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MEASUREMENT OF THE LONGTIDUDIANL SINGLE SPIN ASYMMETRY, A_L, FOR POLARIZED PROTON-PROTON COLLISIONS IN THE $W \rightarrow \mu$ DECAY CHANNEL

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Michael J. Beaumier

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Kenneth Barish , Chairperson
Professor Rich Seto
Professor John Ellison

The Dissertation of Michael J. Beaumier is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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Some say that it takes a village to raise a child. The same can be said of raising a graduate student up to earning a PhD. This thesis is dedicated to the multitude who have helped me become the man I am today, and to students who struggle, and their mentors who do not give up on them.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This thesis discusses the process of extracting information about the spin structure of protons, specifically, spin contributions from the sea of quarks and antiquarks, which are kinematically distinct from the 'valence quarks'. We have known since the 'proton-spin crisis' [3] of the 1990s that proton spin does not entirely reside in the valence quarks, so the thurst of experimental efforts since then have been designed to determine both how to probe the proton spin structure, and how to validate models for proton spin structure. Here, I discuss one particular approach to understanding the sea-quark spin contribution, which utilizes the production of real W-bosons, and the W coupling with polarized spin structure in the proton sea, as produced from polarized protons collisions. Only one of the colliding protons is longitudinally spin polarized, in this analysis, and they are collided at an energy of $500GeV$. The expermental observable used is referred to as "A_L" which is expressed mathematically as a ratio of sums and differences of various helicity combinations of singly polarized interactions between two protons, i.e. $p + p^{\Rightarrow} :\rightarrow W \rightarrow \mu + \nu$. Once A_L has been experimentally measured, it can then be used to determine appropriate polarizations of proton sea-quarks, within a given uncertainty, if we write the cross-sections used in the calculation of A_L in terms of polarized parton distribution functions. Finally, this thesis will also include a discussion of my work experimentally determining the absolute luminosity of collisions at RHIC, which is needed as a normalization on any cross section used in the analysis. In particular, studying the cross section of the W interaction can help to validate our models for assigning a signal-to-background ratio to the $W \rightarrow \mu$ events.

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1.1 A Brief History of the Proton

The angular momentum of the proton has been a subject of study for the last 20 years**[CITATION NEEDED]**. One of the challenges of particle physics is to create a framework which can accurately describe matter, as well as predict the behavior of matter at all energy scales. The proton is a baryon which makes up the majority of the mass in the visible universe, yet fully understanding the origins of its properties - such as its mass and spin, still eludes us. However, through the applicaiton of the scientific method over many generations of physicists, we have magnificently described this important particle, and understood much of its properties. However, one property which still defies our descriptions is its fundamental angular momentum, spin.

Our understanding of the proton has evolved and sharpened since the first experiments in deep inelastic scattering showed that the proton is not a fundamental particle [4]. Gell-Mann later planted the seeds of a theoretical framework which could in part describe some of the structure of baryons, a class of hadrons which we may naively describe as composed of three 'valence quarks'**[CITATION NEEDED]**. We can apply well known spin-sum rules to the indivdual spins of the valence quarks which compose the proton in our naive valence-model to produce a correct prediction for the protons' spin $\frac{1}{2}$. When experimenters set out to measure the contribution of these valence quarks in 1988 at the EMC experiment [3], they were flabbergasted to find that the valence quarks carry only a small fraction of the proton's spin. Although recent papers [9] suggest that this 'spin crisis' is simple due to misattribution of spin, most literature to date has focused on understanding how to model the proton with parton distribution functions. These parton distribution functions come in many varieties, and probe different degrees of freedom within the proton, in both the case of unpolarized partion distribution funcitons, and polarized parton distribution functions.

1.2 Scope and Objectives of This Work

This thesis will describe the research I carried out between May of 2010 through August of 2016. I will

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