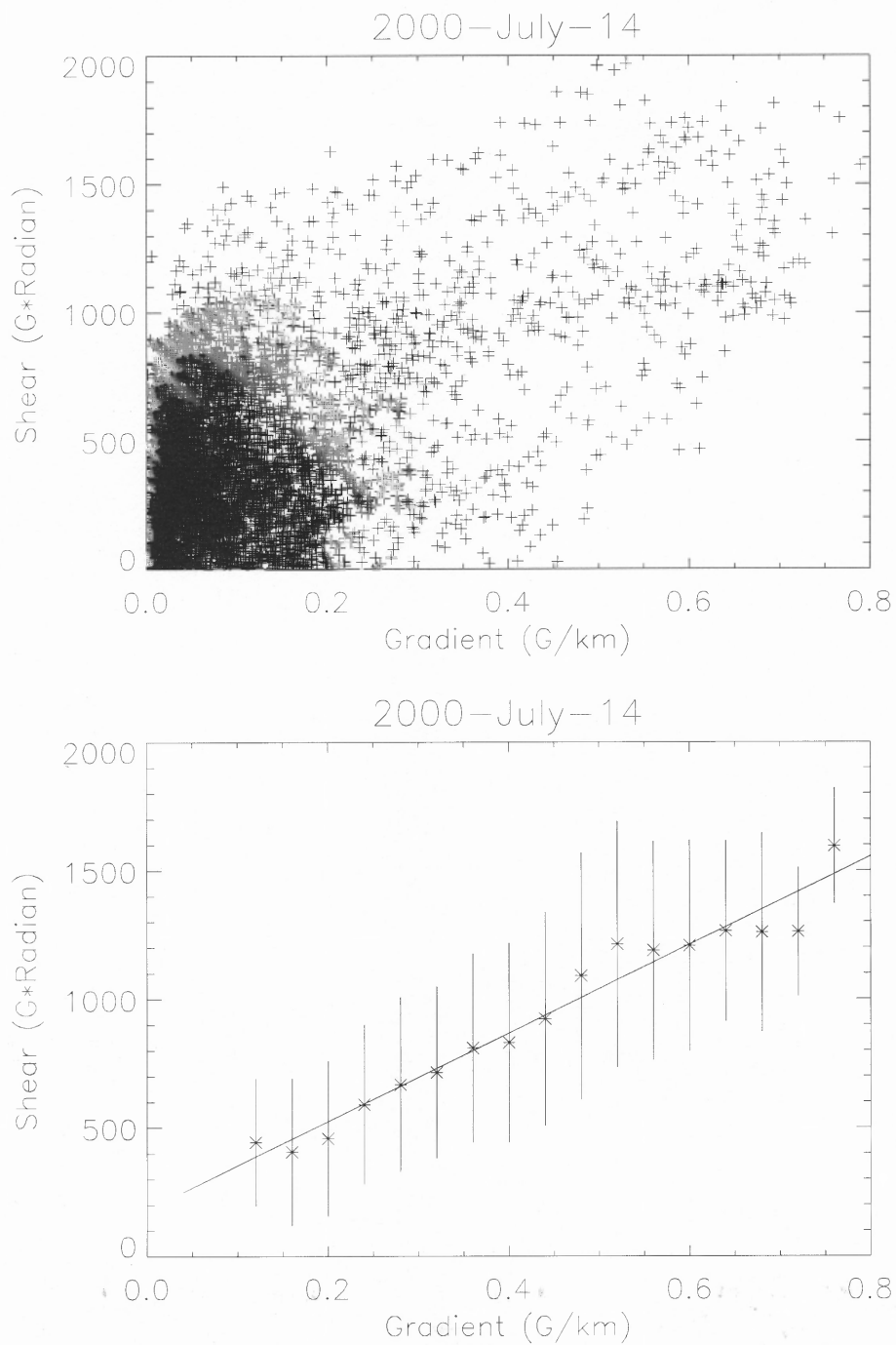


Figure 2.2 Top: Scatter plot of magnetic shear vs. magnetic gradient in all the points along all the neutral lines identified for the active region 9077 on 2000 July 14. Bottom: Plot of averaged magnetic shear vs. magnetic gradient with a linear fit. The vertical bars present standard deviation of shear in each bin.

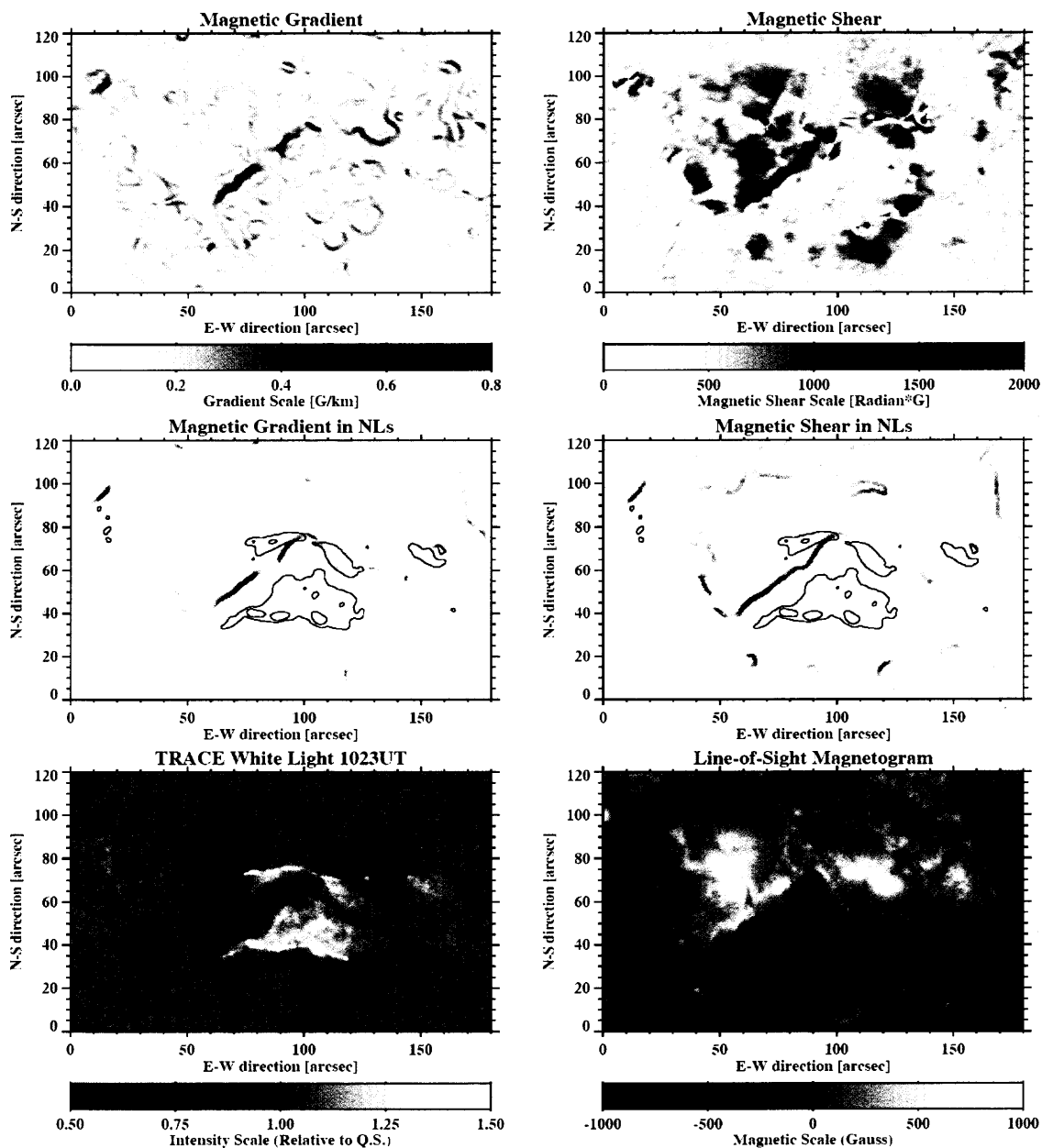


Figure 2.3 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2000 July 14; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines; Flare emissions are also plotted as contours (thin solid lines) in the two middle panels. In this figure and other similar figures below, the shear and gradient are presented in negative images, i.e., darker points show stronger shear or gradient. Bottom left: TRACE WL image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

on this analysis, we can confidently conclude that the high magnetic gradient is a good indicator of the location of these large flares. If we do a similar analysis for the magnetic shear, then, maximum magnetic shear in active regions is not located at the flare neutral lines for the 2001 August 25 and 2003 October 29 events. In general, all the events have scatter plots similar to Figure 2.3: the shear and gradient are correlated, the flare neutral line seems to have both higher gradient and shear. The measurement errors are at least one order of magnitude smaller than the physical quantities presented here.

In Table 2, we also present three parameters describing the relationship between the shear and gradient. If we consider all the neutral lines in the active regions, the correlation coefficients are between 64% and 89%. However, if we only consider points along the flare neutral lines, then, the coefficients are between 87% and 96%. Thus, the correlation between shear and gradient is well established. For our data analysis procedures and results presented in this chapter, it is natural to raise the following concern: since we did not convert the data from the observed coordinate system to the heliographic coordinate system, the neutral lines computed by the line-of-sight component of the magnetic field are not the same as that calculated from the longitudinal fields measured in the heliographic system. Consequently, the calculated gradient and shear angles from the observed transverse fields would have limitations due to this projection effect. Ideally, we should correct these effects. We did not do so for the following reasons:

1. As we stated earlier, Li (2002) simulated the projection effects, and found that they would add about 10% to our uncertainty at the largest off-center position of the observed regions.
2. We applied the coordinate conversion codes to the 2001 April 6 event, which had the

largest angular position away from the disk center. Table 2.3 compares the results based on the corrected and uncorrected magnetograms. It is obvious that all the main conclusions in the present chapter are still valid: maximum shear (or gradient) is located in the flare neutral line; mean shear (or gradient) along the flare neutral line is one order of magnitude larger than the mean value in the entire AR.

3. We noted a drop in the correlation coefficient from about 90% to 80% in the relationship between the gradient and the shear. We believe that the projection correction added noise to the gradient maps. From Table 2.1 it is evident that the transverse fields' uncertainty is about an order of magnitude higher than that of the line-of-sight fields. After we mix the measured line-of-sight and transverse fields, the differential operation to calculate the gradient would increase the noise significantly. This error due to the random noise plus other errors, such as imperfect correction of the 180-degree uncertainty and calibration errors, will cause the results based on corrected magnetograms to suffer a larger amount of uncertainty. Therefore, we only selected events that are not too close to the solar limb and presented results based on the analysis of magnetograms without correction of the projection effect.

2.4 Summary and Discussion

By analyzing vector magnetograms from four observatories for five well-known super-active regions, we found significant correlation between magnetic gradient and magnetic shear. Furthermore, we found that magnetic gradient might be even a better proxy to locate where a large flare occurs: all six flares occurred in the neutral line with the maximum gradient. If we use magnetic shear as the proxy, then the flaring neutral line of at least

Table 2.2 Properties of Six Flares and the Active Regions

Date	91/06/09	00/07/14	01/04/06	01/08/25	03/10/28	03/10/29
Flare Time (UT)	0206	1023	1913	1631	1110	2047
Observatory	HSOS	HSOS	MSO	MSFC	BBSO	MSFC
NOAA Region	6659	9077	9415	9591	0486	0486
Location	N31E04	N22W07	S21E30	S17E34	S16E08	S15E08
Max Grad. AR NL ($G \text{ km}^{-1}$)	0.633	0.789	1.29	0.218	0.586	0.363
Max Grad. Flare NL	0.633	0.789	1.29	0.218	0.586	0.363
Mean Grad. AR NL	0.051	0.123	0.064	0.017	0.137	0.078
Mean Grad. Flare NL	0.389	0.383	0.503	0.136	0.314	0.207
Max Shear AR NL ($G \times \text{rad.}$)	2478	1969	3125	2349	4040	4537
Max Shear Flare NL	2478	1969	3125	3521	4040	2039
Mean Shear AR NL	352	476	181	236	626	825
Mean Shear Flare NL	1544	1170	1397	757	2122	1287
Fitting Slope (radian \times km)	3993	2444	2445	5549	4311	5769
C.C. AR NL	0.80	0.76	0.89	0.64	0.79	0.84
C.C. Flare NL	0.96	0.89	0.94	0.87	0.89	0.94
Shear as Predictor	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Gradient as Predictor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Likely	Yes

Table 2.3 Effects of Projection Correction for the 2001 April 6 Flare

Parameters	Before Correction	After Correction
Max Grad. AR NL ($G \text{ km}^{-1}$)	1.29	1.27
Max Grad. Flare NL	1.29	1.27
Mean Grad. AR NL	0.064	0.061
Mean Grad. Flare NL	0.503	0.453
Max Shear AR NL ($G \times \text{rad.}$)	3125	2453
Max Shear Flare NL	3125	2453
Mean Shear AR NL	181	167
Mean Shear Flare NL	1396	1316
C.C. AR NL	0.89	0.75
C.C. Flare NL	0.94	0.80
Shear as Predictor	Yes	Yes
Gradient as Predictor	Yes	Yes

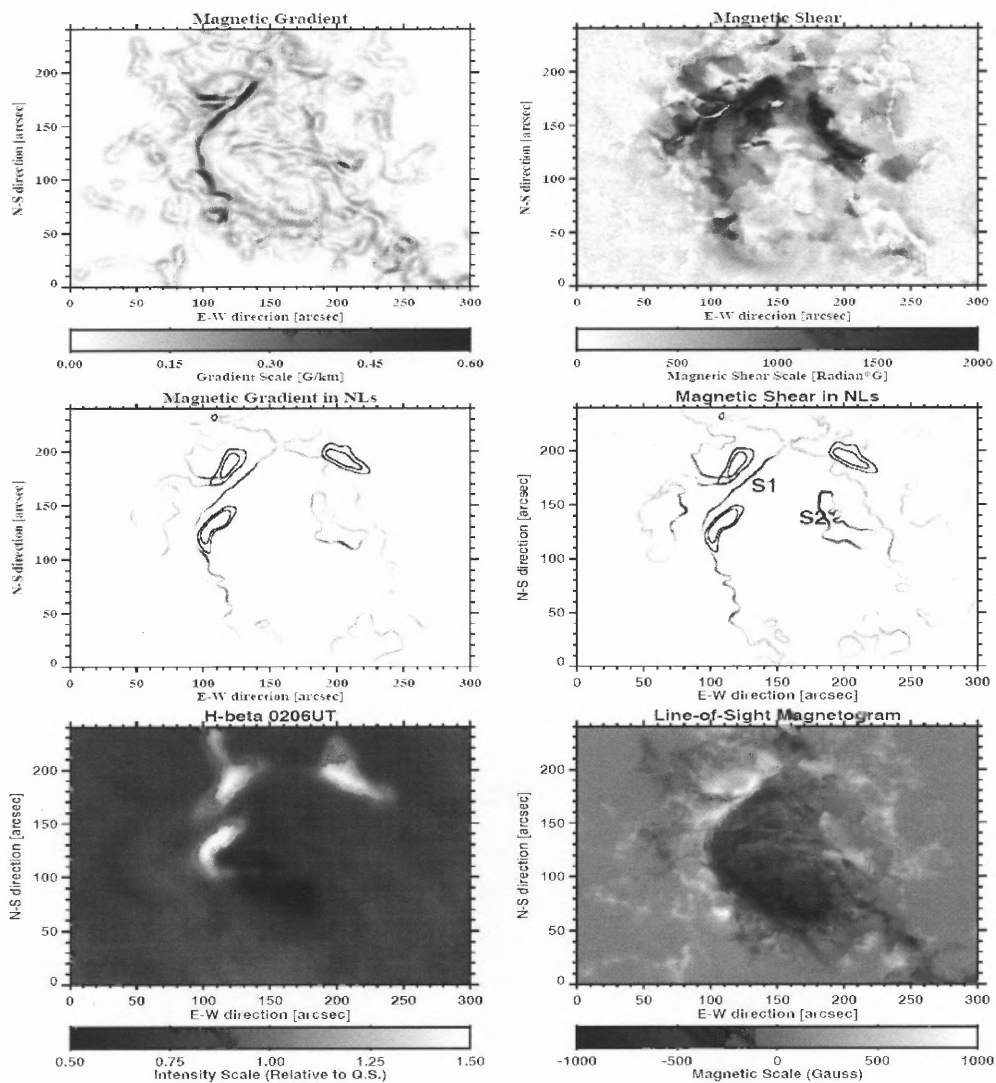


Figure 2.4 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 1991 June 9; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: $H\beta$ image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

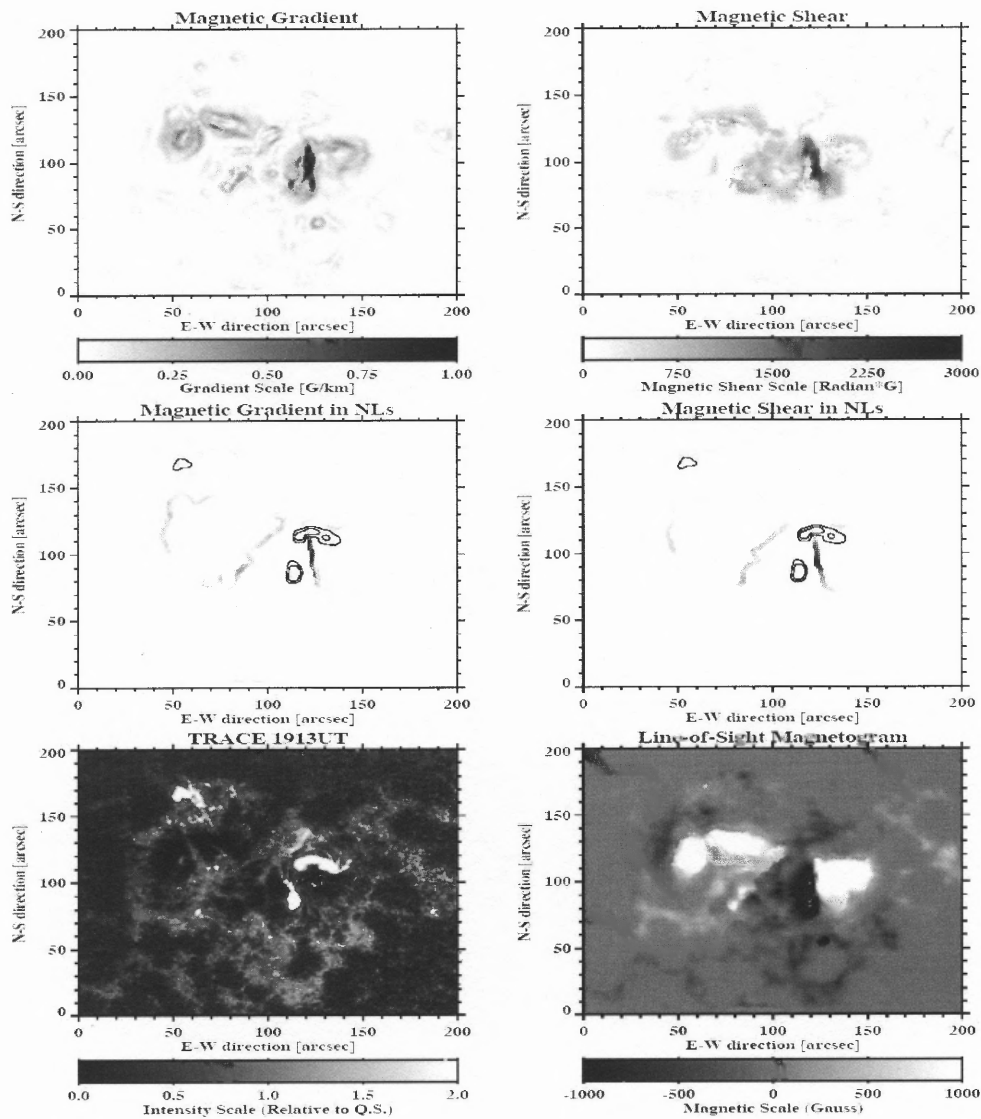


Figure 2.5 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2001 April 6; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

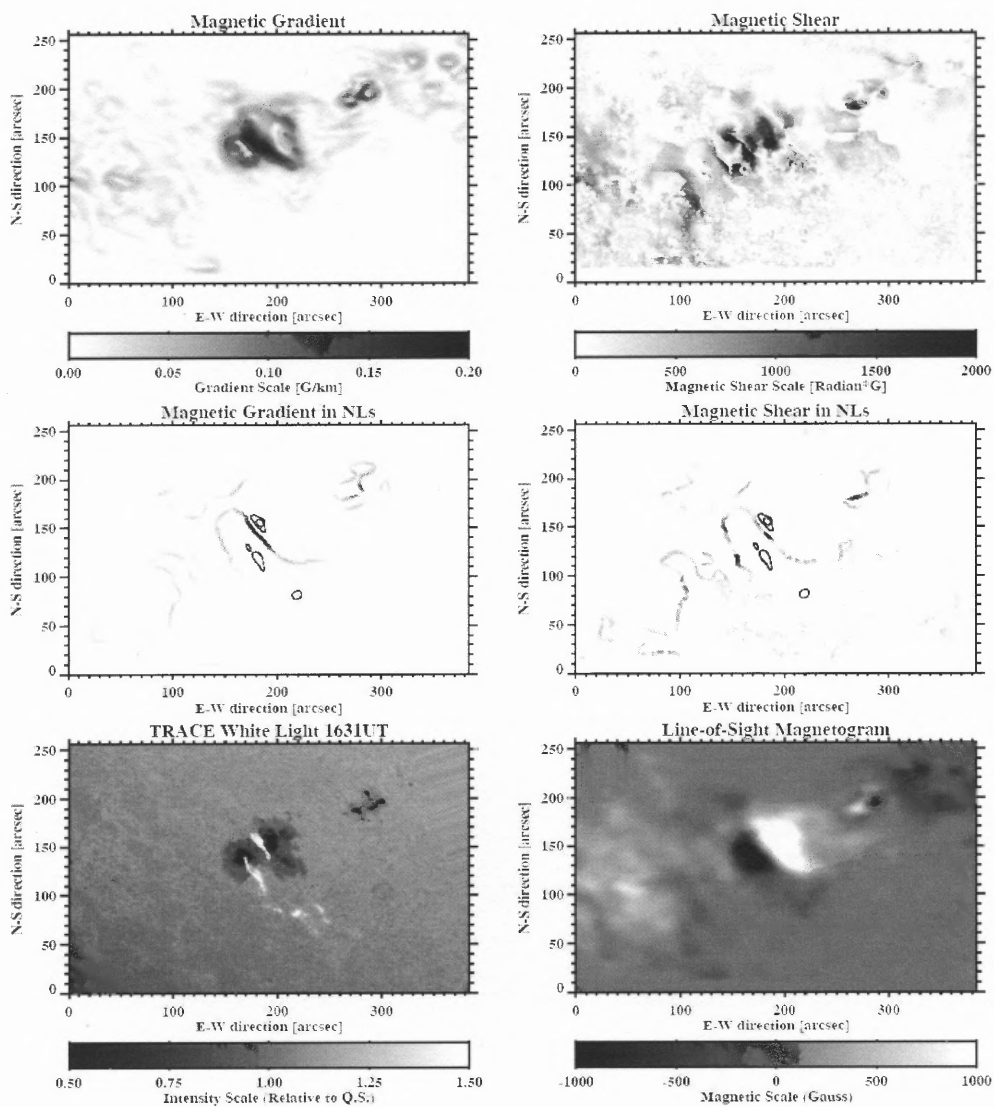


Figure 2.6 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2001 August 25; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE WL image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

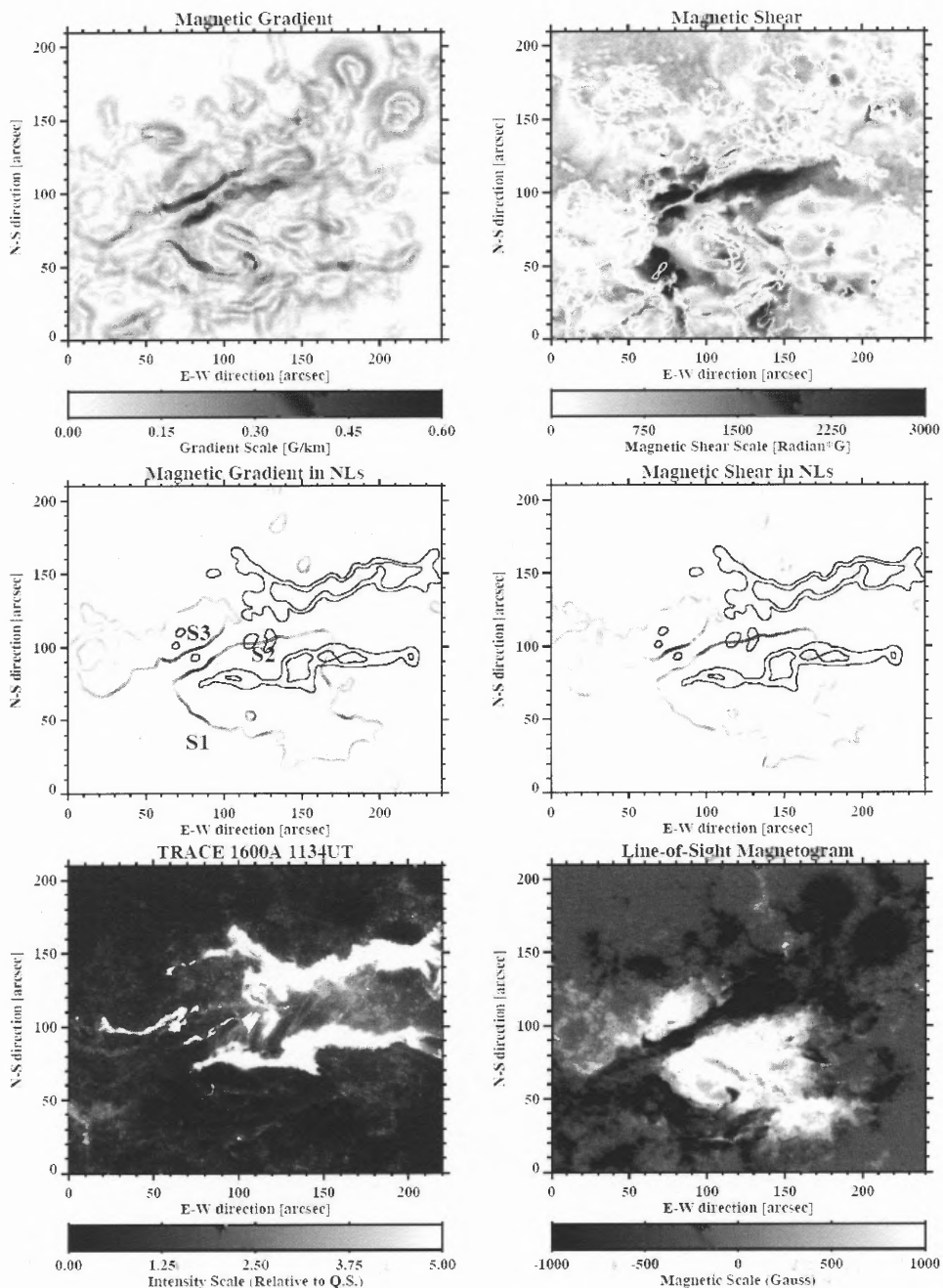


Figure 2.7 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2003 October 28; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

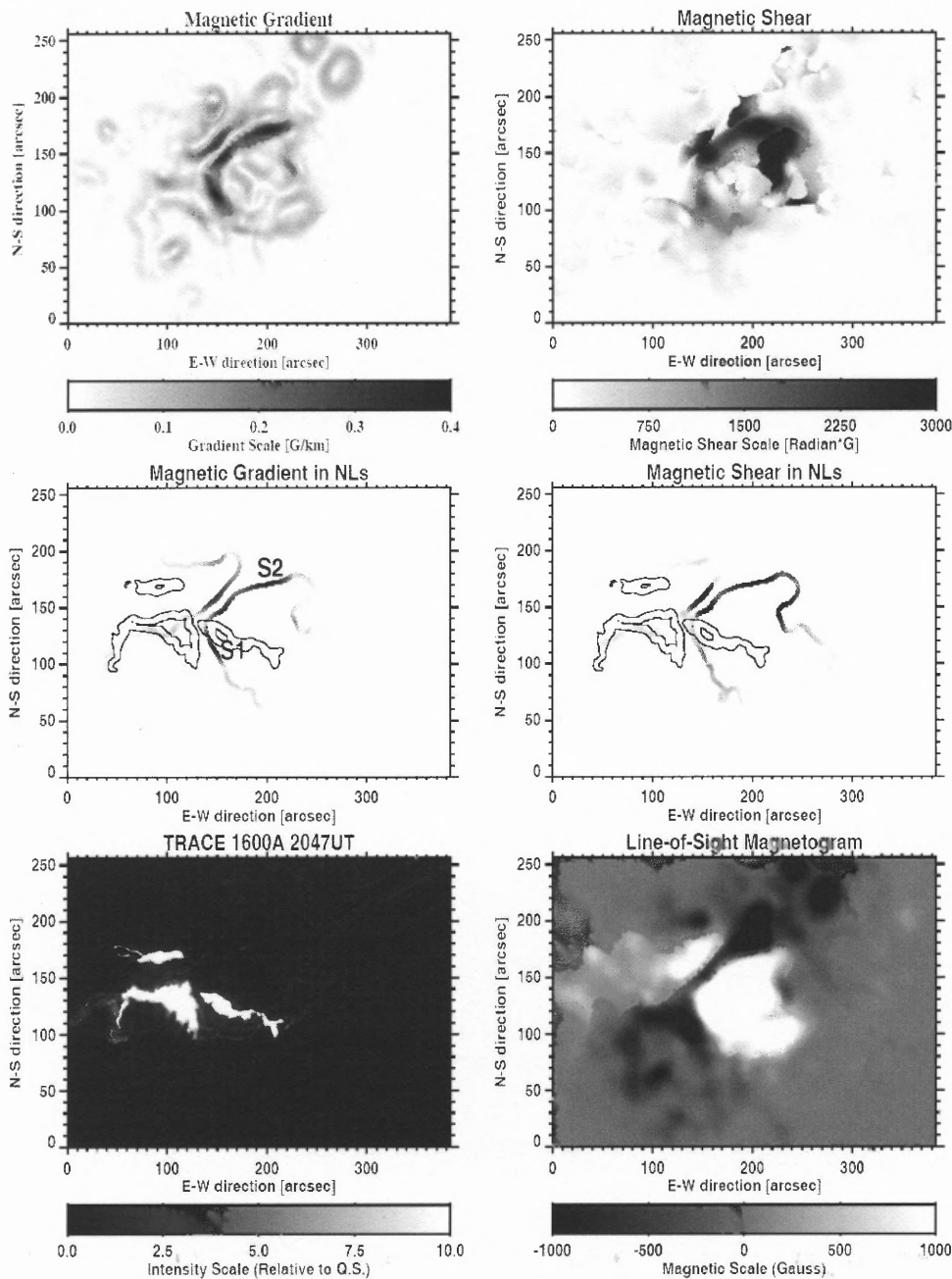


Figure 2.8 Top left: magnetic gradient map of 2003 October 29; Top right: magnetic shear map; Middle left: magnetic gradient in neutral lines with flare contours; Middle right: magnetic shear in neutral lines with flare contours; Bottom left: TRACE 1600Å image to indicate the flare emissions; Bottom right: line-of-sight magnetogram.

one (2001 August 25 event), and possibly two (2003 October 29 event), of the six events would be mis-identified. Please note that the weakness of using shear as a flare predictor might be caused by the limitation of ground based vector magnetograms and the difficulty in data analysis, such as the 180-degree ambiguity resolution and cross-talk among the Stokes components. Clearer conclusions will be obtained when high quality space data from Solar-B and SDO are available and data analysis methods are mature.

Magnetic gradient maps have been posted in the Active Region Monitor page daily (Gallagher et al. 2002), they are being used as one of the parameters for solar flare prediction. The results presented in this study have provided evidence that magnetic gradient is important in real time activity monitoring and forecasting.

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOLAR FLARE INDEX AND MAGNETIC FEATURES

3.1 Introduction

It is generally believed that nonpotential magnetic flux systems carry significant electric currents and the relaxation of such magnetic configurations provides the energy for solar energetic events such as flares, CMEs, etc. Although details of energy buildup and release processes are not yet fully understood, from the observational point of view the frequency and intensity of the activity observed in the solar corona correlate well with the size and complexity of the host active region (e.g., Sawyer et al. 1986; McIntosh 1990; Falconer 2001; Falconer et al. 2003).

In an effort to advance our understanding of solar activity and identify a viable proxy for its forecasting, numerous photospheric magnetic properties that describe the non-potentiality of active regions have been explored. For example, based on 18 years of observations, Zirin and Liggett (1987) found that δ sunspots are responsible for almost all great flares. Temporal and spatial correspondence between the magnetic topological properties of active regions and solar flares have been reported, supporting the idea that the presence of strong electric current systems contributes to flare activity (Moreton and Severny 1968; Abramenko et al. 1991; Leka et al. 1993; Wang et al. 1994b, 1996; Tian et al. 2002; Wang et al. 2006). Falconer (2001); Falconer et al. (2003) measured the length of the strong-sheared and the strong-gradient magnetic neutral lines, and found that they are strongly correlated with each other and both might be prospective predictors of the CME productiv-

ity of active regions. Based on a systematic study of the temporal variations of photospheric magnetic parameters related to solar flares, Leka and Barnes (2003a,b) demonstrated that individually parameters have little ability to differentiate between flare-producing and flare-quiet regions, but with some combinations, two populations may be distinguished.

The magnetic shear and the vertical current in the photosphere are perhaps the most commonly used measures of the magnetic nonpotentiality. However, these measurements require vector magnetogram data, which are, compared to the line-of-sight magnetogram data, less available and hindered by the 180° azimuthal ambiguity inherent to the transverse component of magnetic fields. All published methods for this issue have certain disadvantages. It is therefore desirable to find a measure that can be obtained directly from line-of-sight magnetograms and that may reflect the nonpotentiality of active regions. This is the central interest of this work, where we investigate and quantify the magnitude scaling correlation between flare activity and photospheric magnetic parameters, which can be derived from line-of-sight magnetograms.

This chapter is organized as follows: we introduce the magnetic measures and flare index in Section 3.2. The data sets and the analysis method are described in Section 3.3. Our results are presented and briefly discussed in Section 3.4 and Section 3.5, respectively.

3.2 Magnetic Parameters and Flare Index

Three magnetic parameters derivable from the line-of-sight magnetograms are adopted in the present study. All of them contribute to the overall characterization of magnetic state of active regions.

The first one is the mean spatial gradient of the magnetic fields on the neutral lines,

$(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$. The spatial gradient quantifies the compactness of an active region and was calculated as

$$\nabla B_z = \left(\left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right)^{1/2} \quad (3.1)$$

where B_z is the line-of-sight components of the magnetic field measured in the plane (x, y) . The spatial proximity of flare emission to neutral lines has been extensively reported. In particular, the magnetic gradient on the neutral lines is found to be a good proxy to predict where a major flare might occur (Wang et al. 2006).

The second parameter is the length of the magnetic neutral line with strong magnetic gradient in the context of certain threshold, L_{gnl} . To our knowledge, it was first elaborated by Falconer et al. (2003) as a measure of the nonpotentiality of active regions. Its potential for CME forecasting has been explored (Falconer et al. 2003) and verified (Song et al. 2006).

The third measure is the total energy dissipation of B_z in a unit layer per a unit time, $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$, where the summation is done over the entire active region area A . This parameter quantifies the energy dissipated at very small scales (2-3 Mm) due to the magnetic viscosity. The parameter can be calculated according to the following expression (Abramenko et al. 2003):

$$\varepsilon(B_z) = \nu_m \left(4 \left(\left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right) + 2 \left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} + \frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right), \quad (3.2)$$

that was derived from a more general formula (e.g., Monin and Yaglom 1975).

Assuming magnetic viscosity, ν_m , is spatially uniform and equal to unity (Abramenko et al.

2003), we calculated the magnetic energy dissipation rate of B_z component, $\varepsilon(B_z)$, over the entire active region area.

The reason we adopt this measure is that the photospheric plasma is in a state of highly developed turbulence and the B_z component of magnetic fields is known to be embedded and diffusing in turbulent flows in the same way as a scalar field does (Parker 1979; Petrovay and Szakaly 1993). As the large-scale magnetic flux tubes emerging from beneath the photosphere split into smaller ones, the magnetic energy of the tubes accordingly cascades down to smaller scales. The power-law nature of magnetic power spectra in active regions (Abramenko 2005) indicates that the energy of magnetic flux tubes is indeed cascading from the scale of 10-20 Mm down to 2-3 Mm. Then the energy dissipates due to magnetic viscosity. Thus, it is presumable that the more intensive random turbulent motions lead to the higher energy dissipation rates of B_z .

In brief, $(\nabla B_z)_{NL}$ and L_{gnl} are quantitative measures of an active region's complexity and nonpotentiality, while $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$ in some way conveys the information on the amount of magnetic energy that dissipates (in 1m layer per second) due to turbulent motions of magnetic flux tubes in the photosphere (Abramenko et al. 2003). The measurement methods and errors will be discussed in Section 3.3.

On the other hand, overall flare productivity of a given active region can be quantified by the soft X-ray (SXR) flare index (hereinafter abbreviated as FI_{SXR}), as it was proposed in Abramenko (2005). Note that a similar index quantifying the activity of the entire Sun was first introduced by Antalova (1996) and was later applied by other authors (e.g., Landi et al. 1998; Joshi and Joshi 2004). FI_{SXR} (Abramenko 2005) is defined by weighting the SXR flares of X-, M-, C- and B-class as 100, 10, 1 and 0.1, respectively (in

units of $10^{-6} W m^{-2}$):

$$FI_{SXR} = (100 \times \sum_{\tau} I_X + 10 \times \sum_{\tau} I_M + 1 \times \sum_{\tau} I_C + 0.1 \times \sum_{\tau} I_B) / \tau \quad (3.3)$$

where τ is the length of time (measured in days) during which an active region is visible on the solar disk, I_X , I_M , I_C and I_B are GOES peak intensities of X-, M-, C- and B-class flares produced by a given active region for the duration τ . It is worthy mentioning that, with the appropriate choice of time windows, we may evaluate the flare production for the chosen time interval.

3.3 Data Sets and Analysis

Solar Geophysical Data (SGD) flare reports are a reliable source of the number and the magnitude of SXR flares produced by an active region during its disk passage. In the present study, 89 active regions showing a variety of FI_{SXR} ranging from 0 to 500 were analyzed. We used Michelson Doppler Imager (MDI) full disk magnetograms on board the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) to measure the longitudinal component of the magnetic fields, primarily because these data are routinely obtained, extensively archived and free of the atmospheric seeing. To reduce the measurement errors due to projection effect of magnetic fields, for each active region, we selected one MDI magnetogram according to our criteria that the active region was viewed as close to disk center as possible. That is, the analyzed magnetogram should be located between -10° to $+10^\circ$ in longitude and -30° to $+30^\circ$ in latitude. We then manually cropped the full disk magnetogram such that a small area containing the whole active region was left. Since the size of active regions plays a role in flare production, the area size was not necessarily fixed.

The next step is to derive following three images for each active region: a magnetic gradient map, a magnetic energy dissipation map and a mask map representing the location of the magnetic neutral line. Then the gradient map was multiplied by the mask map in order to generate an image of gradient distribution along the neutral line. Thus, L_{gnl} is the length of segments with strong gradient determined above certain threshold. Following Falconer et al. (2003) and Song et al. (2006), we imposed a gradient threshold of 50 G Mm^{-1} to determine the value of L_{gnl} . From a magnetic energy dissipation map, $\varepsilon(B_z)$, we calculated the total magnetic energy dissipation in a layer of 1 m, $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$, by summing over the entire field of view only for those regions above the 3σ level of $\varepsilon(B_z)$.

An example is illustrated in Figure 3.1 for active region NOAA 9077 on 2000 July 14. Left panel shows the MDI line-of-sight magnetogram of this flare prolific active region. The daily FI_{SXR} is as high as $90 (10^{-6} \text{ W m}^{-2})$, equivalent to a specific flare productivity of one M9.0 flare per day. Middle and right panels show the gradient distribution along the magnetic neutral line and structures of magnetic energy dissipation, respectively. The values at each pixel are indicated by the corresponding color bars. L_{gnl} is the total length of the strong gradient segments ($>50 \text{ G Mm}^{-1}$) of the neutral line. Mean value of magnetic gradient at the neutral line $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$ and the total magnetic energy dissipation, $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$, are also readily obtained.

Measurement errors mainly arise from the projection effect of the magnetic fields. According to Gary and Hagyard (1990), the spherical geometry becomes apparent at 23° heliocentric angle, and must be taken into consideration for those off-center regions with heliocentric angles larger than 50° . Our sample of active regions were chosen primarily because they were located near the center of solar disk, i.e., maximum longitude and lati-

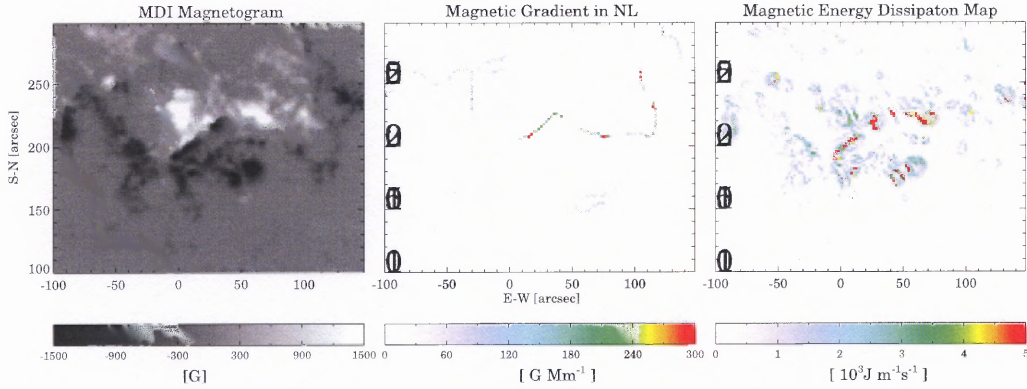


Figure 3.1 Left: the MDI line-of-sight magnetogram of active region NOAA9077 on 2000 July 14; Middle: the gradient distribution along the neutral line; Right: the map of magnetic energy dissipation. The values of parameters at each pixel are indicated by the corresponding color bars.

tude are $\pm 10^\circ$ and $\pm 30^\circ$, respectively. The measurement errors due to the projection effect was estimated to be one order of magnitude smaller than the quantities, comparable to the uncertainly levels presented by Li (2002).

3.4 Results

Left three panels in Figure 3.2, from the top to the bottom, are scatter plots of: i) $\log_{10}(FI_{SXR})$ (the logarithm to the base 10 of FI_{SXR}) vs. $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$, ii) $\log_{10}(FI_{SXR})$ vs. L_{gnl} , and iii) $\log_{10}(FI_{SXR})$ vs. $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$. Regarding that FI_{SXR} is defined by weighting the flares of B-, C-, M- and X-class as 0.1, 1, 10 and 100, respectively, therefore $\log_{10}(FI_{SXR})$ linearly correlates with the level of flare production on average. The solid lines show the least-squares linear fit to the data points, and the lower and upper dashed lines show the 95% confidence intervals about the fitted regression line. Statistically, the width of the confidence interval at the value of x increases as $|x - \bar{x}|$ increases. The correlation coefficients (CCs) of the data

points are also presented in each panel.

Apparently, each of three parameters is positively correlated with the flare productivity. That is, the larger the magnetic parameters, the stronger the flare productivity of active regions. More specifically, the correlation between $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$ and $\log(\text{FI}_{SXR})$ is not very significant (CC is 0.38), however, L_{gnl} and $\int \varepsilon(B_z)dA$ explicitly display significant positive correlations with $\log(\text{FI}_{SXR})$. The CCs are 0.60 and 0.66, respectively.

The above trends imply a physical link between the relevant quantities and carry important statistical information for estimation of the overall flare productivity. Here we extend our study to consider a more specific question: can we predict imminent (say within one day) flare production from magnetic measures? For this purpose, imminent and short-term flare index should be explored.

Thus, in the next step, we introduced a new FI_{SXR} index that is obtained by counting flares within an 1-day time window starting from the time of the analyzed magnetogram. Right panels in Figure 3.2 illustrate how the relationship changes with FI_{SXR} calculated in this imminent 1-day time window. The above mentioned relationships between the magnetic parameters and $\log(\text{FI}_{SXR})$ are still well recognizable, but the distributions are generally more scattered in comparison to the left panels. Actually this is not surprising, since there is usually more variability associated with flare activity in shorter term.

Table 3.4 summarizes the CCs between the magnetic parameters and 1-day, 3-day and 5-day FI_{SXR} s that represent the flare production of an active region for the chosen time interval. Inspecting Table 3.4 one may find that the positive scaling correlation holds true for all cases. It suggests that any of these three measures would be useful in operational flare forecasting. Certainly, L_{gnl} and $\int \varepsilon(B_z)dA$ might be more promising predictors than

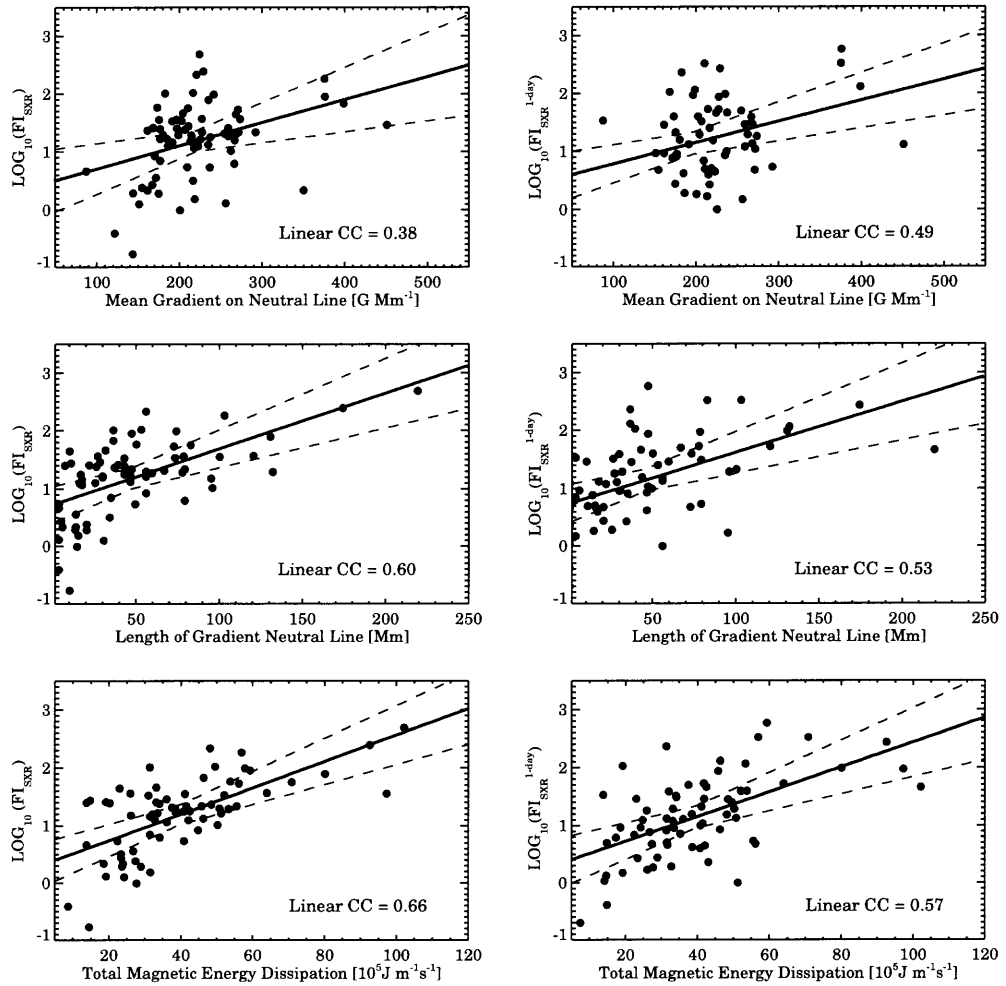


Figure 3.2 Scatter plots to compare flare index (in the form of logarithm) and magnetic parameters. The left panels are based on flare index of entire disk passages of active regions, right is based on one-day flare index. The magnetic parameters presented from top to bottom are: mean gradient on the magnetic neutral line; length of neutral lines with magnetic gradient larger than 50 G Mm^{-1} ; and total magnetic energy dissipation. The solid lines show the least-squares linear regression line to the data points. The dashed lines show the 95 % confidence intervals about the regression line.

the $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$. In addition, the correlation expectably decreases with the span of the time window, except for one case. We note an significant increase on the $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$ vs. FI_{SXR}^{1-day} correlation when compared to other $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$ vs. FI_{SXR} cases. It appears that $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$ is an signature more relevant to the imminent flare production rather than the longer-term productivity.

3.5 Conclusion

By using SOHO/MDI line-of-sight magnetograms of active regions, we calculated (1) the mean gradient of the magnetic field along the neutral line, $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$, (2) the length of the magnetic neutral line with strong magnetic gradient in the context of certain threshold, L_{gnl} , and (3) the total energy dissipation of B_z in a unite layer, $\int \varepsilon(B_z)dA$.

From a sample of 89 active regions, we found an indication that those active regions with larger $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$, L_{gnl} and $\int \varepsilon(B_z)dA$ generally show a higher incidence of flaring activity. Our findings reveal that the parameters bear a physical relationship between the magnetic state in the photosphere and flaring productivity in the corona. Since all the mag-

Table 3.1 Correlation Coefficients between the Magnetic Parameters and the Natural Logarithm of Flare Index

Magnetic Measures	$\log(FI_{SXR}^{1-day})^*$	$\log(FI_{SXR}^{3-day})^*$	$\log(FI_{SXR}^{5-day})^*$	$\log(FI_{SXR})$
$(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$	0.49	0.30	0.35	0.38
L_{gnl}	0.53	0.56	0.60	0.60
$\int \varepsilon_{Bz}$	0.57	0.58	0.60	0.66

* FI_{SXR}^{1-day} : flare activity in the +1-day time window

* FI_{SXR}^{3-day} : flare activity in the +3-day time window

* FI_{SXR}^{5-day} : flare activity in the +5-day time window

netic parameters analyzed here are inferred based on the transverse gradient of B_z , positive correlation between parameters is natural (see Figure 3.3). However, each parameter bears specific physical characteristic of the magnetic structure of active regions, and therefore could complement each other in understanding of undergoing physics.

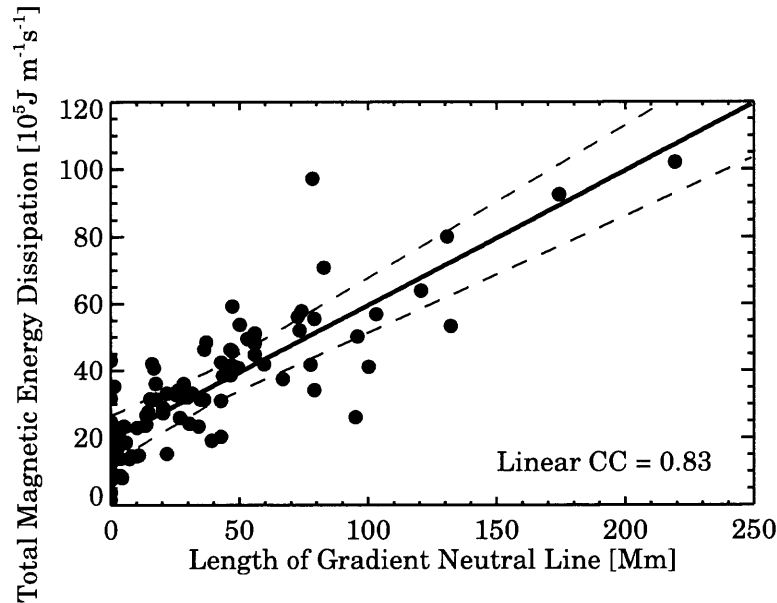


Figure 3.3 Scatter plot of total magnetic energy dissipation vs. length of neutral lines with magnetic gradient larger than 50 G Mm^{-1} . The solid line shows the least-squares linear regression line to the data points. The dashed lines show the 95% confidence intervals about the regression line.

The first parameter, $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$, is a quantitative measure of magnetic complexity of active regions. This measure is easily related to the transverse gradient of B_z , which was historically one of the first magnetic parameters used to predict solar flares. Zvereva and Severnyj (1970) first showed that flares are spatially associated with sites of strong transverse gradients of the magnetic fields. Later, a routine to forecast flares from "the gradient of the magnetic fields between sunspots of opposite polarity" was proposed by

Severny et al. (1979). Recently, from a sample of 5 active regions that produced great flares, Wang et al. (2006) verified that great flares occurred specifically in the neutral lines with maximum gradient.

A generally accepted notion is that a nonpotential magnetic field configuration provides the energy for solar flares. As we mentioned in Introduction, the estimation of the degree of nonpotentiality usually requires vector magnetograms. Falconer et al. (2003) reported a strong correlation between our second parameter, L_{gnl} , and the length of the magnetic neutral lines with strong magnetic shear, L_{snl} , which is derived from vector magnetograms and can be qualified as a measure of nonpotentiality. This result, together with the relationship found in the present study, leads to the conclusion that L_{gnl} is also a viable proxy for the active region's nonpotentiality, and the high level of flare productivity is plausibly caused by strong deviations from the potential state and always accompanied by the presence of strong electric currents in the photosphere.

We note that the relationship is most evident for the third parameter, the energy dissipation. The value of $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$ provides a clue as to the amount of magnetic energy that dissipates due to the turbulent random motions of flux tubes in the photosphere. The dissipation process is accompanied by the fragmentation of magnetic structure. In this regard, the larger value of energy dissipation rate usually implies the higher fragmentation rate and accordingly the more intensive turbulent motions in the photosphere. Recently, Abramenko (2005) reported the relationship between the strong flaring productivity and the high fragmentation rate of magnetic elements. Consistent with Abramenko (2005), the observed correlation between $\int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$ and FI_{SXR} of active regions might support the hypothesis that photospheric random motions of magnetic flux tubes contribute to the

energy build-up needed for flaring activity in the corona (e.g., Parker 1987; Longcope et al. 1996).

Finally, our study is of practical significance in flare forecasting. For example, the empirical scaling correlation between magnetic parameters and 1-day flare production, shown in the right panels of Figure 3.2, enables us a quick estimate of imminent flare occurrence. We emphasize that all three parameters can be easily determined from near real-time regime of MDI line-of-sight magnetograms and, therefore, they can be easily applied in automatic flare forecasting.

CHAPTER 4

STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT OF MAGNETIC FEATURES IN IMMINENT SOLAR FLARES PREDICTION

4.1 Introduction

One of the primary objectives in space weather research is to predict the occurrence of solar flares and Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs), which are believed to be the major causes of geomagnetic disturbances (e.g., Brueckner *et al.*, 1998; Cane *et al.*, 2000; Gopalswamy *et al.*, 2000; Webb *et al.*, 2000; Wang, et al., 2002; Zhang, *et al.*, 2003). It has long been known that solar flares tend to occur along magnetic polarity inversion lines where the magnetic field lines are often highly sheared, with the transverse field directed nearly parallel to the polarity inversion line (Svestka 1976; Hagyard *et al.* 1984; Sawyer *et al.* 1986). Canfield *et al.* (1999) showed that CMEs also tend to arise in connection with active regions (ARs) exhibiting strong sheared and/or twisted coronal loops called sigmoid. The twisting, tangling and shearing of magnetic loops lead to magnetic topological complexities and build up a stressed flux system (and excess energy). Subsequent destabilizing events such as local emergence of new magnetic flux from below the photosphere or changes in magnetic connectivity due to magnetic field reorganization elsewhere on the Sun may result in the release of energy (Hess 1964; Svestka 1976; Priest and Forbes 2000).

To date, various observational studies have explored the connection between photospheric magnetic fields and solar flares, supporting the hypothesis that solar flares are driven by the nonpotentiality of magnetic fields (Moreton and Severny 1968; Abramenko *et al.*, 1991; Leka *et al.*, 1993; Wang *et al.*, 1994; Wang *et al.*, 1996; Tian *et al.*, 2002; Abra-

menko, 2005). Through five solar flares, Wang (2006a) found there are obvious changes of the magnetic gradient occurred immediately and rapidly following the onset of each flare. Falconer *et al.* (2001, 2003) measured the lengths of strong-sheared and strong-gradient magnetic neutral line segments and found that they are strongly correlated with CME productivity of an active region and both might be prospective predictors. In a study of 6 large (X5 or larger) flares, Wang *et al.* (2006b) reported a positive linear relationship between the magnetic shear and the magnetic gradient and that the latter seems to be a better tool to predict the occurrence of flares and CMEs in an active region. According to Song *et al.* (2006), the length of strong gradient neutral line, L_{gnl} , was proved to be a viable tool to locate source regions of either CMEs or flares. The overall accuracy of this method is about 75 % (55 out of 73 events). Jing *et al.* (2006) analyzed three magnetic parameters: i) mean spatial magnetic field gradient at strong-gradient magnetic neutral line, $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$; ii) length of a strong-gradient magnetic neutral line, L_{gnl} ; and iii) total magnetic energy dissipated in a unit layer in 1 second over the active region's area, $E_{\text{diss}} = \int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$ and found that these parameters have a positive correlation with the overall flare productivity of ARs. ARs with larger $(\overline{\nabla B_z})_{NL}$, L_{gnl} and E_{diss} generally show a higher incidence of flaring activity.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether statistical methods that are conceptually simple, algorithmically fast are able to provide a feasible way to evaluate the probability of an active region in producing solar flares. The ordinal logistic regression model satisfies our criteria. The model describes the relationship between an ordered response variable and a set of predictive variables. In our case, the ordered response variable represents four different energy levels of solar flares. We assign numerical values 3, 2, 1 and 0 to represent X-, M-, C- and B-class flares, respectively. The predictive variables so

far include L_{gnl} , E_{diss} , that were used in Jing *et al.* (2006) study and total unsigned magnetic flux, T_{flux} . Mathematically, what the ordinal regression model describes is not the value of the response variable itself, but the probability, $Prob$, that it assumes the certain response value (0, 1, 2 or 3). Thus, in this study, $Prob$ represents the probability of certain class of flare to occur. Since $Prob$ ranges from 0 to 1, traditional linear regression is inappropriate to predict its value directly.

We will study if the ordinal logistic regression model is able to predict the occurrence of solar flares in the next 1-day period. The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. In Section 5.2 the data sets used to perform the statistical analysis are described. Three magnetic measures are calculated based on the full disk Michelson Doppler Imager (MDI) magnetograms. In Section 5.3, the ordinal logistic model is specified and established. The results obtained from the statistical regression model are presented in Section 5.4, and Section 5.5 concludes this chapter with a discussion of key results.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Data Collection

Solar activity reports are available online from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) space environment center (SEC)¹. The reports include detailed information about solar flares, such as the coordinated universal time (UTC) of the beginning, maximum and end of a flare, the X-ray flux at the flare peak and the location of the flare, if available. Our study focuses on those flares occurred between 1996 to 2005. The criteria for flares selection are: (1) the location of the flare is accurately indicated in the reports

¹<http://www.sec.noaa.gov/ftpmenu/indices.html>

and as close to disk center as possible ($\pm 40^\circ$ in longitude and $\pm 30^\circ$ in latitude), so the project effects of magnetic fields can be avoided. In order to have enough events number of X-class flares for our statistical study, the longitude was extended to $\pm 40^\circ$; (2) Michelson Doppler Imager (MDI) full disk magnetograms on board Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) was available. These magnetograms were used to analyze photospheric magnetic parameters. The reason that we use only MDI magnetograms is primarily because these data are routinely obtained, extensively achieved and free of the atmospheric seeing. Total 230 solar flare events were chosen to be analyzed.

4.2.2 Definition of the Predictive and Response Variables

Detailed descriptions of how the photospheric magnetic parameters are calculated from the MDI magnetograms was presented in detail in Jing et al. (2006). Thus, we will only briefly list them here:

1. Total unsigned magnetic flux, T_{flux} , is a measure of the active region's size.
2. Length of the strong-gradient neutral line, L_{gnl} , describes the global non-potentiality of an active region. The spatial gradient is calculated as

$$\nabla B_z = \left[\left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right]^{1/2} \quad (4.1)$$

where B_z is the line-of-sight components of the magnetic field measured in the plane (x, y) . The gradient threshold in this chapter was chosen to be 50 G Mm^{-1} (Falconer et al. 2003; Song et al. 2006).

3. Total magnetic energy dissipation of B_z in a unit layer per unit time, $E_{\text{diss}} = \int \varepsilon(B_z) dA$,

where the summation is done over the entire active region area A . The $\varepsilon(B_z)$ is defined according to the following expression (Abramenko et al. 2003):

$$\varepsilon(B_z) = \left(4 \left[\left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} \right)^2 + \left(\frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right] + 2 \left(\frac{dB_z}{dx} + \frac{dB_z}{dy} \right)^2 \right), \quad (4.2)$$

According to Abramenko et al. (2003), this measure indicates the energy dissipated at very small scales (2-3 Mm) due to the turbulent motions of magnetic flux tubes in the photosphere. Due to the gradient of B_z is also included in $\varepsilon(B_z)$, it could be another proxy measure of an active region's non-potentiality.

4. Overall flare productivity FI_{SXR} of a given active region, which is quantified by the weighting the soft X-ray (SXR) flares of X-, M-, C- and B-class as 100, 10, 1, and 0.1, respectively (Antalova 1996; Abramenko 2005).

$$FI_{SXR} = (100 \times \sum_{\tau} I_X + 10 \times \sum_{\tau} I_M + 1 \times \sum_{\tau} I_C + 0.1 \times \sum_{\tau} I_B) / \tau \quad (4.3)$$

where τ is the length of time (measured in days) during which an active region is visible on the solar disk.

We used Figure 3.1 as an example to present the calculation of these parameters for NOAA AR 9077 on 2000 July 14. The left panel shows the MDI line-of-sight magnetogram of this flare active region. The overall FI_{SXR} is as high as 1256.40 (in units of 10^{-6}Wm^{-2}), equivalent to a specific flare productivity of one super X1.0 flare per day. The middle and right panels show the gradient distribution along the magnetic neutral line and structures of magnetic energy dissipation, respectively. The values in each pixel are indicated by the

corresponding color scale bar. The quantity L_{gnl} is the total length of the strong gradient segments ($>50 \text{ G Mm}^{-1}$) of the neutral line.

The majority of selected ARs produced couple of flares with different intensities in the next 24 hours. Based on the maximum magnitude of flares they produced, ARs were classified into 4 levels with ordinal value 3, 2, 1 and 0. They are shown in Table 4.1. First three columns show date, the AR number, and the flare location. The next four columns show magnetic parameters L_{gnl} , T_{flux} , E_{diss} and FI_{SXR} , computed based on the previous equations. The last column named *Level* is our response variable to indicate the maximum magnitude of flares occurred in the next following 1-day period.

T_{flux} , L_{gnl} and E_{diss} parameters were proved earlier to be positively correlated with the FI_{SXR} of the next 1-day (Jing et al. 2006).

Table 4.1 List of Active Regions Associated with Flares

Date	AR	Location	L_{gnl} (Mm)	$T_{\text{flux}}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{\text{diss}}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20050117	0721	S04E03	0.00	4.00	2.41	0.01	0
20050123	0726	N01W00	0.00	6.94	4.40	0.01	0
20050202	0729	S10W09	0.00	5.30	3.86	1.63	0
20050208	0731	S02W01	0.00	3.94	2.04	0.01	0
20050302	0739	S03W03	0.00	4.65	2.66	0.84	0
20050315	0743	S08W03	5.75	13.80	7.64	14.58	0
20050402	0747	S06W04	0.00	7.19	6.07	6.84	0
20050408	0749	S05E11	0.00	5.98	4.27	0.01	0
20050411	0750	S07E08	4.31	11.90	9.53	1.25	0
20050508	0758	S07E08	18.69	21.90	21.40	140.88	0
20050604	0769	S06E01	0.00	12.30	8.70	0.80	0
20050610	0775	N10E06	48.87	17.30	13.30	65.48	0
20050804	0796	S07W01	0.00	5.21	3.11	0.17	0
20050818	0798	S09E08	0.00	5.26	3.32	120.27	0
20051007	0813	S08E01	10.06	10.30	8.76	1.40	0

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gnl} (Mm)	$T_{\text{flux}}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{\text{diss}}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20051020	0815	N08E07	0.00	5.39	2.74	0.01	0
20051102	0819	S09W05	0.00	6.64	3.37	1.71	0
20051103	0818	S08W04	0.00	6.14	2.99	0.20	0
20051126	0825	S06E01	0.00	4.66	2.04	0.01	0
20051215	0834	S07W01	0.00	12.20	6.92	2.76	0
20051229	0840	S03E02	0.00	9.70	5.59	0.01	0
19980113	8131	S24W12	35.94	13.20	10.40	36.44	0
19990811	8662	S16E08	20.12	21.90	19.00	35.64	0
20010219	9354	S09W07	8.62	13.80	8.40	12.49	0
20010710	9531	S06E05	10.06	12.40	7.05	13.40	0
20010718	9545	N09E03	2.87	8.61	4.24	11.26	0
20010720	9542	N08E07	0.00	6.69	3.08	0.49	0
20010731	9557	S21E25	0.00	10.90	7.11	135.02	0
20020508	9937	S09E13	10.06	12.60	10.00	37.63	0
20020613	9991	S20E05	0.00	14.00	8.67	5.44	0
20020618	0000	N18E15	0.00	14.40	10.70	341.48	0
20021204	0208	N09E03	31.62	16.70	14.00	27.48	0
20030305	0296	N12E05	10.06	23.50	15.70	13.12	0
20030312	0306	N05E06	8.62	21.80	12.20	8.25	0
20030415	0334	S08E12	0.00	10.80	7.30	0.55	0
20030517	0357	S17E07	10.06	6.16	4.49	0.85	0
20030525	0365	S09E21	7.19	10.70	9.20	599.27	0
20030620	0388	S03E04	4.31	8.31	7.22	10.67	0
20030909	0456	S09E10	0.00	8.64	6.76	15.26	0
20031006	0471	S08E07	8.62	23.30	19.90	48.83	0
20040112	0537	N04W04	25.87	15.00	10.00	271.55	0
20040224	0564	N14E00	18.69	22.50	20.00	238.04	0
20040518	0617	S12E08	0.00	6.42	4.84	3.24	0
20040525	0618	S10E12	10.06	27.70	21.90	107.47	0
20040603	0621	S14E13	8.62	18.40	12.80	6.35	0
20040606	0624	S08E10	0.00	7.54	4.62	0.34	0
20040804	0655	S09E14	12.94	15.90	13.20	10.98	0

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gn} (Mm)	$T_{flux}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{diss}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{dx}	Level
20041002	0675	S10W06	0.00	9.78	7.03	0.65	0
20041023	0684	S03W00	7.19	12.20	10.50	0.61	0
20041125	0704	N13W18	7.19	14.70	11.60	2.12	0
20041201	0706	S08W16	0.00	13.40	11.20	27.57	0
20050215	0735	S08E07	4.31	9.71	7.83	13.93	0
20050312	0742	S05E03	7.19	23.60	19.50	25.79	0
20050418	0754	S08E06	2.87	6.58	4.84	0.40	0
20050507	0758	S09E26	31.62	19.00	17.40	140.88	0
20050611	0776	S06E04	8.62	22.30	15.50	37.30	0
20050726	0791	N14E23	7.19	10.90	9.07	7.81	0
20050815	0797	S13E12	10.06	12.30	9.80	0.89	0
20051102	0818	S08E09	0.00	5.66	3.11	0.20	0
20051126	0824	S14W09	0.00	10.10	5.73	10.09	0
20051204	0828	S04E04	0.00	7.19	3.95	1.34	0
20051215	0835	N19W03	7.19	9.63	5.22	7.13	0
20051219	0837	S10W10	0.00	10.60	7.36	2.04	0
19981104	8375	N19W08	61.81	23.20	14.50	220.89	1
19990602	8562	S16E07	54.62	17.10	15.20	21.70	1
19990626	8598	N23E09	0.00	30.10	24.80	71.20	1
19990629	8603	S15E16	0.00	23.40	18.00	77.20	1
19990701	8611	S25E18	0.00	17.70	15.70	160.70	1
19990802	8651	N24E08	47.44	45.40	30.40	153.10	1
19990803	8651	N25W04	47.44	42.70	29.80	153.10	1
19990826	8674	S22E09	43.12	47.10	36.70	346.70	1
19991111	8759	N09E14	138.00	35.30	26.70	113.50	1
19991125	8778	S15E06	14.37	18.60	15.70	138.90	1
19991127	8778	S14W17	35.94	20.60	15.40	138.90	1
20000316	8910	N11E18	12.94	22.90	16.10	437.51	1
20000410	8948	S15E03	64.69	27.90	21.10	216.10	1
20000418	8963	N16E18	0.00	14.60	8.77	54.70	1
20000419	8963	N14E09	23.00	14.00	10.10	54.70	1
20000517	8996	S20E16	48.87	43.10	33.60	129.40	1

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gnl} (Mm)	$T_{flux}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{diss}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20000608	9026	N20W06	56.06	31.70	31.50	945.23	1
20000707	9070	N20E14	46.00	23.10	24.00	186.80	1
20000708	9070	N17W01	43.12	24.80	26.60	186.80	1
20000905	9154	S20E06	24.44	19.00	18.50	55.56	1
20000930	9173	S12E13	34.50	19.20	14.40	50.30	1
20001009	9182	N02W04	0.00	12.70	5.57	69.50	1
20001031	9209	S23W06	20.12	17.20	11.70	81.20	1
20001122	9236	N20E12	10.06	17.60	9.50	1326.30	1
20010306	9368	N26W08	0.00	21.20	15.20	167.00	1
20010327	9393	N18E08	155.25	57.20	47.30	2954.50	1
20010521	9461	N22E08	0.00	16.90	11.30	18.36	1
20010715	9539	S17W01	28.75	11.40	8.46	60.60	1
20010910	9608	S23E14	44.56	37.40	24.90	498.24	1
20010911	9608	S29E10	125.06	35.60	23.90	498.24	1
20010913	9610	S13W08	35.94	36.00	19.10	31.60	1
20010924	9628	S18E07	70.44	38.90	22.80	274.00	1
20010930	9636	N12W05	69.00	27.20	19.20	100.30	1
20011024	9672	S17E00	47.44	28.80	17.00	475.10	1
20011027	9678	N07E05	7.19	28.60	16.60	103.10	1
20011030	9682	N12E02	76.19	41.90	25.10	269.70	1
20011103	9684	N05W17	56.06	24.40	14.80	145.00	1
20011120	9704	S17W09	51.75	26.90	14.70	283.60	1
20020106	9767	S21W14	7.19	31.80	15.60	61.50	1
20020108	9773	N14E05	24.44	26.30	17.30	290.56	1
20020110	9773	N14W17	40.25	34.70	24.40	290.56	1
20020716	0030	N21E01	73.31	44.60	38.70	793.73	1
20020727	0039	S17E17	132.25	55.20	51.10	733.80	1
20020729	0050	S07E06	11.50	21.50	19.30	60.20	1
20020802	0057	S09E05	8.62	9.96	8.25	72.70	1
20020905	0096	N08W01	23.00	27.60	19.80	23.80	1
20021002	0137	S20E18	46.00	15.00	14.90	174.64	1
20021105	0177	N16W09	43.12	23.70	20.00	80.30	1

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gni} (Mm)	$T_{flux}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{diss}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20021106	0180	S09W07	56.06	25.10	22.80	259.50	1
20030222	0290	N17W06	8.62	15.70	11.80	36.06	1
20030315	0314	S15W13	30.19	14.50	16.60	529.20	1
20030501	0349	S13E07	8.62	34.80	22.50	86.37	1
20030607	0375	N11E09	30.19	26.30	25.30	1358.62	1
20030608	0375	N11W03	43.12	31.80	29.70	1358.62	1
20030718	0410	S12E09	0.00	2.27	0.70	91.71	1
20030815	0431	S13W02	0.00	4.34	2.10	124.65	1
20031028	0488	N09W05	92.00	38.50	46.60	881.80	1
20040225	0564	N14W13	0.00	2.61	0.90	238.04	1
20040329	0582	N13E18	0.00	2.25	0.65	144.65	1
20040331	0582	N13W14	8.62	20.60	13.80	144.65	1
20040719	0649	S09W00	0.00	4.10	2.12	1381.59	1
20040811	0656	S14E13	0.00	3.49	1.54	1260.24	1
20050604	0772	S18E09	7.19	10.90	11.10	98.41	1
20050702	0785	S17E04	0.00	3.87	1.86	15.56	1
20050914	0808	S11E02	92.00	44.70	45.60	4886.56	1
19980315	8179	S24W04	53.19	31.40	20.60	100.32	2
19980326	8185	S24E04	17.25	18.20	12.90	48.46	2
19980501	8210	S17E05	7.19	20.00	9.37	422.59	2
19990630	8603	S14W01	18.69	19.10	17.00	77.20	2
19990702	8611	S26E08	33.06	22.60	20.40	160.70	2
19990724	8636	N20W06	33.06	35.00	26.40	94.99	2
19990819	8672	N16W02	10.06	15.10	10.70	10.00	2
19990827	8674	S21W04	74.75	49.60	38.40	346.70	2
19991112	8759	N10E05	90.56	42.90	32.50	113.50	2
19991126	8778	S14W06	21.56	20.20	15.30	138.90	2
19991222	8806	N19E09	24.44	37.40	25.70	259.78	2
20000118	8831	S17E00	7.19	24.90	14.80	49.00	2
20000217	8872	S28E05	0.00	11.30	6.86	13.80	2
20000313	8906	S17E02	107.81	46.30	28.80	284.10	2
20000720	9087	S12W02	34.50	36.70	30.20	443.60	2

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gni} (Mm)	$T_{\text{flux}}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{\text{diss}}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20000725	9097	N06W02	30.19	25.60	13.90	149.80	2
20000916	9165	N15E00	27.31	21.70	14.60	259.60	2
20001109	9221	S12E08	0.00	13.70	8.49	10.00	2
20001118	9231	S21E00	15.81	22.10	17.30	99.01	2
20001123	9236	N22E04	58.94	26.30	17.50	1326.30	2
20010110	9302	N19W00	21.56	20.40	10.90	56.10	2
20010328	9393	N17W04	161.00	62.10	56.80	2954.50	2
20010409	9415	S21E04	50.31	33.80	31.30	2811.82	2
20010425	9433	N19E04	35.94	38.60	35.60	541.09	2
20010505	9445	N25W02	57.50	26.70	20.90	70.80	2
20010513	9455	S17E01	48.87	16.10	17.60	161.04	2
20010604	9484	S06E05	20.12	13.20	7.55	37.00	2
20010903	9601	N13E02	73.31	39.20	22.30	327.31	2
20010925	9628	S20E00	120.75	46.60	31.00	274.00	2
20010929	9636	N16E07	17.25	25.90	15.90	100.30	2
20011106	9687	S20E01	37.37	25.40	14.60	333.10	2
20011110	9690	S17E05	156.68	54.10	34.00	518.83	2
20011111	9690	S17W07	136.56	46.00	25.90	518.83	2
20011129	9715	N04E03	69.00	36.40	22.10	262.60	2
20020109	9773	N14W04	38.81	34.60	26.00	290.56	2
20020314	9866	S09E06	11.50	32.50	22.10	163.70	2
20020315	9866	S09W06	15.81	32.10	24.50	163.70	2
20020410	9893	N19W08	10.06	19.40	14.20	248.70	2
20020415	9906	S14W04	51.75	30.40	20.80	215.82	2
20020728	0039	S16E08	143.75	52.40	46.70	733.80	2
20020728	0044	S18E01	70.44	48.40	41.60	309.70	2
20020815	0066	N13E03	8.62	17.50	14.10	22.40	2
20020817	0069	S08E08	169.62	56.60	47.70	1100.00	2
20020818	0069	S08W07	173.93	59.90	46.00	1100.00	2
20020823	0083	S18W05	50.31	16.00	17.30	135.80	2
20021003	0137	S19E08	44.56	17.90	17.40	174.64	2
20021004	0137	S19W05	14.37	18.90	18.20	174.64	2

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Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	$L_{\text{gl}} \text{ (Mm)}$	$T_{\text{flux}} (10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{\text{diss}} (10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{dx}	Level
20021025	0162	N27W03	44.56	33.80	26.00	246.48	2
20021216	0227	N06W06	8.62	9.31	10.40	28.30	2
20021217	0226	S27W02	48.87	27.80	28.50	231.60	2
20021219	0229	N19W02	0.00	25.90	20.50	42.30	2
20030107	0244	S21W01	0.00	14.40	11.00	40.17	2
20030123	0266	N13W04	12.94	8.28	7.51	65.81	2
20030421	0338	N18E06	0.00	8.66	6.13	399.41	2
20031024	0484	N02E01	81.94	49.60	34.60	696.70	2
20031118	0501	N01E08	64.69	22.30	16.00	404.78	2
20031119	0501	N01W03	47.44	21.20	15.00	404.78	2
20040118	0540	S14E01	38.81	26.60	19.90	179.69	2
20040723	0652	N08E04	66.12	57.10	42.40	670.64	2
20040812	0656	S13E02	27.31	39.60	36.80	1260.24	2
20041105	0696	N09E06	84.81	26.20	22.70	1120.55	2
20041106	0696	N09W08	80.50	30.10	31.30	1120.55	2
20041202	0708	N09E01	0.00	13.10	9.24	31.34	2
20050114	0718	S07W08	40.25	19.20	19.60	87.67	2
20050517	0763	S17E06	41.69	14.00	16.80	130.91	2
20050707	0786	N11E08	51.75	20.70	22.50	612.87	2
20051118	0822	S08W01	17.25	23.60	10.90	255.59	2
20051202	0826	S04E06	21.56	22.70	16.80	221.05	2
19980502	8210	S17W12	37.37	23.10	12.40	422.59	3
20000606	9026	N21E18	51.75	30.50	26.20	945.23	3
20000607	9026	N20E05	53.19	29.80	31.00	945.23	3
20000711	9077	N17E45	109.25	27.70	19.50	1256.40	3
20000712	9077	N18E27	92.00	35.80	27.60	1256.40	3
20000714	9077	N17E02	76.19	37.30	38.00	1256.40	3
20001124	9236	N21W10	74.75	27.80	17.50	1326.30	3
20001125	9236	N21W24	37.37	26.70	16.20	1326.30	3
20010329	9393	N17W18	182.56	59.40	59.50	2954.50	3
20010406	9415	S21E42	100.62	21.90	19.20	2811.82	3
20010410	9415	S22W12	84.81	32.00	30.10	2811.82	3

Continued on next page

Table 4.1 – continued from previous page

Date	AR	Location	L_{gnl} (Mm)	$T_{flux}(10^{21} \text{ Mx})$	$E_{diss}(10^5 \text{ Jm}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1})$	F_{idx}	Level
20010623	9511	N10E23	15.81	9.74	7.14	276.79	3
20010825	9591	S18E40	80.50	25.10	17.20	872.30	3
20010924	9632	S18E28	51.75	31.00	18.90	322.40	3
20011022	9672	S19E23	44.56	28.00	16.80	475.10	3
20011025	9672	S19W16	58.94	35.90	18.30	475.10	3
20011104	9684	N05W29	12.94	22.90	12.50	145.00	3
20020715	0030	N19E11	86.25	39.50	36.60	793.73	3
20030527	0365	S06W08	51.75	23.00	21.10	599.27	3
20031026	0486	S16E41	182.56	44.30	33.20	6829.50	3
20031028	0486	S18E04	240.06	70.60	68.60	6829.50	3
20031029	0486	S17W09	222.81	69.30	58.10	6829.50	3
20040226	0564	N14W28	34.50	28.50	22.90	238.04	3
20040715	0649	S10E48	79.06	24.20	18.80	1381.59	3
20040716	0649	S08E38	63.25	26.50	23.00	1381.59	3
20040717	0649	S08E24	38.81	28.80	26.30	1381.59	3
20040813	0656	S13W12	58.94	43.30	35.60	1260.24	3
20041030	0691	N13W14	24.44	17.70	17.20	454.48	3
20041107	0696	N08W21	64.69	27.90	27.50	1120.55	3
20050101	0715	N04E22	15.81	13.50	12.40	158.56	3
20050115	0720	N13W03	119.31	45.90	36.50	2379.42	3
20050117	0720	N13W29	100.62	39.10	28.70	2379.42	3
20050913	0808	S11E17	130.81	41.60	39.80	4886.56	3
20050915	0808	S11W13	81.94	41.60	41.50	4886.56	3

4.2.3 Flares Statistical Characteristics

From 1998 to 2005, a total of 230 flare events analyzed. The descriptive data for the magnetic parameters L_{gnl} , T_{flux} and E_{diss} are summarized in Table 4.2. Among the flare event list, 34 of them ($Level=3$) produced X-class flares, 68 ($Level=2$) produced M-class flares, and 65 ($Level=1$) produced C-class flares. Only small fraction of C-class events

were randomly selected to match the sample size of larger flares. For the left ($Level=0$), they either did not produce any flares or produced smaller flares under C-class in the next 1-day period. According to each $Level$, the mean and standard deviations of each parameter are calculated and displayed.

Mean value of L_{gnl} for events, associated with X-class flares, was found to be 81.18 Mm, much larger than that associated with either M- (47.86 Mm) or C-class (36.62 Mm) flares and an order of magnitude larger than the mean value found for those flare-quiet regions. The same trend is also present in the case of E_{diss} . This further evidences that the extreme events such as X-class flares have higher tendency to occur in the ARs with high concentration of free magnetic energy. As to T_{flux} , the differences between the mean values of X-, M- and C-class are only about 15%, not as large as for L_{gnl} and E_{diss} . Flare productivity is only weakly related to the active region size.

4.3 Ordinal Logistic Regression Model

4.3.1 Model Specification

There is a variety of statistical techniques that can be used to predict a response variable Y from a set of independent variables. Since the purpose of this chapter is to estimate probabilities, the analytical technique should somehow provide it. In addition, if Y is

Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Solar Flares Data

Label	X-class (n=34)		M-class (n=68)		C-class (n=65)		N-class (n=63)	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
L_{gnl} (Mm)	81.18	55.62	47.86	43.72	36.62	36.35	6.75	10.03
T_{flux} (10^{21} Mx)	33.23	13.55	29.05	13.63	24.89	13.06	11.91	5.93
E_{diss} (10^5 J m $^{-1}$ s $^{-1}$)	27.52	14.03	22.20	11.12	19.07	11.47	8.69	5.27

categorical, with more than two categories, such a response variable essentially rules out usual regression analysis, including the variety of linear models. The major problem with these techniques is that the linear function is inherently unbounded, while probabilities are bounded by 0 and 1. This make the generalized (compared with binary) logistic method the most obvious candidates for the regression analysis. It always returns values between 0 and 1. Depending on the scale of \mathbf{Y} (ordinal or nominal), the model is further classified into ordinal regression and nominal regression model. In our study, we use ordinal regression model since \mathbf{Y} here indicates the maximum magnitude of flares the given active region may produce.

Suppose \mathbf{Y} is the categorical response variable with $k+1$ ordered categories. For example

$$\mathbf{Y} = \begin{cases} 0 = & \text{weak} \\ 1 = & \text{moderately strong} \\ \vdots = & \vdots \\ k = & \text{extremely strong} \end{cases} \quad (4.4)$$

Let \mathbf{X} denotes the vector of predictive variables $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$, and $\pi_j(\mathbf{x}) = \text{Prob}(Y = j | \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x})$ be the probability for the realization of $Y = j$, given $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{x}$, $j = 0, 1, \dots, k$. The cumulative probabilities

$$\begin{aligned} \gamma_j(\mathbf{x}) &= \text{Prob}(Y \geq j | \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}) \\ &= \pi_j(\mathbf{x}) + \dots + \pi_k(\mathbf{x}) \\ &= 1 / [1 + \exp(-(\alpha_j + x\beta))], \quad j = 1, \dots, k, \end{aligned} \quad (4.5)$$

where $x\beta$ stands for $\beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \dots + \beta_nx_n$. There are k intercepts (α s). The regression parameters α and β are estimated by the method of maximum likelihood (Agresti 1996), which works by finding the value of β that returns the maximum value of the log-likelihood function. Expression

$$Prob = [1 + \exp(-x)]^{-1} \quad (4.6)$$

is called the logistic function (*logit*). We can solve the above equation for $\alpha_j + x\beta$

$$\alpha_j + x\beta = \log\left[\frac{Prob}{1-Prob}\right] = \log[\text{odds that } Y \geq j \text{ occurs}] = \text{logit}\{Y \geq j\}. \quad (4.7)$$

Thus the model becomes a linear regression model in the log odds that $Y \geq j$. This is the well-known proportional odds (PO) model (McCullagh 1980), also called ordinal logistic model (Scott et al. 1997).

The logistic model formulated here for the solar flares study, contains a four-state response variable. *Level* = 0 means the active region only produce microflares (Lower than C-class flares) in the next 1-day period. *Level* = 1 means the active region at most produce C-class flares. *Level* = 2 is for M- and *Level* = 3 is for X-class flares. Therefore, the category number $k = 3$ and predictive variables are the some or all of three magnetic parameters discussed earlier.

The model is computed with the statistical R software package (version 2.3.0 Linux system), using a procedure that supports ordinal logistic regression model (*lrm*). For details on the estimation procedure and the statistics in logistic regression models, see website². Ordinal logistic regression is not part of the standard R, but can be calculated via library

²<http://www.r-project.org/>

*Design*³ by using function *lrm* (Alzola and Harrell 2004).

4.3.2 Testing for Ordinality Assumption

A basic assumption of ordinal regression models is that the response variable behaves in an ordinal fashion with respect to each predictive variable. Assuming that a predictor x is linearly related to the log odds of some appropriate event, a simple way to check for ordinality is to plot the mean of x stratified by levels of y . These means should be in a consistent order. If for many of the x s, two adjacent categories of Y do not distinguish the means, that is the evidence that those levels of Y should be pooled.

Figure 4.1 is such displays. Means of all three predictive variables are calculated for each ordinal class of the response and plotted (solid) against it. In the ideal case, the dotted line (PO model) should be superposed on the solid line if the PO assumptions hold. Ordinality is satisfactorily verified for all three predictive variables (same monotonic trends).

Figure 4.2 shows another way to assess the PO assumption. Each predictive variable is categorized into quartiles. Each quartile group is identified using the upper and lower endpoints within that quartile. The logits of all proportions of the Level $\geq j, j = 1, 2, 3$. is computed. When proportional odds holds, the difference in logits between different values of j should be the same at all levels of each parameter. This is because the model dictates that $\text{logit}(\text{Level} \geq j|x) - \text{logit}(\text{Level} \geq i|x) = \alpha_j - \alpha_i$, for any constant x .

³<http://biostat.mc.vanderbilt.edu/twiki/bin/view/main/design>

4.3.3 Estimation Procedures

Before presenting the obtained results, we first describe three groups of models that were used in our analysis. Table 4.3 shows products of different data generating models used in the regression. In order to investigate the effects of each predictive parameter, every possible combination is analyzed.

The models in group (a) contain only one predictive parameter. For prediction purpose, these preliminary models may be too simple. However, their fitted results will help us to understand which parameter may be more significant in producing solar flares. Models in group (b) have three terms. The first two terms in each model are from our predictive parameters. The third one is called the interaction term. It exists when the effect of one independent variable changes with different values of another independent variable. It is also said that Variable 2 "moderates" the effect of Variable 1. In regression analysis, interaction term is quantitatively represented by the product of Variable 1 and 2. Theoretically, interactions among more than two variables, especially when these variables are continuous, can be exceedingly complex. This is because there are many different combinations of two-way interactions and the possibility of the order of interaction effects may be higher than two, e.g. product of the square of one predictor and other predictor. Therefore, a good approach is to test for all such prespecified interaction effects with a single global test. Then, unless interactions involving only one of the predictive variables is of special interest, we can either drop all interactions or retain all of them (Harrell 2001). The models in group (c) include all three predictive parameters, with and without corresponding interaction effect terms.

The assumption of linearity in the logistic model need to be verified, especially

when the continuous predictive variables are presented. Often, however, the property of response variable, the probability in our study, does not behave linearly in all the predictors. To test linearity, or to describe nonlinear relationships, a general way is to expand predictive continuous variables with spline functions, which are piecewise polynomials used in curve fitting. In this chapter, we used restricted cubic spline function (also called natural splines) with 4 knots on every predictive variable (Stone and Koo 1985). For many datasets, 4 knots ($k = 4$) offers an adequate fit of the model and is a good compromise between flexibility and loss of precision caused by overfitting a small sample (Harrell 2001). The locations of knots (quantiles) are fixed, when k is fixed. When $k = 4$, the quantiles are 0.5, 0.35, 0.65 and 0.95.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Quantifying Predictive Ability of Fitted Models

A commonly used measure of predictive ability for logistic models is the fraction of correctly classified responses. One chooses a cutoff on the predicted probability of a positive response and then predicts that a response will be positive if the predicted probability exceeds this cutoff. The drawback of this method is that it is highly dependent on the cutpoint

Table 4.3 Regression models for Different Combination of Predictive Parameters

	Parameters	Formula
Group (a)	(1) L_{gnt}	$Level \sim L_{gnt}$
	(2) T_{flux}	$Level \sim T_{flux}$
	(3) E_{diss}	$Level \sim E_{diss}$
Group (b)	(4) L_{gnt}, T_{flux}	$Level \sim L_{gnt} + T_{flux} + L_{gnt} * T_{flux}$
	(5) T_{flux}, E_{diss}	$Level \sim T_{flux} + E_{diss} + T_{flux} * E_{diss}$
	(6) L_{gnt}, E_{diss}	$Level \sim L_{gnt} + E_{diss} + L_{gnt} * E_{diss}$
Group (c)	(7) $L_{gnt}, T_{flux}, E_{diss}$	$Level \sim L_{gnt} + E_{diss} + T_{flux}$
	(8) $L_{gnt}, T_{flux}, E_{diss}$	$Level \sim L_{gnt} + T_{flux} + E_{diss} + L_{gnt} * T_{flux} + T_{flux} * E_{diss} + L_{gnt} * E_{diss} + L_{gnt} * T_{flux} * E_{diss}$

chosen for a positive prediction. In addition, it is presumptions to make one classification rule from a probability model.

The test statistics allow us to test whether a predictive variable, or set of variables, is related to the response. The generalized index R_N^2 (Nagelkerke 1991; Cragg and Uhler 1970) can be useful for quantifying the predictive strength of a model. Let us assume that the log likelihood (L.L.) of a model is represented by:

$$R_N^2 = \frac{1 - \exp(-LR/n)}{1 - \exp(-L^0/n)}, \quad (4.8)$$

where $L^0 = -2 \times L.L.$, obtained under the null hypothesis that all regression coefficients except for intercepts are zero. Likelihood ratio (LR) is then $L^0 - L$, where L is $-2 \times L.L.$, achieved from the fitted model. n is the size of dataset. For large enough datasets, LR approximately follows χ^2 distribution. Index R_N^2 ranges from 0 to 1 and can be used to assess how well the model compares to a “perfect” model.

A dimensionless index c indicates probability of concordance between the predicted probability and the response. It has been shown that c is identical to a widely used measure of diagnostic discrimination, which is the area under a “receiver operating characteristics” (ROC) curve. A value of c 0.5 indicates random predictions, while $c=1$ indicates perfect prediction. A model that has c near 0.8 has some reliability in predicting the responses of individual events.

Another widely used index is 'Somers' index, D_{xy} , that ranks the correlation between predicted probabilities and observed responses by the difference between concor-

dance and discordance probabilities.

$$D_{xy} = 2(c - 0.5). \quad (4.9)$$

When $D_{xy} = 0$, the model is making random predictions. When $D_{xy} = 1$, the predictions are perfectly discriminating.

Table 4.4 displays these indexes for every model listed in Table 4.3. For the models with only one predictive variable, they have comparable reliability in flare prediction (nearly same indexes). The indexes of model (1) are slightly larger than that for model (2) and (3). The larger indexes implies that the length of strong gradient neutral line is relative more significant in prediction than the other two parameters. When we add one more parameter to each model, then model (4) and (6) have larger indexes, indicating the new parameter may improve the predictive strength. The worst result is for model (5) and it confirms that L_{gnl} plays the key role among three predictors. The nearly same results for model (7) and (8) show that the ignorance of the interaction effects between predictors does not reduce the predictive ability. Moreover, from the comparison of models (4) and (7), it follows that parameter E_{diss} may be the least effective in flare prediction, while model (4), namely the combination of L_{gnl} and T_{flux} as predictors, seems to be the most effective tool for predictions. This conclusion is consistent with the result that major flares of class M or X are associated with pronounced high-gradient magnetic neutral line (Schrijver 2007). According to Schrijver (2007), the measure of unsigned magnetic flux near the neutral line is proved to be related with the probability of a active region to produce major flares.

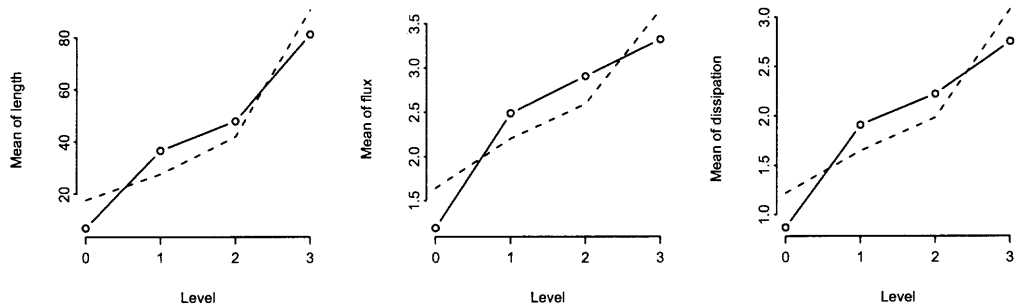


Figure 4.1 Examination of the ordinality of *Level* for every magnetic parameter by accessing how is the *Level* related to the mean value of each predictor, and whether the trend in each plot is monotonic. Solid lines connect the simple stratified means, and dashed lines connect the estimated expected value of $X|Y=j$ given that PO holds. The extend of closeness of two curves indicates the perfect condition to hold ordinal condition.

Table 4.4 Indexes to Evaluate the Predictive Ability of Models

Models	R_N^2	c	D_{xy}
(1)	0.382	0.771	0.543
(2)	0.341	0.748	0.496
(3)	0.333	0.749	0.497
(4)	0.432	0.791	0.582
(5)	0.353	0.758	0.516
(6)	0.400	0.782	0.564
(7)	0.430	0.792	0.584
(8)	0.423	0.785	0.569

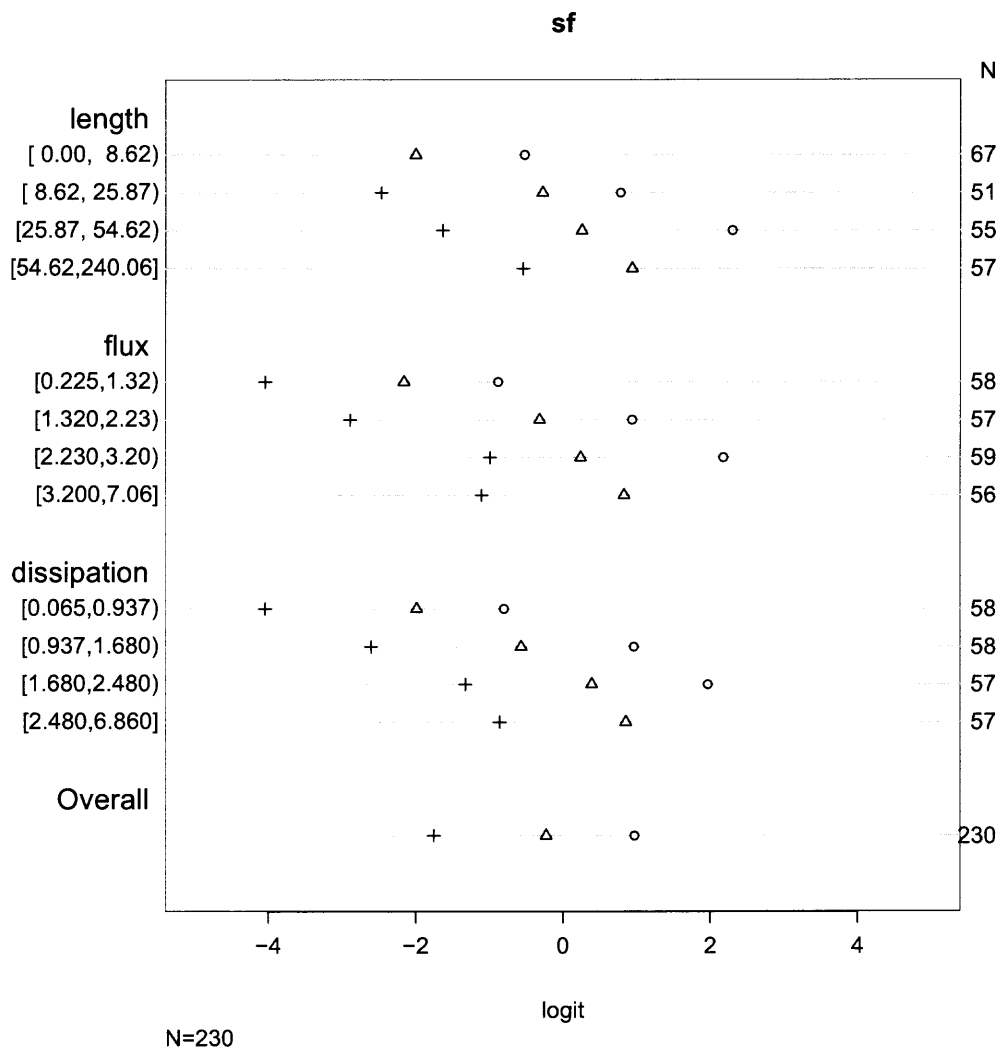


Figure 4.2 Checking PO assumptions separately for a series of predictive parameters. The circle, triangle, and plus sign correspond to Level $\geq 1, 2, 3$, respectively. PO is checked by examining the vertical constancy of distances between any two of these three symbols.

4.4.2 Validating the Fitted Models

Model validation is done to ascertain whether predicted values from the model are likely to accurately predict responses on future events. The simplest validation method is one time data-splitting. A dataset is split into training (model development) and test (validation) samples by a random process. The model's calibration are validated in the test dataset. One disadvantage of data-splitting is that it greatly reduces the sample size for both model development and model testing. The situation will become even worse when the original dataset is not large enough, like our case in X-class flares. Bootstrapping can be used to obtain nearly unbiased estimates of model performance without sacrificing sample size (Efron 1986; Breiman 1992). With bootstrapping, one repeatedly fits the model in a bootstrap sample and evaluates the performance of the model on the original sample. The estimate of the likely performance of the final model on future data is estimated by the average of all of the indexes computed on the original sample. In general, the major cause of unreliable models is overfitting the data. The amount of overfitting can be quantified by the index of overoptimism. With bootstrapping we do not have a separate validation sample for assessing calibration, but we can estimate the overoptimism in assuming that the final model needs no calibration, that is, it has overall intercept and slope corrections of 0 and 1, respectively. Refitting the model

$$P_c = \text{Prob} \left\{ Y = 1 \mid X\hat{\beta} \right\} = [1 + \exp - (\gamma_0 + \gamma_1 X\hat{\beta})]^{-1}, \quad (4.10)$$

where P_c denotes the actual calibrated probability, and the original predicted probability is $\hat{P} = [1 + \exp(-X\hat{\beta})]^{-1}$ in the original dataset will always result in $\gamma = (\gamma_0, \gamma_1) = (0, 1)$,

since a logistic model will always fit when assessed overall. Thus, the bias-corrected estimates of the true calibration can be obtained by the estimation of overoptimism in (0, 1). An index of unreliability, E_{\max} , that represents the maximum error in predicted probabilities over the range $a \leq \hat{P} \leq b$, follows immediately from this calibration:

$$E_{\max}(a, b) = \max | \hat{P} - \hat{P}_c |. \quad (4.11)$$

As an example, we first validate model (4) shown in Table 4.3. The optimism-corrected calibrations are in Table 4.5. The apparent Somers' D_{xy} is 0.579, while the bias-corrected D_{xy} is 0.559. The slope shrinkage factor is 0.933, indicating that this model will validate on new data about 6.7% worse than on the current dataset. The maximum absolute error in predicted probability is estimated to be about 0.017. A slight decrease in R^2 suggests some overfitting. Table 4.6 presents the validation results for all models. All estimates of the maximum calibration error, E_{\max} , are small, and quite satisfactory. After the bias correction, model (4) still has the highest D_{xy} and R^2 .

The estimated calibration curves for model (4) are displayed in Figure 4.3. They are calculated as:

$$\text{Prob}\{\text{Level} \geq j\} = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-(-0.009 + 0.933L_j)]},$$

where L_j is the logit of the predicted probability of $\text{Level} \geq j$. The closeness of the calibration curves to the bisector line demonstrates excellent validation on the absolute probability scale. The missing data in panel (a) and (c) cast some doubt on the validity of predictions for C- and X-class flares. The shape of the calibration curve in panel (b) (slope < 1) implies

that overfitting is present in the M-class predictions.

4.4.3 Describing the Fitted Models

Once the proper predictive variables have been modelled and all model assumptions have been met, it is the time to present and interpret our fitted models. Equation (4.7) indicates that the logistic model becomes a linear model in log odds. The parameter β_j then denotes the change in the log odds per unit change in X_j , where X_j represents a single linear factor that does not interact with other variables, provided that all other variables are held constant. Instead of writing this relationship in terms of log odds, it can also be written in terms of the odds that $Y \geq j$:

$$\text{odds} \{Y \geq j \mid X\} = \exp(x\beta + \alpha_j) = \exp(x\beta)\exp(\alpha_j). \quad (4.12)$$

The odds that $Y \geq j$, when X_j is increased by d , divided by the odds at X_j is:

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{\text{odds} \{Y \geq j \mid x_1, x_2, \dots, x_j + d, \dots, x_k\}}{\text{odds} \{Y \geq j \mid x_1, x_2, \dots, x_j, \dots, x_k\}} \\ &= \frac{\exp[\beta_j(x_j + d)]\exp(\alpha_j)}{\exp(\beta_j x_j)\exp(\alpha_j)} \\ &= \exp(\beta_j d) \end{aligned} \quad (4.13)$$

Table 4.5 Validation of Model With Predictive Variables L_{gnl} and T_{flux}

	index.orig	optimism	index.corrected
D_{xy}	0.579	0.020	0.559
R^2	0.432	0.033	0.399
Intercept	0.000	-0.009	0.009
Slope	1.000	0.067	0.933
E_{max}	0.000	0.017	0.017

Table 4.6 Validation Results of All Models

Models	Bias-corrected D_{xy}	Bias-corrected R^2	Intercept	Slope	E_{max}
(1)	0.538	0.365	-0.011	0.969	0.009
(2)	0.490	0.325	0.001	0.970	0.007
(3)	0.501	0.326	0.002	0.984	0.004
(4)	0.559	0.399	0.009	0.933	0.017
(5)	0.489	0.309	0.021	0.899	0.027
(6)	0.533	0.362	0.000	0.924	0.018
(7)	0.557	0.382	-0.022	0.898	0.028
(8)	0.551	0.389	0.000	0.928	0.017

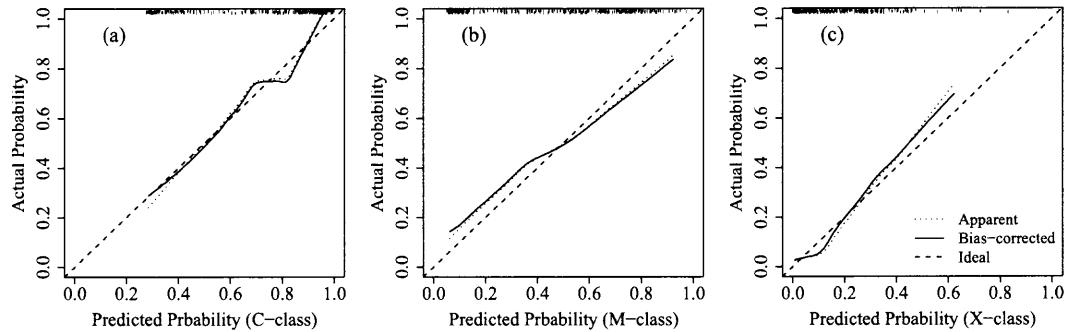


Figure 4.3 Estimated logistic calibration curves obtained by bootstrapping using the corrected intercept and slope. The logistic calibration model $P_c = [1 + \exp(-(\gamma_0 + \gamma_1 L))]$, where P_c is the bias-corrected probability. L is $\logit(\hat{P})$, and \hat{P} is the predicted probabilities (labelled with 'Apparent'). The bisector line demonstrates excellent validation on an absolute probability scale.

Thus the effect of increasing X_j by d is to increase the odds that $Y \geq j$ by a factor of $\exp(\beta_j d)$, or to increase the log odds that $Y \geq j$ by an increment of $\beta_j d$.

Table 4.7 contains such summary statistics for the model (4). The outer quartiles of L_{gnl} and T_{flux} are shown in the columns labelled with “Low” and “High”, respectively. So the half-sample odds ratio for L_{gnl} is 5.18, with 0.95 confidence interval [2.22, 12.09], when T_{flux} is set to its median. The effect of increasing L_{gnl} from 7.190 (its lower quartile) to 53.190 (its upper quartile) is to increase the log odds by 1.64 or to increase the odds by a factor of 5.18. The value of odd ratio for T_{flux} is nearly same as L_{gnl} .

Instead of displaying the result in odds, Figure 4.4 directly shows the predicted probabilities versus each predictive variables (models (1)-(3)). The probability curves for C-, M- and X-class flares are plotted in black, red and green color, respectively. The plot indicates that: (1) the occurrence probability for each class of solar flares increases with the predictive parameters, (2) for C-class flare predictions, there is a saturation value. The probabilities are nearly 100% when the measure values are larger than their thresholds. For M- and X-class probabilities, when L_{gnl} , E_{diss} are used as predictors (panels (a) and (c)), no such saturation value exists. The probabilities keep increasing as predictors increase. However, when T_{flux} is used to predict the probability (panel (b)), the saturation of probabilities is present for all kinds of flares. Further increase of the magnetic flux will not help to produce flares. (3) The maximum predicted probability of X-class flares is only around $0.3 \sim 0.6$. This may suggest that each single magnetic variable is not sufficient to predict X-class flares.

Finally our fitted regression expression of model (4) is shown as following:

$$\text{Prob}\{\text{level} \geq j\} = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-(\alpha_j + X\beta)]}, \text{ where}$$

$$\hat{\alpha}_1 = -1.01,$$

$$\hat{\alpha}_2 = -2.81,$$

$$\hat{\alpha}_3 = -4.81,$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} X\hat{\beta} = & \\ & + 5.13 \times 10^{-2} L_{\text{gnl}} \\ & + 2.42 \times 10^{-2} T_{\text{flux}} + 2.84 \times 10^{-4} (T_{\text{flux}} - 5.23)_+^3 \\ & - 9.97 \times 10^{-4} (T_{\text{flux}} - 16.73)_+^3 + 8.81 \times 10^{-4} (T_{\text{flux}} - 26.7)_+^3 \\ & - 1.68 \times 10^{-4} (T_{\text{flux}} - 49.6)_+^3 \\ & + L_{\text{gnl}} [3.82 \times 10^{-5} T_{\text{flux}} - 3.73 \times 10^{-6} (T_{\text{flux}} - 5.23)_+^3 \\ & + 1.14 \times 10^{-5} (T_{\text{flux}} - 16.73)_+^3 - 9.11 \times 10^{-6} (T_{\text{flux}} - 26.7)_+^3 \\ & + 1.46 \times 10^{-6} (T_{\text{flux}} - 49.6)_+^3] \end{aligned}$$

and $(x)_+ = x$ when $x > 0$, $(x)_+ = 0$ otherwise.

L_{gnl} and T_{flux} , measured for a given active region, are then put into the above equa-

tion to compute the predicted probabilities.

4.4.4 Comparison with NOAA/SEC and NASA Solar Monitor Predictions

The existing methods of prediction rely on the McIntosh classification scheme of active regions (McIntosh 1990; Bornmann and Shaw 1994). The general expression of McIntosh classification is Zpc , where Z is the modified Zurich class, p is the type of principal spot, primarily describing the penumbra, and c is the degree of compactness in the interior of the group. According to these three components, sunspots can be classified into 60 distinct type of groups. The percentage probabilities are calculated based on the historical rate of number of flares produced by a given sunspots group. This approach is the basis of the prediction generated by NOAA/SEC ⁴ and NASA Goddard Space Flight Center's Solar Data Analysis Center (SDAC) (Gallagher et al. 2002).⁵ In addition to the McIntosh classification scheme, NOAA/SEC incorporates a lot of additional information, including dynamical properties of spot growth, magnetic topology inferred from the sunspot structure, and previous flare activity to establish an expert system. This system involves more than 500 decision rules including those provided by human experts.

⁴<http://www.sec.noaa.gov/ftplib/latest/daypre.txt>

⁵<http://www.solarmonitor.org>

Table 4.7 Effects of L_{gni} , T_{flux} on Response Variable *Level*

	Low	High	Δ	Effect	S.E.	Lower 0.95	Upper 0.95
L_{gni}	7.190	53.190	46.00	1.64	0.43	0.80	2.49
<i>Odds Ratio</i>	7.190	53.190	46.00	5.18		2.22	12.09
T_{flux}	13.125	31.775	18.65	1.61	0.51	0.61	2.62
<i>Odds Ratio</i>	13.125	31.775	18.65	5.03		1.85	13.68

Disadvantages of the classification-based approaches are that the variation in flare probability within a class is unavoidably ignored. The classification process is possibly subjective because the McIntosh scheme with three parameters is an arbitrary construction. Different observers may not agree with a given classification. The similar problems arise with the additional information in the expert system since the choice of properties is essentially arbitrary. Moreover, They might need human intervention, either in classification or in prediction procedures, and therefore are not suitable for automated prediction.

In order to compare the predictability of the Logistic model and NASA/SDAC, NOAA/SEC schemes, we studied our event list and found 55 events in the list were also predicted by NOAA/SEC and NASA/SDAC. Their prediction results were plotted together and shown in Figure 4.5. Every event (flare) is indexed in x-axis. Y axis represents the predicted probability. The results from different prediction approach are indicated by different shapes of points. For comparison, the actual results (1 means occurred, 0 means not) are also presented (green dots). We then used a contingency table, which has been widely used in the meteorological forecasting literature, to evaluate the prediction capability of these approaches. This table can provide us with information on the success or failure of the forecasting experience in real time (Kim et al., 2005). We thus defined the probability of $>50\%$ to be the “yes predicted”, as shown by the points above horizontal dotted line. The vertical dotted line indicates the actual start point of flare happening. Each graph in Figure 4.5 is divided into four regions (a-d). Region “a” contains the events with “yes predicted” and “yes observed”. The region “b” represents the number of false alarms that means “yes predicted” but not observed. Similarly, “c” is the number of misses that means not predicted but “yes observed”, and “d” is the number of correct nulls that means not predicted

or observed.

The indexes used by NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) were computed and listed in Table 4.8. Probability of detection (POD) is the percentage of all flare events which are predicted ($a/(a+c)$). A perfect score would be 100%. False alarm ratio (FAR) measures how often we issue false alarm, or in other words, a measure of 'crying wolf' ($b/(a+b)$). Ideally we want this number to be 0.0%. Critical success index (CSI) is the ratio of predicted events a to the total number of $(a + b + c)$. In C-class flare prediction, the predicted probabilities computed from NASA/SDAC only distribute in the range of 0 and 55%. The "yes predicted" is not as obvious as those from other two methods. Meanwhile, the minimum probabilities predicted by Logistic method are larger than the results from both NASA/SDAC and NOAA/SEC. This is probably due to the threshold (50 GMm^{-1} in this study) for the gradient neutral lines. Those L_{gnl} with small values might still have enough nonpotential energy to product weaker flares. For M- and X-class flares, such a problem is eliminated. In M-class prediction, NASA/SDAC approach is no doubt incapable to satisfy the prediction requirement. For X-class prediction, the results from all current methods are not satisfactory. Thus, the indexes show that the method used by NOAA/SEC provide the best prediction results. The low predictability in forecasting X class flares perhaps indicates that the predictive parameters we applied so far may not have close enough correlation in triggering stronger flares. The other possible reason for the incapability in prediction of X class flares may be due to the insufficient data samples in logistic regression model.

The gap between NOAA/SEC and logistic regression model become smaller when forecasting major solar flares. In Figure 4.5 the probabilities of X class flares prediction obtained from ordinal logistic method and NOAA/SEC are higher in those active regions

producing flares. We therefore lower the cutoff probability to 25% and recount the value of a, b, c , and d . The resulted indexes are displayed in the last two columns of Table 4.8. Every index of logistic method is better than the one from NOAA/SEC. We propose that Ordinal logistic method is more promising in forecast major flares, especially as we have enough data samples, and even more predictive parameters in the future.

4.5 Conclusions

In this chapter we developed a statistical ordinal logistic regression model to solar flare prediction. For this, we have selected 230 active regions from 1996 to 2005, computed their corresponding magnetic parameters L_{gnl} , T_{flux} and E_{diss} measured from SOHO MDI magnetograms and then applied logistic model to them. Our main results can be summarized as follows.

1. The ordinal logistic regression model is proved to be a viable approach to the automated flare prediction. The results are much better than those data published in NASA/SDAC service, and comparable to the data provided by NOAA/SEC complicated expert system. To our knowledge, this is the first time that logistic regression model is

Table 4.8 Comparison between Three Prediction Approaches

	C-class flares prediction			M-class flares prediction			X-class flares prediction ¹	
	Logistic	NOAA/SEC	NASA/SDAC	Logistic	NOAA/SEC	NASA/SDAC	Logistic	NOAA/SEC
a: yes predicted	16	18	14	11	12	2	5	4
b: false alarms	5	5	2	2	2	1	2	2
c: misses	4	1	6	5	4	14	2	3
d: correct nulls	30	31	33	37	37	38	46	46
POD: $a/(a+c)$	0.80	0.95	0.70	0.69	0.75	0.13	0.71	0.57
FAR: $b/(a+b)$	0.24	0.22	0.13	0.15	0.14	0.33	0.29	0.33
CSI: $a/(a+b+c)$	0.64	0.75	0.64	0.61	0.67	0.12	0.56	0.44

¹In X-class flares prediction, a, b, c, d are redefined by the new cutoff probability $> 25\%$.

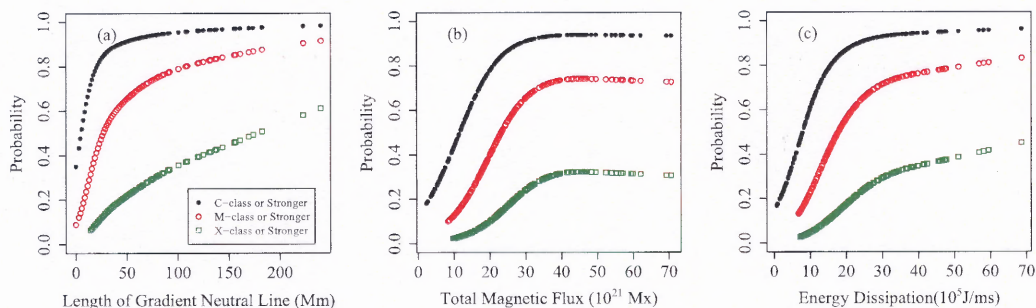


Figure 4.4 Distribution of predicted occurrence probability of solar flares. Panel (a), (b) and (c) show the results when only L_{gnl} , T_{flux} and E_{diss} as the predictive parameter, respectively. The probabilities for C, M and X class flares are displayed by the black dots, red circles and green squares.

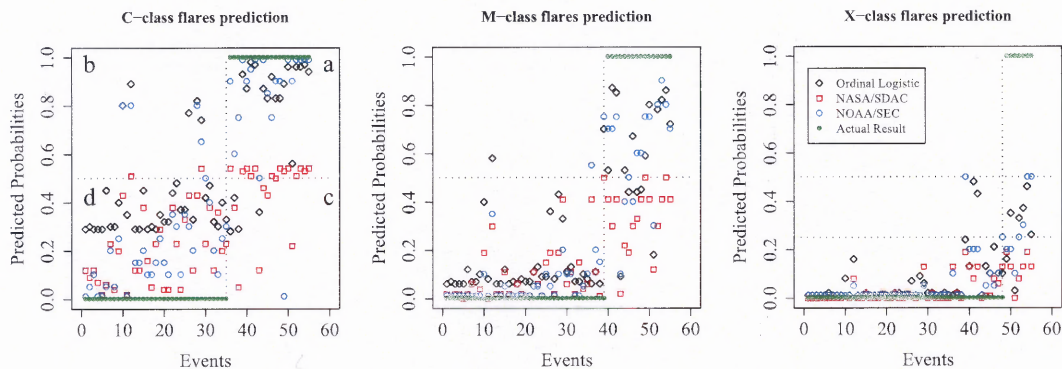


Figure 4.5 Comparison of three predictive methods for each level of solar flares. The results from Ordinal logistic method, NASA/SDAC and NOAA/SEC are indicated by black diamonds, red squares and blue circles, respectively. For comparison reasons, the actual probabilities of producing flares are shown by green dots. The horizontal dot line is the probability of 50% (One more 25% in X class panel). Vertical dot line represents the turning point of flare occurrence.

applied in solar physics to predict flare occurrence. And this is the first time that the occurrence probability of flares is quantified into math expression.

2. Each magnetic parameters on photospheric layers L_{gnl} , T_{flux} and E_{diss} has a positive correlation with the predicted probability. Among them the most significant variable is L_{gnl} , followed by the T_{flux} and E_{diss} .

3. Considering the interaction effects between predictive parameters, statistical analysis demonstrates the combination of L_{gnl} and T_{flux} might be enough to be included in the prediction model.

4. According to the results from contingency table, we found that all three approaches can get good results in forecasting C-class flares (CSI is between 0.64 ~ 0.75). In the M-class prediction, only Logistic and expert system approach are feasible (0.61 and 0.66, respectively). For X-class flare prediction, the 50% cutoff is too strict to all methods to achieve. It perhaps implies that the current parameters used in prediction are not sufficient enough to forecast these super flares. After we changed the cutoff probability to 25%, both methods might be acceptable. However, ordinal logistic method provided better performance and is more promising in X class prediction.

So far our prediction model is limited to those magnetic parameters obtained only through SOHO MDI magnetograms. There are several physical parameters which are considered to improve the forecast capability of solar flares. These parameters need to be derived from the vector magnetograms. It has been suggested that the occurrence of flares is related to (1) length of strong-sheared magnetic neutral line (Falconer et al. 2003); (2) total unsigned vertical current $\int J_z dA$, where J_z is the vertical current density, and (3) photospheric excess magnetic energy $\int \rho_e dA$, where ρ_e is the density of the excess magnetic

energy (Wang et al. 1996; Leka and Barnes 2003b,a). More extensive investigation is in preparation as these parameters become readily available in the near future.

CHAPTER 5

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAGNETIC ORIENTATION ANGLE AND GEOMAGNETIC STORM

5.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives in space weather research is to predict the occurrence of geomagnetic storms based on real-time solar observations. A severe geomagnetic storm may produce many harmful effects on the Earth, and usually is initiated when the energy is transferred from the Sun to the Earth's magnetosphere through CMEs. Normally, the Earth's magnetosphere is a closed structure and no energy and particles can be injected into it. Therefore, a geomagnetic storm can only occur when the IMF turns southward and remains so for some period of time (e.g., Bothmer and Schwenn 1998; Tsurutani et al. 1988; Tsurutani 2001). Reconnection between southward IMF and the northwardly directed geomagnetic field occurs at the day side magnetopause and this reconnection transports energy from the solar wind into the magnetosphere (Dungey 1961).

A geomagnetic storm has three distinct phases of evolution: (1) initial phase, lasting from minutes to hours, when D_{st} increases up to tens of nT; (2) main phase, lasting from half an hour to several hours during which D_{st} drops below zero, down to minus hundreds of nT; (3) recovery phase lasting tens of hours to days, when the D_{st} index gradually returns to the normal (undisturbed) level.

Previous studies had shown that filament chirality and the orientation of filament magnetic fields correspond to the chirality and orientation of the magnetic field in the associated MCs (Bothmer and Schwenn 1994; Rust 1994; Yurchyshyn et al. 2001, 2005). These

results suggest that immediately after the eruption one may be able to predict the orientation of the MC associated with the CME and, furthermore, the likelihood of a geomagnetic storm.

In order to advance our current understanding of the relationship between CMEs and geomagnetic storms we need a deeper knowledge of solar magnetic field that is the main source of energy for solar eruptions. Because of lack of direct measurements of the coronal magnetic field, extrapolation of the photospheric measurements upward into the corona is the primary means to reconstruct coronal magnetic structure and analyze magnetic connectivity. There are variety of extrapolation techniques such as potential, force-free and non force-free field methods. For an automated, real-time magnetic field simulations, we choose a potential field model, which requires least human intervention, a minimum set of initial assumptions and boundary conditions and thus enables us to analyze magnetic configuration of the CME source regions in the real time.

The objective of this chapter is to better understand the relationship between surface magnetic structures and the geomagnetic index (B_z or D_{st}). In this chapter, observations are described in Section 5.2, data analysis in Section 5.3. Statistical results are listed in Section 5.4. Finally, we present conclusions and discussions in Section 5.5.

5.2 Data Sets

Beginning from middle 1990s more advanced data on CMEs and IMF became available from space observatories such as SOHO, ACE and WIND. They provide unprecedented opportunity to study and forecast space weather. In this study we use the following data.

- (1) Data from LASCO coronagraphs C2 and C3 that image Thomson-scattered vis-

ible light taken through a broadband filter onboard SOHO. The data allow us to determine the occurrence of CMEs and their speeds. The CME Catalog, generated and maintained at the CDAW data center and NASA, covers the period from 1996 to present (Yashiro et al. 2004). For each event it provides, among others, height-time plots, plane-of-sky speeds, and CME onset time recorded by their first appearance in LASCO/C2, position angle, corresponding accelerations and so on. The CME speeds are determined from both linear and quadratic fits to the height-time measurements. In our study we used the linear (constant speed) fit. This choice is based on the study by MacQueen and Fisher (1983) who showed that flare associated CMEs tend to display little or no acceleration beyond the edge of the occulting disk ($1.2 R_{\odot}$).

(2) Intensities of geomagnetic storms, measured by hourly equatorial D_{st} values from the World Data Center for Geomagnetism in Kyoto¹. Since the storms with $D_{st} \leq -200\text{nT}$ are the most disastrous phenomena in space weather, for the purpose of this study we regrouped geomagnetic storms as follows: moderate storms are in the range of -30 to -100nT, intense storms are between -100 and -200nT and super storms are those with the D_{st} index less than -200nT.

(3) Solar activity reports that are available online from the NOAA Space Environment Center². Solar flare reports include the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) of the beginning, maximum and end of a flare, the X-ray flux at the flare peak and the location of the flare, if available. In our study we associated solar flares with the corresponding halo CMEs by matching their onset times.

¹<http://swdocdb.kugi.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dstdir/>

²<http://www.sec.noaa.gov/ftpmenu/indices.html>

(4) Magnetic Field Experiment (MAG) onboard ACE satellite provides one-hour averages of magnetometer data, which are used to study structure of IMF. MAG measurements, in particular the southward component, B_z , are used to forecast intensity of geomagnetic storms.

(5) SOHO's Michelson Doppler Imager (MDI) provides full-disk line-of-sight magnetograms at the photospheric layer with a spatial resolution of 4 arc sec. These magnetograms were used to analyze the structure of magnetic fields in CME source regions.

5.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Halo CMEs are classified according to their angular width into either partial or full halo CMEs. Here we concentrate only on full halo CMEs, which are defined as those having 360° span angle as indicated in the LASCO CME Catalog. Based on this criteria, we selected 318 full halo CMEs that occurred during 1996 - 2004. The identification of the geomagnetic storms, associated with these CMEs, was composed of two steps: 1) identification of the active regions with high probability of CMEs/flares occurrence that is based on full disk MDI magnetogram; 2) estimation of the range of intensity of geomagnetic storms based on the observed CME data.

5.3.1 Identification of possible CME source regions from high gradient neutral lines

There are variety of ways to identify the solar source of a front-side halo CME, such as EIT dimming (Sheeley et al. 1983; Sterling and Hudson 1997; Webb et al. 2000; Wang et al. 2002), EIT and Moreton waves (Thompson et al. 1999; Warmuth et al. 2004), post-flare

loops (Hudson et al. 1998). All these methods, however, are based on the analysis of post-event data. In this chapter we propose a gradient neutral line method that will enable us to identify possible sources of CMEs/flares from solar data taken before the eruptive event.

Eruption of CME is accompanied by release of large amount of energy in a short period of time. In order to store this energy, the magnetic field of the CME source region must be in a stressed, distorted configuration as compared to the minimum-energy potential field configuration. One signature of such a non-potential configuration is strong magnetic shear seen along the active region main neutral line (NL) that divides two opposite polarity magnetic regions. The extent to which the magnetic field is sheared along the main neutral line is a measure of global non-potentiality of an active region (Falconer 2001; Zhang 2001). Magnetic shear can be quantitatively described by the angle between the observed and potential transverse fields. Falconer et al. (2003) analyzed 17 vector magnetograms and concluded that when the horizontal gradient of the line-of-sight field (∇B_{\parallel} , herein, magnetic gradient) is higher than a certain threshold (50 G Mm^{-1} in their study), the length of a segment of the main NL with strong gradient, L_{SG} , is significantly correlated with CME productivity of an active region. In a study of 6 large (X5 or larger) flares, Wang et al. (2006) reported on the positive linear relationship between the magnetic shear and the magnetic gradient and that the latter seems to be a better tool to determine the probability of the occurrence of flares and CMEs in an active region. In this work we further examine this conclusion with more events. If this relationship is proved to be viable, then the magnetic gradient method can be used as the first step in an automatic routine to locate the most probable CME/flare source regions.

First, utilizing a full disk longitudinal MDI magnetogram obtained on the day of a

halo CME, we calculated a full disk magnetic gradient map and masked it with a neutral line map. We then chose 50 G Mm^{-1} (Falconer et al. 2003) as the threshold to calculate the length of high gradient neutral line (HGNL) at a point with the largest magnetic gradient in the gradient map, and move along the NL in both directions away from the starting point. According to Hagyard (1990), a sufficient condition for a large flare to occur is that the length of the neutral line should be equal or exceed $8 \sim 10 \text{ Mm}$. In our study we accepted that if the length of HGNL is longer than $\sim 7 \text{ Mm}$ (approx. 10 arc sec), it indicates that the region under study has a non-potential configuration and the probability of occurrence of CMEs and/or flares is high. Otherwise, we proceed to the next largest gradient point in the map and perform similar analysis again, until all neutral lines are evaluated. Then, using the first qualified gradient point as center, we cropped the full disk MDI magnetogram into a small map (Figure 5.1) with a field of view of about $300'' \times 200''$. This size can cover a typical large active region. Both images are presented in negative, i.e., darker points indicate stronger magnetic gradient. The dark thick line shown in the lower panel of Figure 5.1 is a HGNL and it represents the gradient distribution along the NL. The length of HGNL depends on the gradient threshold values. It becomes shorter and only strongest parts are left as we increase the threshold.

The locations identified by this method are shown in Table 5.1, column 2. The total length of all intervals of HGNL in the identified source region is presented in column 8 as L_{neu} . Note that for several events listed in Table 5.1 the 50 G Mm^{-1} magnetic gradient threshold was too large and therefore HGNL is zero.

To verify our identified locations, we used NOAA SEC reports on $H\alpha$ flares, associated with the selected 318 halo CMEs. Please, note that only those halo CMEs that

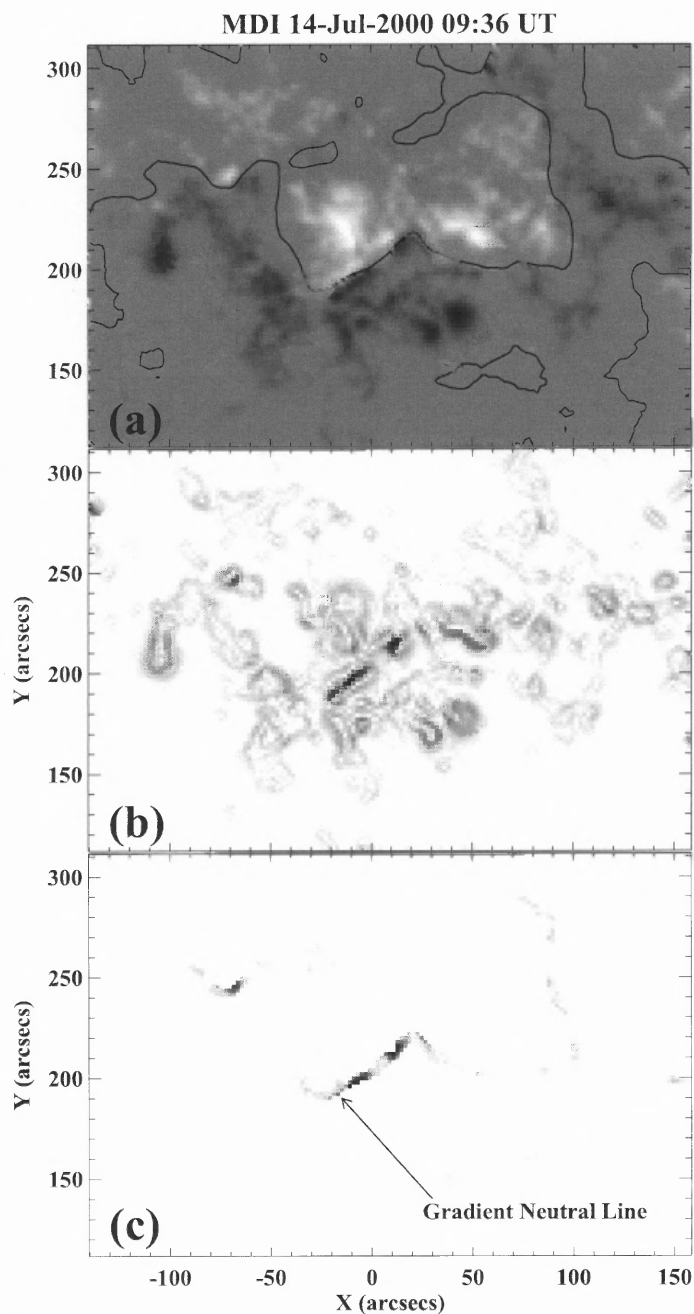


Figure 5.1 MDI high resolution magnetogram for AR 9077 taken on 2000 July 14 (top panel). Black contours are magnetic neutral lines. The middle panel (b) shows the corresponding magnetic gradient map. The bottom panel (c) is the gradient distribution along the neutral line. Dark line is a gradient neutral line.

were associated with M or X-class flares whose location was reliably indicated in the Solar Activity Reports are listed in Table 5.1. In those cases, when our predicted location significantly differs from that reported by NOAA, the NOAA coordinates are used. These coordinates are marked in Table 5.1 with asterisks.

We studied how the selection of the gradient threshold affects the active region identification. We repeated the process of identification by using several different thresholds: 25, 50, 75 and 100G Mm⁻¹. The results are shown in Table 5.2. The “correct” column shows the number of cases when the active region, identified by the magnetic gradient method, is the same as the one reported by NOAA SEC. This table shows that the magnetic gradient method performs better when the gradient threshold increases. Namely, the probability to detect a source of an X-class flare is much higher than that of an M-class flare.

Table 5.1 List of Halo CME Events Associated with Large Flares

Halo CMEs	AR location	Speed (km s ⁻¹)	Flares	D_{st} (nT)	IP structure	B_z (nT)	L_{neu} (Mm)	$ \theta $ (deg)
1997/11/04 0610UT	S19W28	785	X2.1@0558UT	-110 on 11/07	Sheath	-12.53	36.30	90.48
1998/04/29 1658UT	S17E22	1374	M6.8@1637UT	-85 on 05/02	...	-12.71	31.94	86.13
1998/05/01 2340UT	S18W09	585	M1.2@2254UT	-119 on 05/05	Sheath	-9.76	25.41	135.16
1998/05/02 1406UT	S17W15	938	X1.1@1342UT	-205 on 05/04	Sheath	-22.92	31.94	46.81
1998/11/05 2044UT	N22W18	1118	M8.4@1955UT	-149 on 11/08	MC-ESW	-11.68	58.81	91.52
1998/11/27 0830UT	S24E09*	434	M1.6@0743UT	-22 on 12/02	...	-1.90	0.0	78.46
1999/05/03 0606UT	N15E32*	1584	M4.4@0602UT	-20 on 05/03	...	-1.06	12.34	90.01
1999/05/10 0550UT	N16E19*	920	M2.5@0531UT	-49 on 05/13	...	-9.99	16.70	20.94
1999/06/22 1854UT	N22E37	1133	M1.7@1829UT	1 on 06/24	...	-4.78	3.63	173.83
1999/06/26 0731UT	N23E02	364	M2.3@0512UT	-17 on 06/29	...	-2.20	15.97	102.20
1999/06/29 1854UT	S14E01*	438	M1.6@1913UT	-25 on 07/03	...	-5.07	18.15	102.89
1999/06/30 1154UT	S15W04*	406	M1.9@1130UT	-7 on 07/04	...	-1.03	22.51	21.38

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Table 5.1 – continued from previous page

Halo	AR	Speed	Flares	D_{st}	IP	B_z	L_{neu}	$ \theta $
CMEs	location	(km s^{-1})		(nT)	structure	(nT)	(Mm)	(deg)
1999/07/28 0906UT	S15E02	462	M2.3@0814UT	-39 on 07/31	...	-5.94	23.23	15.47
1999/10/14 0926UT	N11E32	1250	X1.8@0900UT	-47 on 10/16	...	-2.82	73.33	142.81
1999/12/22 0230UT	N20E24*	570	M1.8@0216UT	-8 on 12/25	...	-2.13	38.48	105.58
1999/12/22 1931UT	N20E14	605	M5.3@1904UT	-8 on 12/25	...	-2.13	24.68	99.53
2000/01/18 1754UT	S19E08*	739	M3.9@1727UT	-97 on 01/23	...	-15.86	13.07	152.69
2000/02/08 0930UT	N27E24	1079	M1.3@0900UT	-24 on 02/11	...	-3.29	25.41	71.21
2000/02/12 0431UT	N26W23	1107	M1.7@0410UT	-67 on 02/14	...	-6.71	13.07	83.14
2000/02/17 2130UT	S22W19	728	M2.5@1852UT	-26 on 02/21	...	-5.08	15.97	42.61
2000/06/06 1554UT	N20E18	1119	X2.3@1525UT	-90 on 06/08	...	-7.25	41.38	78.22
2000/06/07 1630UT	N23E03	842	X1.2@1553UT	-52 on 06/10	...	-5.33	34.12	73.98
2000/06/10 1708UT	N22W38	1108	M5.2@1702UT	-37 on 06/13	...	-4.91	9.44	115.03
2000/07/11 1327UT	N18E27*	1078	X1.0@1310UT	-43 on 07/13	...	-2.10	79.13	8.52
2000/07/14 1054UT	N17W01	1674	X5.7@1024UT	-301 on 07/16	MC-SEN	-42.82	41.38	17.31
2000/07/25 0330UT	N06W05*	528	M8.0@0249UT	-71 on 07/29	...	-11.88	23.96	58.38
2000/09/12 1154UT	S17W09*	1550	M1.0@1213UT	-41 on 09/13	...	-7.55	0.0	113.57
2000/09/16 0518UT	N13W02	1215	M5.9@0426UT	-201 on 09/17	Sheath	-21.28	14.52	52.68
2000/11/24 0530UT	N20W05	994	X2.0@0502UT	-80 on 11/27	...	-10.78	43.56	41.29
2000/11/24 1530UT	N21W10	1245	X2.3@1513UT	-80 on 11/27	...	-10.78	53.72	6.04
2000/11/24 2206UT	N19W15	1005	X1.8@2159UT	-80 on 11/27	...	-10.78	20.33	31.61
2000/11/25 0930UT	N19W21	675	M3.5@0920UT	-119 on 11/29	MC-WSE	-11.67	53.00	39.46
2000/11/25 1931UT	N18W25	671	X1.9@1844UT	-119 on 11/29	MC-WSE	-11.67	37.03	38.88
2000/11/26 1706UT	N19W31	980	X4.0@1648UT	-119 on 11/29	MC-WSE	-11.67	16.70	25.34
2001/01/20 1931UT	S07E40	839	M7.7@2120UT	-52 on 01/24	...	-6.77	26.86	42.12
2001/03/24 2050UT	N15E22*	906	M1.7@1955UT	-56 on 03/28	...	-6.75	0.0	64.38
2001/03/28 0127UT	N16E08	427	M1.1@0158UT	-387 on 03/31	MC-SEN	-44.17	133.58	88.65
2001/03/28 1250UT	N17E02	519	M4.3@1240UT	-387 on 03/31	MC-SEN	-44.17	138.66	70.79
2001/03/29 1026UT	N16W12	942	X1.7@1015UT	-387 on 03/31	MC-SEN	-44.17	131.41	7.16
2001/04/06 1930UT	S21E31	1270	X5.6@1921UT	-63 on 04/09	...	-4.43	51.55	60.30
2001/04/09 1554UT	S21W04	1192	M7.9@1534UT	-271 on 04/11	Sheath	-17.62	58.08	82.10
2001/04/10 0530UT	S23W09	2411	X2.3@0526UT	-271 on 04/09	Sheath	-17.62	42.83	81.59
2001/04/11 1331UT	S22W27	1103	M2.3@1326UT	-77 on 04/13	...	-3.698	22.51	87.12

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Table 5.1 – continued from previous page

Halo CMEs	AR location	Speed (km s ⁻¹)	Flares	D_{st} (nT)	IP structure	B_z (nT)	L_{neu} (Mm)	$ \theta $ (deg)
2001/04/26 1230UT	N20W12	1006	M7.8@1312UT	-47 on 04/29	...	-13.38	41.38	41.79
2001/08/25 1650UT	S17E34	1433	X5.3@1645UT	-23 on 08/28	...	-4.36	53.00	22.59
2001/09/24 1030UT	S16E23	2402	X2.6@1038UT	-102 on 09/26	DG^a	-10.30	38.48	62.13
2001/09/28 0854UT	N13E18*	1000	M3.3@0830UT	-148 on 10/01	MC-NES	-12.88	15.25	51.66
2001/10/09 1130UT	S28E08*	973	M1.4@1113UT	-71 on 10/12	...	-7.11	0.0	116.29
2001/10/19 0127UT	N16W18	558	X1.6@0105UT	-187 on 10/21	Sheath	-16.93	36.30	118.07
2001/10/19 1650UT	N15W29	901	X1.6@1630UT	-187 on 10/21	Sheath	-16.93	31.22	122.39
2001/10/25 1526UT	S16W21	1092	X1.3@1502UT	-157 on 10/28	MC-NES	-10.70	42.83	62.98
2001/11/04 1635UT	N06W18	1810	X1.0@1620UT	-292 on 11/06	MC-ESW	-68.10	25.41	50.73
2001/11/28 1730UT	N05E17	500	M6.9@1635UT	-3 on 12/02	...	-0.71	51.55	76.64
2002/03/15 2306UT	S09W02	957	M2.2@2310UT	-37 on 03/19	...	-10.10	18.88	30.62
2002/04/15 0350UT	S15W01*	720	M1.2@0355UT	-127 on 04/18	MC-SWN	-12.24	42.11	21.35
2002/04/17 0826UT	S16W28	1240	M2.6@0824UT	-149 on 04/20	Sheath	-13.40	47.92	30.97
2002/07/15 2030UT	N19W01	1151	X3.0@2008UT	-17 on 07/18	...	-3.84	60.26	91.06
2002/07/18 0806UT	N20W25*	1099	X1.8@0744UT	-34 on 07/20	...	-4.49	52.27	91.47
2002/07/26 2206UT	S19E22	818	M8.7@2112UT	-14 on 07/28	...	-2.73	87.85	158.02
2002/08/16 1230UT	S14E20	1585	M5.2@1232UT	-38 on 08/17	...	-3.39	103.82	57.50
2002/12/19 2206UT	N17W09*	1092	M2.7@2153UT	-48 on 12/21	...	-1.78	3.63	98.46
2003/05/27 0650UT	S07W12	509	M1.6@0626UT	-73 on 05/30	...	0.82	63.34	142.38
2003/05/27 2350UT	S07W17	964	X1.3@2307UT	-131 on 05/30	Sheath	-15.00	56.63	141.31
2003/05/29 0127UT	S07W33	1237	X1.2@0105UT	-131 on 05/30	Sheath	-15.00	79.86	157.35
2003/10/28 1130UT	S16E08	2459	X17.2@1110UT	-363 on 10/30	MC-WSE	-24.49	206.18	171.15
2003/10/29 2054UT	S15W02*	2029	X10.0@2049UT	-401 on 10/30	Sheath	-29.18	145.93	76.32
2004/04/06 1301UT	S18E15*	1368	M2.4@1328UT	-31 on 04/07	...	-1.22	0.0	63.71
2004/07/23 1606UT	N04W08	824	M2.2@1728UT	-197 on 07/27	MC-NES	-15.29	71.87	6.69
2004/07/25 1454UT	N04E30	1333	M2.2@1349UT	-197 on 07/27	MC-NES	-15.29	79.13	23.15
2004/09/14 1012UT	N09W18	462	M1.5@0930UT	-43 on 09/15	...	-8.90	15.25	87.41
2004/11/03 1606UT	N07E38	1068	M5.0@1547UT	-10 on 11/04	...	-2.47	26.14	159.06
2004/11/06 0131UT	N08E05	818	M9.3@0034UT	-373 on 11/08	MC-SEN	-43.80	74.05	39.64
2004/11/07 1654UT	N08W16	1759	X2.0@1606UT	-373 on 11/08	MC-SEN	-43.83	66.07	36.11

5.3.2 Orientation of CMEs

In order to evaluate the geoeffectiveness of CMEs, we will examine the structure of magnetic fields in their source regions. We used a potential field model (Abramenko 1986) to extrapolate the measured photospheric fields up into the corona. The model assumes that electric currents above the photosphere are negligible and the potential field vanishes faster than $1/R$. The model always provides a good approximation to the observed large scale, steady-state coronal loops, although it is inapplicable to the dynamic solar events. Another reason to choose a potential model is because it can be automatically computed by using readily available line-of-sight magnetograms. Besides, the existing force-free field methods need either vector field measurements or some additional constraints and thus are less suitable, in their present state, for automated processes.

Recently we used the MDI magnetograms observed before and after a great solar flare occurred on Dec. 13, 2006 to made a comparison between potential field and extrapolated nonlinear force free (NLFF) field calculated by Wiegmann (2005). In Figure 5.2, the top panel shows a NLFF field extrapolation before solar flare occurred on July 14, 2000. The bottom panel shows the magnetic field after that flare. In Figure 5.3, the θ_w (top) and $\theta_w \Sigma |B^N|$ (bottom) were plotted in the area P as a function of altitude from the

Table 5.2 Comparison of Magnetic Gradient Thresholds in Source Regions Identification

Threshold	M-flare identification			X-flare identification			Overall(%)
	Correct	Wrong	%	Correct	Wrong	%	
25 G Mm ⁻¹	25	20	55.6%	24	4	85.7%	67.1%
50 G Mm ⁻¹	30	15	66.7%	25	3	89.3%	75.3%
75 G Mm ⁻¹	29	16	64.4%	25	3	89.3%	74.0%
100 G Mm ⁻¹	28	17	62.2%	26	2	92.9%	74.0%

photosphere boundary. In this case, 8,000 km appears to be a critical height, below which the non-potentiality of the active region increases after the flare and above which to a height of $\sim 70,000$ km the field is relaxed to a more potential state. Beyond 70,000 km, the fields are potential both before and after the flare. It implies that the magnetic shear may increase in a local area near flaring magnetic neutral lines, but, in the large scale, magnetic fields are relaxed. When it is far enough from solar surface, the potential field model can provide us with reliable extrapolated results.

Now let us illustrate how magnetic orientation of a CME can be quantified by using the well studied July 14, 2000 eruption. A halo CME on July 14 2000, first appeared in the LASCO/C2 FOV at 1054UT. Simultaneously, a great X5.7 solar flare was observed near the disk center in active region NOAA 9077. The SOHO MDI full disk magnetogram taken at 0936UT on July 14 2000 is shown in Figure 5.1a. The extrapolated potential field is presented in Figure 5.4. The magnetic field lines are plotted in either red or green color, depending on whether their projection is intersect with the HGNL (Figure 5.1c).

Figure 5.5 illustrates how the magnetic orientation angle θ is defined and calculated for a source region identified by the HGNL method. An extrapolated field line, L, is shown by red color, while the gradient neutral line (N) is plotted in blue. Two arbitrary points on the field line L are indicated with letters P and A. Projection of P and A on the horizontal plane (photosphere) are P' and A', correspondingly. Hence, the line P'A' is the projection of L on the surface and it intersects with the gradient neutral line N. The angle between P'A' and the southward direction is defined as the orientation angle θ . In the entire active region, numerous field lines have projections that intersect the HGNL and each of them has its unique orientation angle. Thus, the average orientation angle determined for the

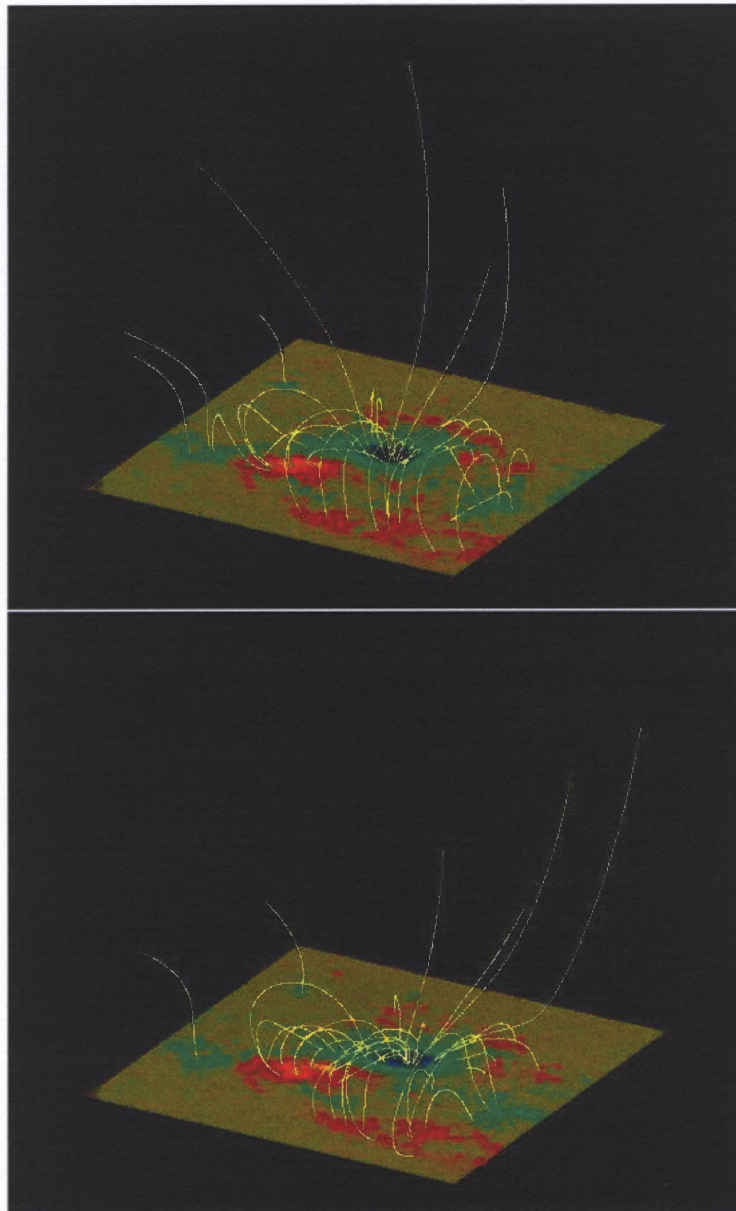


Figure 5.2 The comparison of magnetic field NLFF extrapolation before and after bastille flare on July 14, 2000. (Courtesy of Thomas Weigleemann.)

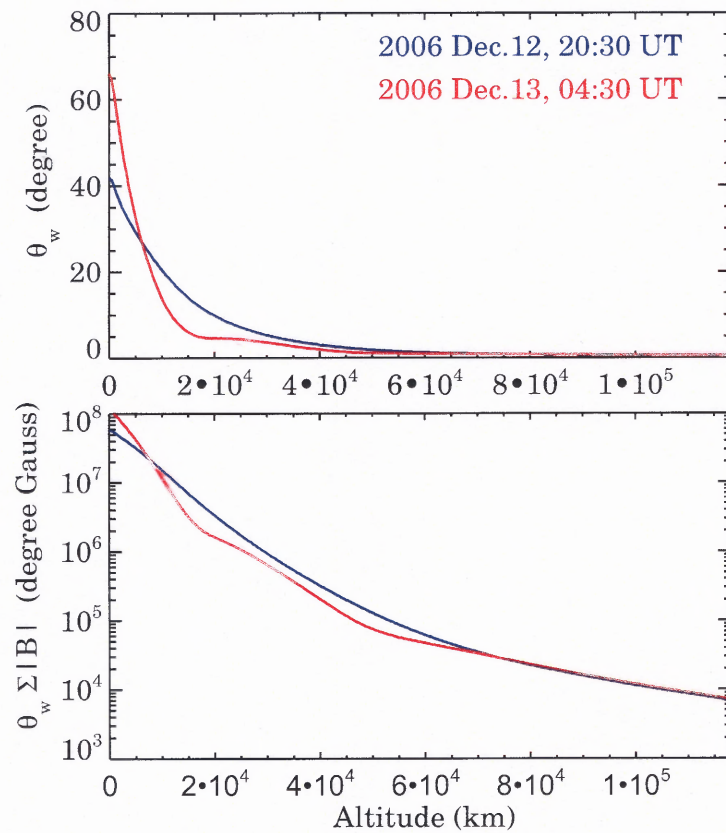


Figure 5.3 The relationship between weighted mean shear angle and altitude. The blue and red lines indicate the shear angles before and after solar flare, respectively. Beyond 70,000 km, the magnetic field become potential.

entire active region is calculated as the median of individual θ_i . In order to get an accurate orientation angle θ , for each event we extrapolated over several thousands of field lines. The number of intersected field lines to calculate the average angle are always more than hundreds. The overall orientation angle of this particular event is about 11.65° , which indicates southward magnetic field component associated with the neutral line.

5.3.3 The effect of interplanetary CMEs

ICME is the manifestation of a CME in interplanetary (IP) space. Depending on the magnetic orientation, an ICME may or may not trigger a large geomagnetic storm. There are two magnetic structures in an ICME that can carry intense southward IMFs (Gonzalez et al. 1999): the sheath region behind the forward shock (Tsurutani et al. 1988; Tsurutani and Gonzalez 1997) and an ICME body that can be often observed as a MC (Klein and Burlaga 1982). In the sheath region solar wind plasma is heated, compressed and piled up in front of the ICME body. Magnetic fields with a rapidly fluctuating orientations are characteristic for the sheath region. A MC is a large-scale and organized structure that can possess long intervals of the southwardly directed fields, therefore it is expected to be more geoeffective than sheath region (Zhang et al. 2004).

Generally, MCs could be modelled by a flux rope model (Mulligan and Russell 2001). The internal magnetic field configuration within a MC is cylindrically symmetric and force-free, with constant α , where α is the magnitude of the magnetic helicity (Goldstein 1983; Burlaga et al. 1998). According to this model, Bothmer and Schwenn (1998) described four types of MC structures: SWN, NES, SEN and NWS. In the GSE coordinate system, these types of MCs will produce different magnetic signatures in the spacecraft

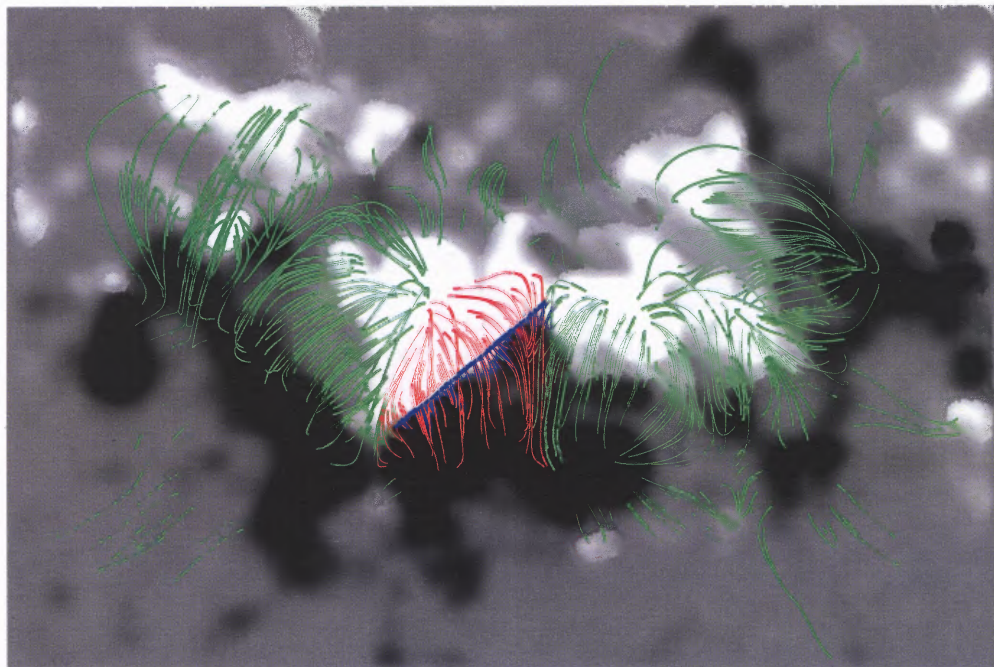


Figure 5.4 Background is an MDI magnetogram taken at 0936UT on July 14 2000. Over plotted are potential field lines. The segment of a thick blue line indicates the position of the main magnetic neutral line. The field lines that cross the main neutral line are displayed with red color.

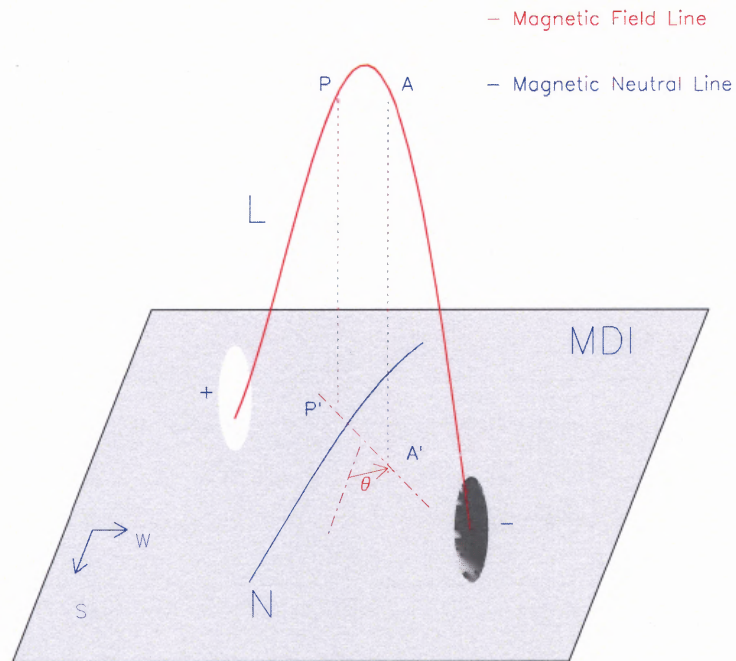


Figure 5.5 Definition of the magnetic orientation angle θ . Blue line N represents the main neutral line. $P'A'$ is projection of the field line L on the plane. Angle between $P'A'$ and the direction toward south pole is the orientation angle for this particular field line.

measurements. Assuming that the axis of a MC lies in the ecliptic plane, the SEN type clouds are those whose magnetic field vector turns from south (S, negative B_z) at the leading edge to east (E, positive B_y) at the cloud's axis and finally to the north (N, positive B_z) at its trailing edge. Such a cloud is left handed (negative helicity). A SWN type cloud has its axial field pointed westward, while the azimuthal field rotates from S to N direction. This cloud is right handed (positive helicity). Similarly one can deduct the magnetic field rotation in NES and NWS type clouds. Mulligan et al. (1998) introduced another four types of MCs: ESW, ENW, WSE and WNE. The axes of these MC structures are perpendicular to the ecliptic plane. Those MCs with an axes that lies approximately in the ecliptic plane are called bipolar clouds because B_z can change its sign (rotate) during the passage of satellite. Unipolar clouds have their axes nearly normal to the ecliptic plane and thus B_z component, measured by a satellite, is of the same sign.

By studying 34 ICME events, Wu and Lepping (2002) found that geomagnetic storms can be produced either by a sheath region, the leading or trailing field of a MC or both the sheath field and the MC itself. In their study, when only bipolar MCs were considered a cloud's leading field is found to be the major driving force for storms (44.1%). Zhang et al. (2004) examined the relationship between 271 storms and 104 magnetic clouds. It is found that the leading field is the most geoeffective region and 72% of intense storms were caused by MCs. Huttunen et al. (2005) examined 73 MCs observed by the WIND and ACE instruments in solar cycle 23 and found that in 16 cases the storm was caused by sheath region preceding the MC and for 21 events neither the sheath nor the MC triggered the storm.

To determine the effect of magnetic topology of the CME source region on the B_z

of IMF and the D_{st} index, we need to understand ICME's IP structures and distinguish between magnetic fields of the sheath region and a ICME body, and identify a storm driver. Table 5.1, column 6 lists drivers of geomagnetic storms with $D_{st} \leq -100$ nT. They are identified based on either data from OMNI-data base³ or obtained from several other studies (Wang et al. 2003, 2005b; Zhang et al. 2004; Xue et al. 2005; Huttunen et al. 2005). Our criteria to identify MC are: (1) smooth field rotation is required for all cases in this study; (2) enhanced field is qualitatively compared with the ambient solar wind values. The reference field enhancement tended to be $\geq 50\%$ with some exception; (3) The ratio of N_{α}/N_p is $\geq 0.08-0.10$ (Lynch et al. 2003; Xue et al. 2005); (4) The average values of plasma pressure β is ≤ 0.5 (Huttunen et al. 2005).

Figures 5.6 and 5.7 show ACE measurements data and D_{st} index for two MCs in observed in 2004. Panels from top to bottom are the total interplanetary magnetic field B , east-west B_y and north-south B_z components of IMF (GSE system), latitude (θ) and longitude (ϕ) of the solar wind magnetic field in RTN coordinates, proton temperature T , ratio of N_{α}/N_p , magnetic plasma pressure β , and D_{st} index. The boundaries of each MCs are indicated with vertical solid lines and the dashed lines indicate the beginning of sheath regions. All data are 1-hour averages except the magnetic field data, which are 4-minute averages.

In these two events, the D_{st} index peaked at 1400UT on July 27 (-197nT) and at 0700UT on Nov 08 (-373nT). The cause of these two geomagnetic storms was the intense southward IMF in the corresponding MCs. Figure 5.6 shows that southward IMF in the July 27 MC lasted for about 12 hours and it attained the maximum value of -17.7nT. In

³<http://cdaweb.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

this event, the field vector rotated from the northern direction (N) at the leading edge to the southern (S) at the trailing edge and it was eastwardly directed at the cloud's axis (E, positive B_y). Such a MC is of the NES type and it was the trailing field (TF) that caused the geomagnetic storm ($D_{st} = -197$ nT). Figure 5.7 shows a super geomagnetic storm ($D_{st} = -373$ nT) caused by another bipolar MC. The maximum southward B_z was -46.17 nT, nearly 3 times stronger than that in Figure 5.6. The B_z duration was about 17 hours. The magnetic field vector in this SEN MC changed from south (S) at the leading, to east (E) at the axis, to north (N) at the trailing edge. Thus the geomagnetic storm was a result of the strong southward leading field.

5.4 Results

In Table 5.1 we list results of our study for total of 73 halo CMEs. The first column shows the date and time of the halo CMEs, the second column provides locations of the source regions determined from the magnetic gradient method. The next columns are the linear speed of a CME in the plane of the sky (POS), magnitude and time of associated solar flares, the corresponding D_{st} index, the IP structures of ICME that caused the storm (only for strong storms), the maximum southward component B_z , the length of main NL and the orientation of magnetic structure in the source region.

5.4.1 Effectiveness of HGNL method on identification of flaring active regions

Figure 5.8 shows the distribution of the number of events versus their calculated L_{neu} . For comparison, the events associated with X-class or M-class flares are separated and

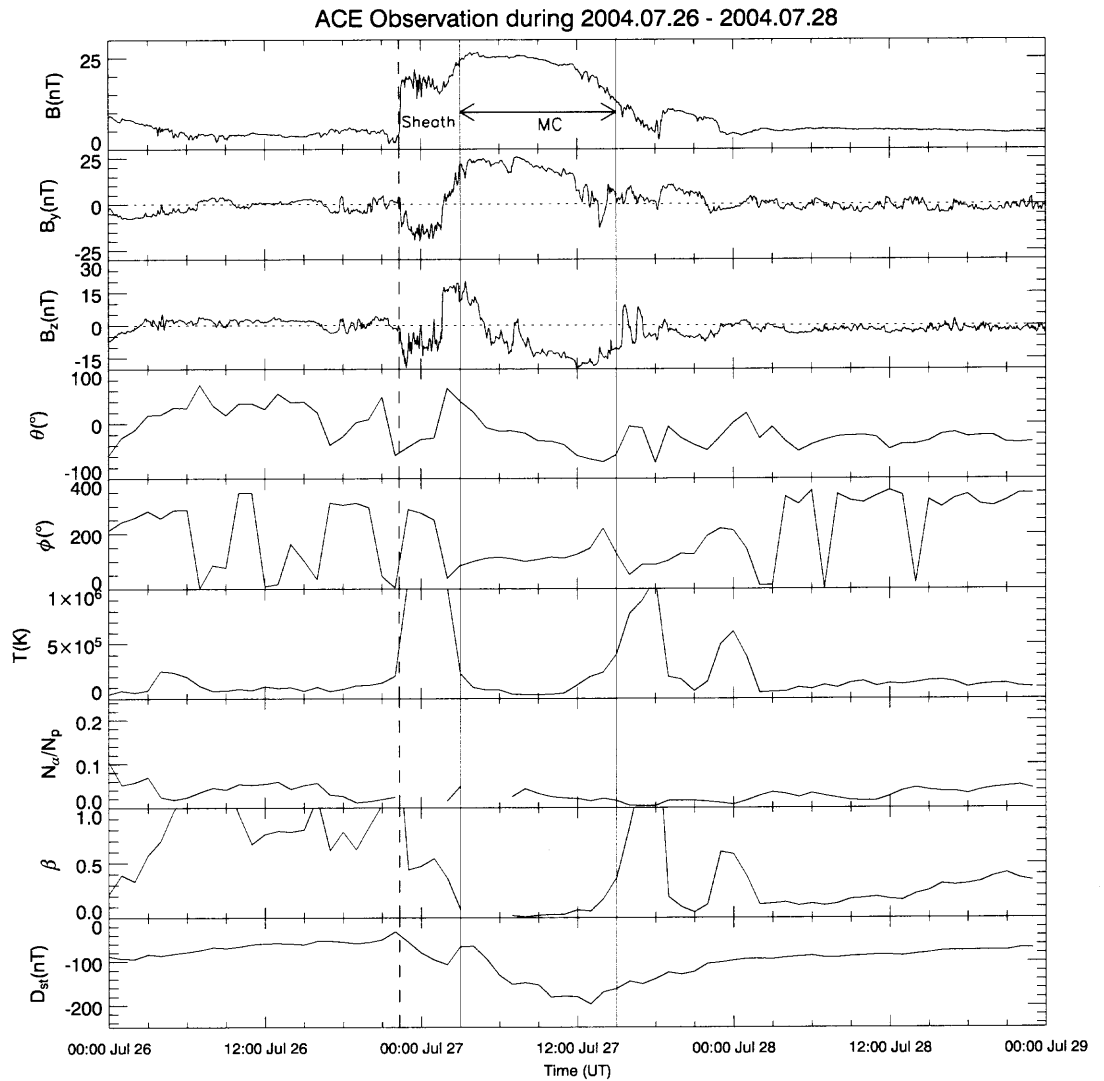


Figure 5.6 ACE measurements of IMF from July 26 to July 28 2004 (in GSE). From top to bottom are magnetic field strength (B), y and z component of magnetic fields (B_y , B_z), the latitude (θ) and longitude (ϕ) angles, proton temperature (T), density ratio (N_α/N_p), plasma pressure (β) and the D_{st} index.

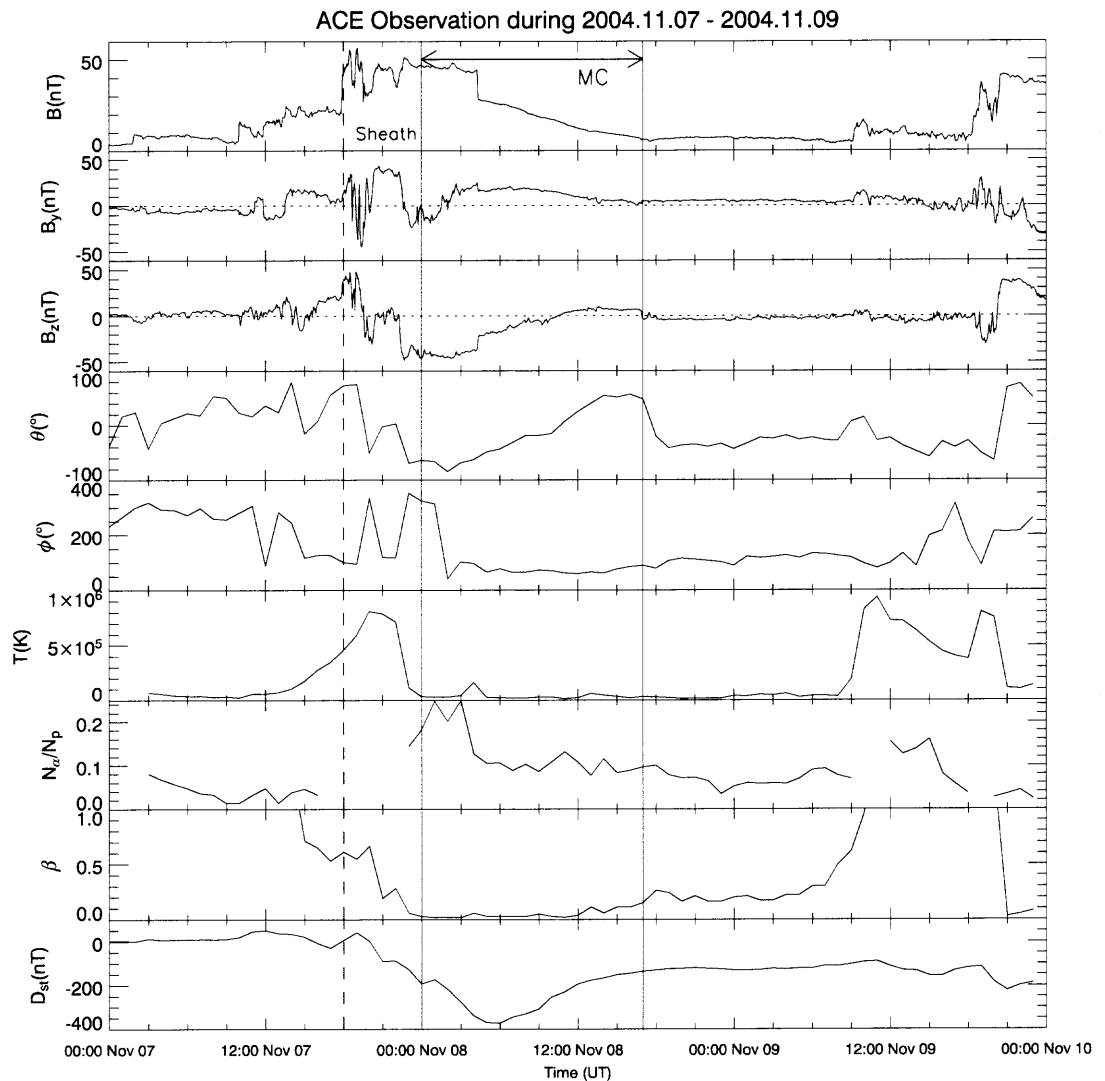


Figure 5.7 ACE measurements of IMF from Nov. 07 to Nov. 09 2004 (in GSE). From top to bottom are magnetic field strength (B), y and z component of magnetic fields (B_y , B_z), the latitude (θ) and longitude (ϕ) angles, proton temperature (T), density ratio (N_α/N_p), plasma pressure (β) and the D_{st} index.

displayed in panels (a) and (b). The median L_{neu} in panel (a) was in the range of 30–60 Mm, while it was much longer than that found in M-class events. Meanwhile, the range of L_{neu} shown in panel (a) (up to 200 Mm) is also wider than that in panel (b). This is probably because that X flares are extreme events and their tendency to occur at the location with high concentration of free magnetic energy is much higher than that for the M-class flares.

In 25% of cases (18 out of 73, indicated by asterisks) the magnetic gradient method produced wrong results and thus the location of source regions was different from that listed in NOAA SEC reports. Furthermore, 11 out of these 18 events (61%) have L_{neu} shorter than 20 Mm. Table 5.2 shows how the selection of the gradient threshold affects the source identification. A sufficiently high threshold may improve the accuracy of identification from 67% up to 75%. There is a limit on the gradient threshold, i.e., we can only improve accuracy to a certain extent: further increase of the threshold value does not lead to a significant increase in the accuracy. In this study the highest overall accuracy is about 75% when the threshold was 50 G Mm^{-1} . When we divided events based on the magnitudes of associated flares, the HGNL method produced better results for X-class flares (89% success) as compared to the M-class flares (68% success).

The limitation of HGNL method could be due to the fact that several active regions are in the same full disk MDI magnetogram. The region identified by HGNL method is indeed 'active', however, it was not responsible for any CME eruptions. Such a limit might be solved by the combination of LASCO information about CMEs, or the power spectra method proposed by Abramenko (2005). Therefore, we conclude that the prediction on the CME source region with the HGNL method is feasible, especially for those events associated with X-class flares.

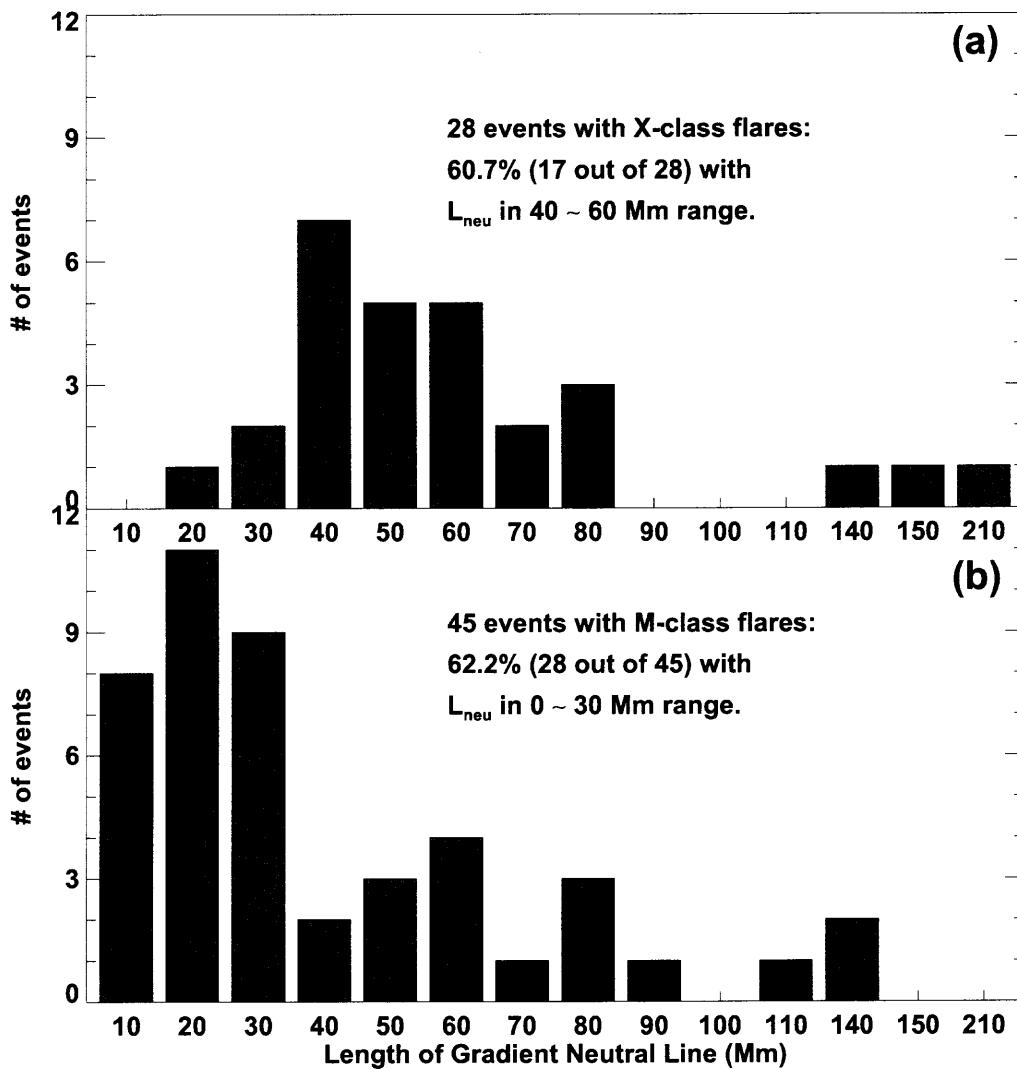


Figure 5.8 Distribution of the calculated length of magnetic gradient neutral line of 73 CME events. The width of the bar is 10 Mm.

5.4.2 Relationship between surface magnetic orientation θ , IMF B_z and the D_{st} index

In Figure 5.9, we plot the magnetic orientation angle θ versus the D_{st} index. Blue triangles represent super geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -200\text{nT}$), green crosses are intense storms ($-200\text{nT} \leq D_{st} \leq -100\text{nT}$), while red diamonds are moderate storms ($D_{st} \geq -100\text{nT}$). Labels next to data points indicate the type of the IP structure that caused the storm (see Table 5.1). Those events with northward magnetic orientation ($|\theta| \geq 90^\circ$) appear in the upper half of the graph, while southwardly directed events are in the lower part. The moderate storms for which we had difficulties in MC identification are not included in the figure.

The graph shows that about 92% of super geomagnetic storms (12 out of 13) had their orientation angle $|\theta| < 90^\circ$, thus indicating the southward orientation of the associated solar source regions. For the intense and moderate storms, the southward orientation was found in 59% (10 out of 17) and 63% (27 out of 43) of cases, respectively. Table 5.3 summarizes the results and illustrates that largest geomagnetic storms are more likely to be associated with the orientation angle smaller than 90° . We would like to emphasize that the orientation angle obtained from solar surface data should not be considered as a prediction of the orientation of a MC at 1AU. Instead, it is a parameter that indicates, when $|\theta| < 90^\circ$, whether the azimuthal field in an ICME is expected to have southwardly directed component.

We found that totally there are 8 super and intense storms (1 super, 7 intense) whose source regions on the solar surface were associated with northward oriented angles. Their IP structures shown that 6 of them were caused by the southward B_z in the sheath region. The orientation angles for the two exceptions on 1998 Nov 05 and 2003 Oct 28, were 91.52

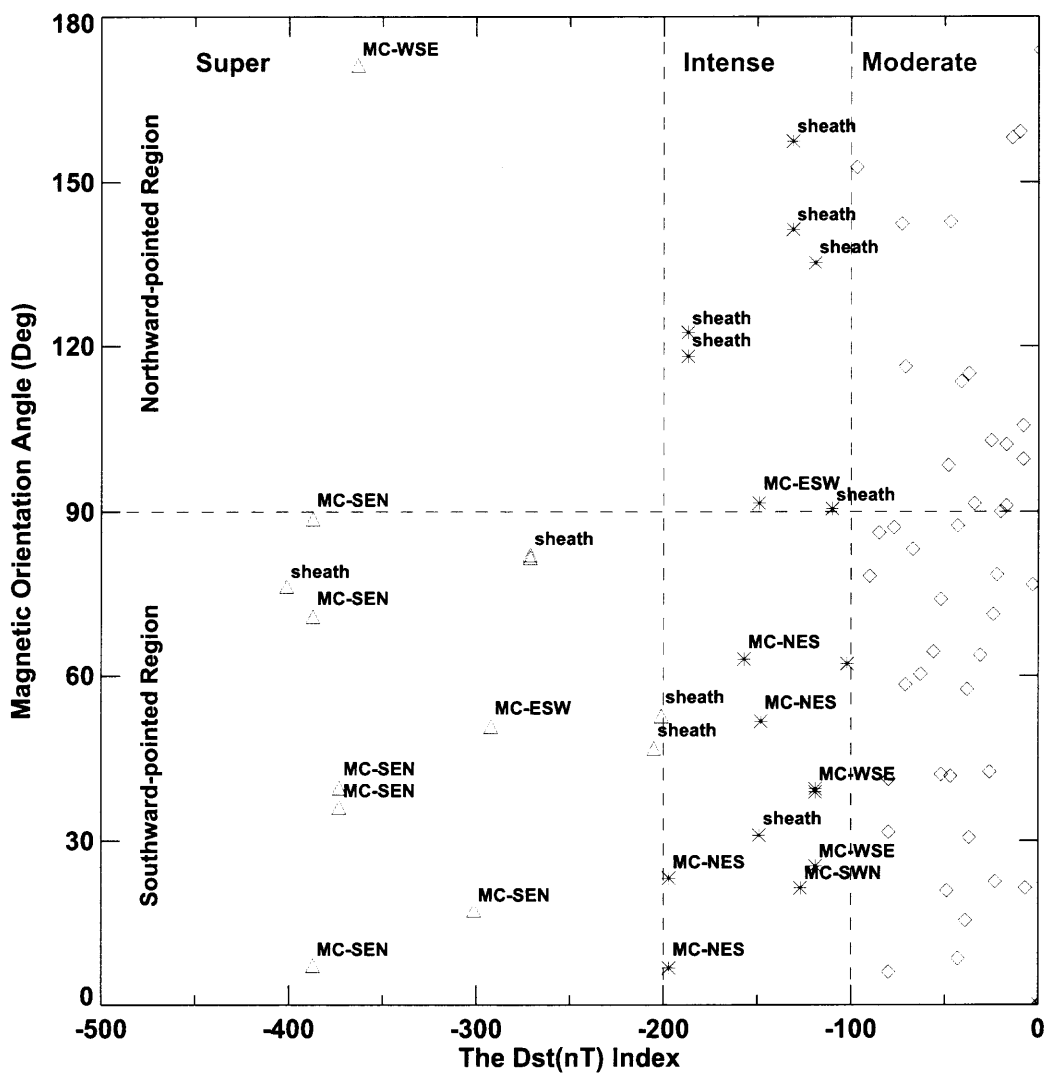


Figure 5.9 Magnetic orientation angle, θ , versus the D_{st} index. The blue triangles represent super storms, green stars show intense storms and red diamonds are moderate storms. The label indicates the responsible interplanetary magnetic structure for the storm.

and 171.15, respectively. The IP structure of the first event (intense storm, $D_{st} = -149nT$) is identified as ESW. Many studies from different perspectives were made on the second case because of its large D_{st} index (super storm, $D_{st} = -363nT$) and high intensity of X17.2 flare (Yang et al. 2004; Metcalf et al. 2005; Yurchyshyn et al. 2005). Yurchyshyn et al. (2005) concluded that this magnetic storm was caused by a MC of WSE-type. Both storms were almost entirely due to the strong axial field, which led to the reconnection and then the storm. Gopalswamy et al. (2005) obtained the same conclusion that the unipolar MC is geoeffective when the axial field vector directs southward, after the study of a super geomagnetic storm ($D_{st} = -472nT$) occurred on 2003 November 20. Therefore, the topology of the source region, at least of those super storms, plays a key role in determining the magnetic structure of an interplanetary ejecta, and furthermore the occurrence of geomagnetic storms.

Figure 5.10 shows a similar graph as in Figure 5.9 but the D_{st} index was replaced by IMF B_z . The trend is similar: for super and intense geomagnetic storms the orientation angle tends to be smaller than 90° , i.e., the corresponding source regions have southward orientation.

Recently, Kim et al. (2007); Moon et al. (2005) proposed the CME earthward direction parameter D to quantify the degree of symmetry of CME shape and found that those CMEs with large direction parameters ($D > 0.4$) are highly associated with geo-

Table 5.3 Magnetic Orientation of Solar Source Regions and Geomagnetic Storms

$D_{st}(nT)$	$ \theta < 90^\circ$	$ \theta \geq 90^\circ$	Total	Fraction of $\theta < 90^\circ$ (%)
$D_{st} \leq -200$	12	1	13	92%
$D_{st} \leq -150$	15	3	18	83%
$D_{st} \leq -100$	22	8	30	73%

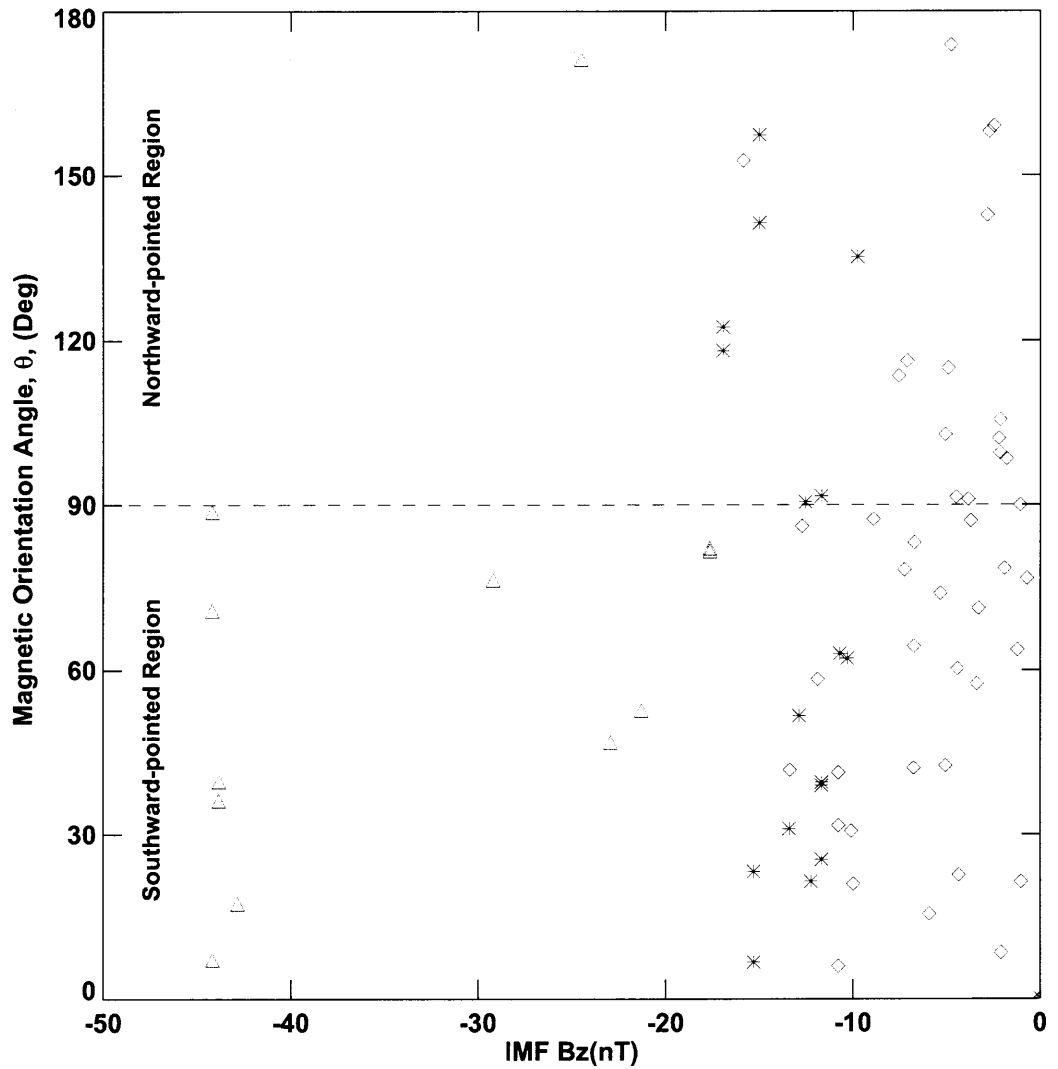


Figure 5.10 The magnetic orientation angle θ versus corresponding IMF B_z . In the case of super geomagnetic storms produced by strong negative B_z , the corresponding source regions also had southward oriented magnetic fields.

magnetic storms and their association probability rises from 52% to 84% as the direction parameter increases from 0.4 to 1.0. Among the events listed in Table 5.1, they selected 64 CMEs whose direction parameters are well determined. They found that those six exceptional events that have northward magnetic field orientations but cause strong geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -100nT$) all have large direction parameters ($D \leq 0.6$). The combination of magnetic orientation angle θ and direction parameter D might help us to improve the accuracy of geomagnetic storms prediction.

5.5 Conclusions and Discussion

Automatic prediction of super geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -200nT$) is an important task in space weather programs. In our present work, the automatic prediction is performed in the following procedures:

- identification of CME source regions: longitudinal magnetic gradient and gradient neutral lines are calculated from full disk SOHO MDI magnetograms by using a suitable threshold value (50 G Mm^{-1}). The solar active regions most probable to launch a CME are located on the solar disk by identifying locations with the largest length of the strongest HGNL. Due to the projection effect on HGNL calculation, those active regions close to the limb of solar disk might not be identified by HGNL method.
- potential field extrapolation: a potential field model is used to extrapolate coronal magnetic fields of the selected source region. Those extrapolated field lines that intersect with the strongest HGNL are chosen to calculate the magnetic orientation angle θ .
- prediction: the magnetic orientation angle is used to predict the presence of southward B_z in an ejecta: The events associated with $|\theta| < 90^\circ$ are more likely to cause a super

geomagnetic storm.

Based on a study of 73 halo CMEs associated with M and X class flares that occurred between 1996 and 2004, we have reached the following conclusions:

1. Magnetic gradient method is proved to be a viable approach to locate the source region of either CMEs or flares. The overall accuracy is about 75% (55 out of 73 events). It appears to be more accurate in identification of sources of X-class flares (89%) than M-class flares (68%).

2. The magnetic orientation angle θ , determined from a potential field model, can be used to predict the probability of super geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -200\text{nT}$). About 92% of the super storms (12 out of 13 events) were associated with solar source regions that had orientation angles $|\theta|$ smaller than 90° , i.e. southward oriented magnetic fields. Geomagnetic storms with northward oriented source region ($|\theta| \geq 90^\circ$) may be caused by the sheath region and/or unipolar magnetic clouds.

3. The relationship between the Dst index and the orientation angle indicates that, at least for super storms, the topology of the source region plays a key role in determining the magnetic structure of an interplanetary ejecta.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

This dissertation has covered a series of relationships between magnetic features of solar active regions, solar activities such as solar flares, CMEs, etc. and the induced geomagnetic storms in the interplanetary space. The following contributions to the space weather forecasting have been made as part of this dissertation:

1. The statistical ordinal logistic regression model is first time applied into solar physics study and is proved to be a viable approach to automated predict the occurrence probability of solar flares in next 24 hours. The predictive variables used in the model so far are magnetic parameters obtained through SOHO MDI magnetograms. The model is easy to extend to include other parameters, in order to improve the forecast ability. The results are much better than those published in NASA/SDAC service, and comparable to the data provided by NOAA/SEC service. The major breakthrough is that solar flare might be forecasted automatically and quantitatively.

2. The magnetic orientation angle θ , determined from a potential field model, can be used to predict the probability of super geomagnetic storms ($D_{st} \leq -200\text{nT}$). About 92% of the super storms (12 out of 13 events) were associated with solar source regions that had orientation angles $|\theta|$ smaller than 90° , i.e. southward oriented magnetic fields. Geomagnetic storms with northward oriented source region ($|\theta| \geq 90^\circ$) may be caused by the sheath region and/or unipolar magnetic clouds. The relationship between D_{st} index and the orientation angle indicates that at least for super geomagnetic storms, the topology of the source region plays a key role in determining the magnetic structure of an interplan-

etary ejecta. Meanwhile, the potential field extrapolation model is proved as accurate as nonlinear extrapolation model, when the distance is far from solar surface.

3. Compared with magnetic shear, magnetic gradient might be a better proxy to locate the source region of where a larger flare or CME occurs. Based on a study of 73 halo CMEs associated with larger flares, the overall identification accuracy is about 75% (55 out of 73 events). It appears to be more accurate in identification of sources of X-class flares (89%) than M-class flares (68%).

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