

Probing the Deuteron at Very Large Internal Momenta



C. Yero¹, D. Abrams², Z. Ahmed³, A. Ahmidouch⁴, B. Aljawrneh⁴, S. Alsalmi⁵, R. Ambrose³, W. Armstrong⁶,
A. Asaturyan⁷, K. Assumin-Gyimah⁸, C. Ayerbe Gayoso⁹, A. Bandari⁹, J. Bane¹⁰, S. Basnet³,
V.V. Berdnikov¹¹, J. Bericic¹⁵, H. Bhatt⁸, D. Bhetuwal⁸, D. Biswas¹², W.U. Boeglin¹, P. Bosted⁹,
E. Brash¹³, M. Bukhari¹⁴, H. Chen², J.P. Chen¹⁵, M. Chen², M.E. Christy¹², S. Covrig¹⁵, K. Craycraft¹⁰,
S. Danagouliau⁴, D. Day², M. Diefenthaler¹⁵, M. Dlamini¹⁶, J. Dunne⁸, B. Duran⁶, D. Dutta⁸, R. Ent¹⁵,
R. Evans³, H. Fenker¹⁵, N. Fomin¹⁰, E. Fuchey¹⁷, D. Gaskell¹⁵, T.N. Gautam¹², F.A. Gonzalez¹⁸,
O. Hansen¹⁵, F. Hauenstein¹⁹, A.V. Hernandez¹¹, T. Horn¹¹, G.M. Huber³, * M.K. Jones¹⁵, S. Joosten⁶,
M.L. Kabir⁸, A. Karki⁸, C.E. Keppel¹⁵, A. Khanal¹, P. King¹⁶, E. Kinney²⁰, N. Lashley-Colthirst¹²,
S. Li²¹, W.B. Li⁹, A.H. Liyanage¹², D.J. Mack¹⁵, S.P. Malace¹⁵, J. Matter², D. Meekins¹⁵, R. Michaels¹⁵,
A. Mkrtchyan⁷, H. Mkrtchyan⁷, S.J. Nazeer¹², S. Nanda⁸, G. Niculescu²², M. Niculescu²², D. Nguyen²,
N. Nuruzzaman²³, B. Pandey¹², S. Park¹⁸, C.F. Perdrisat⁹, E. Pooser¹⁵, M. Rehfuß⁶, J. Reinhold¹,
B. Sawatzky¹⁵, G. Smith¹⁵, A. Sun²⁴, H. Szumila-Vance¹⁵, V. Tadevosyan⁷, S.A. Wood¹⁵, and J. Zhang¹⁸

¹Florida International University, University Park, Florida 33199, USA

²University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903, USA

³University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0A2, Canada

⁴North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Greensboro, North Carolina 27411, USA

⁵Kent State University, Kent, Ohio 44240, USA

⁶Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122, USA

⁷A.I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute),
2 Alikhanian Brothers Street, 0036, Yerevan, Armenia

⁸Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi 39762, USA

⁹The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185, USA

¹⁰University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996, USA

¹¹Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064, USA

¹²Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia 23669, USA

¹³Christopher Newport University, Newport News, Virginia 23606, USA

¹⁴Jazan University, Jazan 45142, Saudi Arabia

¹⁵Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility, Newport News, Virginia 23606, USA

¹⁶Ohio University, Athens, Ohio 45701, USA

¹⁷University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut 06269, USA

¹⁸Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York 11794, USA

¹⁹Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia 23529, USA

²⁰University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, Colorado 80309, USA

²¹University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire 03824, USA

²²James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807, USA

²³Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08854, USA and

²⁴Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213, USA

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²H($e, e'p$) n cross sections have been measured at 4-momentum transfers of $Q^2 = 4.5 \pm 0.5$ (GeV/c)² over a range of neutron recoil momenta, p_r , with p_r reaching up to ~ 1.0 GeV/c. The data have been obtained at fixed neutron recoil angles $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$, 45° and 75° with respect to the 3-momentum transfer \vec{q} . The new data agrees well with previous data which reached $p_r \sim 500$ MeV/c. At $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$ and 45° , final state interactions (FSI), meson exchange currents (MEC) and isobar configurations (IC) are suppressed and the plane wave impulse approximation (PWIA) provides the dominant cross section contribution. The new data are compared to recent theoretical calculations, where a significant disagreement for missing momenta $p_r > 700$ MeV/c is observed.



The deuteron is the only bound two-nucleon system and serves as an ideal framework to study the strong nuclear force at the sub-Fermi distance scale, a region

which is currently practically unexplored and not well understood. At such small inter-nucleon distances, the nucleon-nucleon (NN) interaction is expected to become

repulsive and the interacting nucleons begin to overlap. The dynamics in this short distance region are directly related to the dynamics of two-nucleon short range correlations (SRC) observed in $A > 2$ nuclei [1–6]. Short-range studies of the deuteron are also important in determining whether, or to what extent, the description of nuclei in terms of nucleon/meson degrees of freedom is still valid, before having to include explicit quark degrees of freedom, an issue of fundamental importance in nuclear physics [7]. As of the present time, there are only a few nuclear physics experiments for which a transition between nucleonic to quark degrees of freedom has been observed [8–10].

The most direct way to study the short range structure of the deuteron wave function (or equivalently, its high momentum components) is via the exclusive deuteron electro-disintegration reaction at internal momenta $p_r > 300$ MeV/c. For ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$, within the PWIA, the virtual photon couples to the bound proton which is subsequently ejected from the nucleus without further interaction with the recoiling system (neutron). The neutron carries a recoil momentum, p_r , equal in magnitude but opposite in direction to the initial state proton, $\vec{p}_r \sim -\vec{p}_{i,p}$, thus providing information on the momentum of the bound nucleon and its momentum distribution.

In reality, the ejected nucleon undergoes FSI corresponding to subsequent interactions with the recoiling system. Another possibility is that the photon couples to the virtual meson being exchanged between nucleons (MEC), or that the photon excites a bound nucleon into an isobar resonance state (Δ) which subsequently decays ($\Delta N \rightarrow NN$) via FSI to the ground state (IC). FSI, MEC and IC can significantly alter the recoiling neutron momentum thereby obscuring the original momentum of the bound nucleon and reducing the possibility of directly probing the deuteron momentum distribution.

Theoretically, MEC and IC are expected to be suppressed at $Q^2 > 1$ (GeV/c)² and Bjorken $x_{\text{Bj}} \equiv Q^2/2M_p\omega > 1$, where M_p and ω are the proton mass and photon energy transfer, respectively [7]. The suppression of MEC can be understood from the fact that the estimated MEC scattering amplitude is proportional to $(1 + Q^2/m_{\text{meson}}^2)^{-2}(1 + Q^2/\Lambda^2)^{-2}$, where $m_{\text{meson}} \approx 0.71$ GeV/c² and $\Lambda^2 \sim 0.8 - 1$ (GeV/c)² [11]. IC can be suppressed kinematically by selecting $x_{\text{Bj}} > 1$, where one probes the lower energy (ω) part of the deuteron quasi-elastic peak which is maximally away from the inelastic resonance electro-production threshold. Previous deuteron electro-disintegration experiments performed at lower Q^2 ($Q^2 < 1$ (GeV/c)²) [12] have helped quantify the contributions from FSI, MEC and IC on the ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ cross section and to determine the kinematics at which they are either suppressed (MEC and IC) or under control (FSI).

At large Q^2 , FSI can be described by the Generalized Eikonal Approximation (GEA) [7, 11, 12], which predicts

a strong dependence of FSI on neutron recoil angles θ_{nq} . GEA predicts FSI to be maximal for $\theta_{nq} \sim 70^\circ$. This strong angular dependence has been found to lead to the cancellation of FSI at neutron recoil angles around $\theta_{nq} \sim 40^\circ$ and $\theta_{nq} \sim 120^\circ$. Because at $\theta_{nq} \sim 120^\circ$ ($x_{\text{Bj}} < 1$) IC are not negligible, the $x_{\text{Bj}} > 1$ ($\theta_{nq} \sim 40^\circ$) kinematics are the preferred choice to suppress IC as well as FSI.

The first ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ experiments at high Q^2 (> 1 (GeV/c)²) were carried out at Jefferson Lab (JLab) in Halls A [13] and B [14]. Both experiments determined that the cross sections for fixed missing momenta indeed exhibited a strong angular dependence with neutron recoil angles, peaking at $\theta_{nq} \sim 70^\circ$ in agreement with GEA [11, 12] calculations. In Hall B, the CEBAF Large Acceptance Spectrometer (CLAS) measured angular distributions for a range of Q^2 values as well as momentum distributions. However, statistical limitations made it necessary to integrate over a wide angular range to determine momentum distributions which are therefore dominated by FSI, MEC and IC for p_r above ~ 300 MeV/c.

In the Hall A experiment [13], the pair of high resolution spectrometers (HRS) made it possible to measure the missing momentum dependence of the cross section for fixed neutron recoil angles (θ_{nq}) reaching recoil momenta up to $p_r = 550$ MeV/c at $Q^2 = 3.5 \pm 0.25$ (GeV/c)². For the first time, very different momentum distributions were found for $\theta_{nq} = 35 \pm 5^\circ$ and $45 \pm 5^\circ$ compared to $\theta_{nq} = 75 \pm 5^\circ$. Theoretical models attributed this difference to the suppression of FSI at the smaller angles ($\theta_{nq} = 35, 45^\circ$) compared to FSI dominance at $\theta_{nq} = 75^\circ$ [13].

The experiment presented in this Letter takes advantage of the kinematic window previously found in the Hall A experiment [13] and extends the ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ cross section measurements to $Q^2 = 4.5 \pm 0.5$ (GeV/c)² and neutron recoil momenta up to $p_r \sim 1$ GeV/c, which is almost double the maximum recoil momentum measured in Hall A [13]. Measurements at such large Q^2 and high missing momenta required scattered electrons to be detected at about 8.5 GeV/c, which was only made possible with the newly commissioned Hall C Super High Momentum Spectrometer (SHMS). At the selected kinematic settings with neutron recoil angles between 35° and 45° , MEC and IC are suppressed and FSI are under control giving access to high momentum components of the deuteron wave function.

A 10.6 GeV electron beam was incident on a 10 cm long liquid deuterium target (LD₂). The scattered electron and knocked-out proton were detected in coincidence by the new SHMS and the existing High Momentum Spectrometer (HMS), respectively. The beam currents delivered by the accelerator ranged between 45-60 μA and the beam was rastered over a 2x2 mm² area to reduce the effects of localized boiling on the cryogenic targets (hydrogen and deuterium).

Both Hall C spectrometers have similar standard detector packages, each with four scintillator planes [15] used for triggering, a pair of drift chambers [16] used for tracking, and a calorimeter [17] and gas Čerenkov [18, 19] used for electron identification. For each spectrometer, a logical signal was created from the coincidence of hits in three of the four scintillator planes. The event trigger was the coincidence of these two signals.

We measured three central missing momentum settings: $p_r = 80, 580$ and 750 MeV/c. At each of these settings, the electron arm (SHMS) was fixed and the proton arm (HMS) was rotated from smaller to larger angles corresponding to the lower and higher missing momentum settings, respectively. At these kinematic settings, the 3-momentum transfer covered a range of $2.4 \lesssim |\vec{q}| \lesssim 3.2$ GeV/c, which is more than twice the highest neutron recoil momentum measured in this experiment. As a result, most of the virtual photon momentum is transferred to the proton, which scatters at angles relative to \vec{q} in the range $0.4^\circ \lesssim \theta_{pq} \lesssim 21.4^\circ$. At these forward angles and large momenta transferred to the proton, the process where the neutron is struck by the virtual photon is suppressed.

Hydrogen elastic $^1\text{H}(e, e'p)$ data were also taken at kinematics close to the deuteron $p_r = 80$ MeV/c setting for cross-checks with the spectrometer acceptance model using the Hall C Monte Carlo simulation program, SIMC [20]. Additional $^1\text{H}(e, e'p)$ data were also taken at three other kinematic settings that covered the SHMS momentum acceptance range for the deuteron and were used for spectrometer optics optimization, momentum calibration and the determination of the spectrometer offsets and kinematic uncertainties [21].

The kinematics of the recoiling neutron was reconstructed using energy-momentum conservation. The recoil momentum is defined as $\vec{p}_r = \vec{q} - \vec{p}_f$, and the nuclear binding (or “missing”) energy as $E_m = \omega - T_p - T_r$, where \vec{p}_f is the final proton momentum, \vec{q} is the 3-momentum transfer and T_p is the final proton kinetic energy. The recoil particle kinetic energy, T_r , is calculated from the electron and proton 4-momentum vectors assuming an exclusive three-body final state with a recoiling neutron.

Identical event selection criteria were used for the hydrogen and deuteron data. The criteria were determined by making standard cuts on the spectrometer momentum fraction (δ) to select a region for which the reconstruction optics are well known, a cut to restrict the HMS solid angle acceptance to events that passed directly through the collimator and not by re-scattering from the collimator edges, a “missing” energy cut (peak ~ 2.22 MeV for the deuteron) to select true $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ coincidences, a coincidence time cut to select true coincidence events, a PID cut on the SHMS calorimeter normalized total track energy to select electrons and not other sources of background (mostly pions), and a cut on the reconstructed HMS and SHMS reaction vertices to select events that

originated from the same reaction vertex at the target.

The experimental data yields for both hydrogen and deuteron data were normalized by the total charge and corrected for various inefficiencies. For $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$, the corrections were as follows: tracking efficiencies (98.9%-HMS, 96.4%-SHMS), total live time (92.3%), proton loss inefficiency due to nuclear interactions in the HMS (4.7%) [21] and target boiling inefficiency (4.2%) [21]. The values in parentheses were averaged over all momentum settings.

For $^1\text{H}(e, e'p)$, the corrected data yield was compared to SIMC calculations using Arrington’s proton form factor (FF) parametrization [22] to check the spectrometer acceptance model. The ratio of data to simulation yield was determined to be $97.6 \pm 0.3\%$ (statistical uncertainty only).

The systematic uncertainties of the measured cross sections were determined from normalization and kinematic uncertainties in the beam energy and spectrometer angle/momentum settings. The individual contributions from normalization uncertainties for each setting were determined to be (on average): tracking efficiencies (0.40%-HMS, 0.59%-SHMS), and target boiling (0.38%) which were added in quadrature and determined to be about 0.81 % per setting. The systematic uncertainties due to proton loss in HMS (0.49%), total live time (3.0%), and total charge (2.0%) were the same for every setting and thus were added (in quadrature) as an overall normalization constant to the final result.

The systematic uncertainties on the cross section due to systematic error on the absolute beam energy and spectrometer angle/momentum settings were determined point-to-point in (θ_{nq}, p_r) bins for each missing momentum setting, and added in quadrature for overlapping p_r bins. For $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$ and 75° (presented in this Letter) the overall kinematic uncertainty varied up to 6.5%. The overall systematic uncertainty in the cross section was determined by the quadrature sum of the normalization and kinematic uncertainties. This result was then added in quadrature to the statistical uncertainty (20-30% on average) to obtain the final uncertainty in the cross section.

The data were radiatively corrected for each bin in (θ_{nq}, p_r) by multiplying the measured cross sections by the ratio of the calculated particle yield excluding and including radiative effects. The SIMC simulation code was used for these calculations with the Deuteron Model by Laget including FSI [23]. For each bin in (θ_{nq}, p_r) , the averaged $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ kinematics was calculated and used in the bin centering correction factor defined as: $f_{bc} \equiv \sigma_{\text{avg.kin}}/\bar{\sigma}$, where $\sigma_{\text{avg.kin}}$ is the cross section calculated at the averaged kinematics and $\bar{\sigma}$ is the cross section averaged over the kinematic bin. The systematic uncertainty associated with the radiative and bin-centering corrections was investigated using the Laget PWIA and FSI models but negligible effects on the cross sections

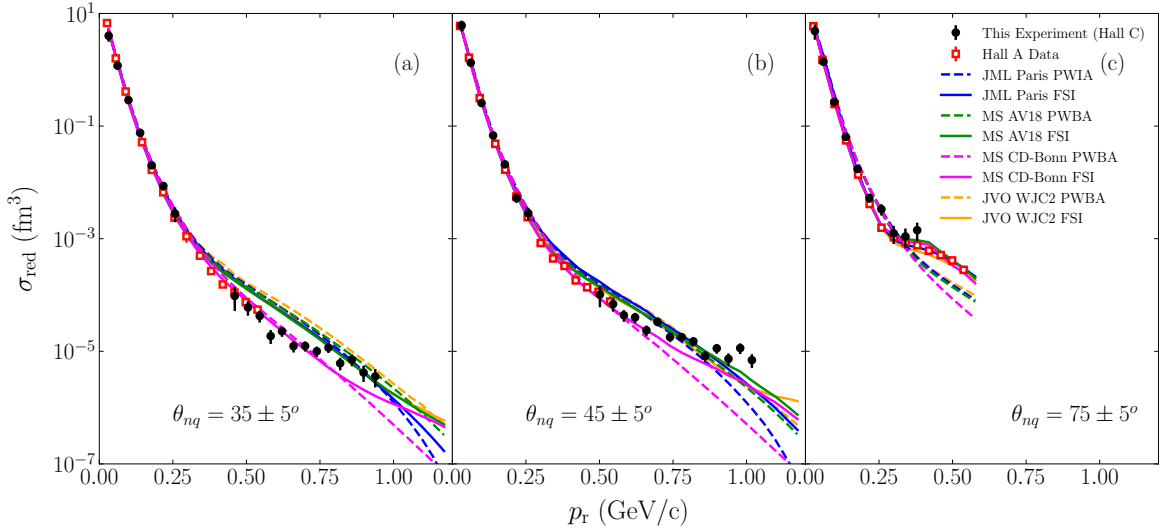


FIG. 1. The reduced cross sections $\sigma_{\text{red}}(p_r)$ as a function of neutron recoil momentum p_r are shown in (a)-(c) for recoil angles $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$ and 75° , respectively, with a bin width of $\pm 5^\circ$. The data is compared to the previous Hall A experiment (red square) results [13] as well as the theoretical reduced cross sections using the Paris (blue), AV18 (green), CD-Bonn (magenta) and WJC2 (orange) NN potentials.

were found. The experimental and theoretical reduced cross sections were extracted and are defined as follows:

$$\sigma_{\text{red}} \equiv \frac{\sigma_{\text{exp(th)}}}{E_f p_f f_{\text{rec}} \sigma_{\text{cc1}}}, \quad (1)$$

where $\sigma_{\text{exp(th)}}$ is the 5-fold experimental (or theoretical) differential cross section, $\frac{d^5\sigma}{d\omega d\Omega_e d\Omega_p}$, E_f is the final proton energy, $f_{\text{rec}} \equiv \frac{2p_f^2 E_r}{2p_f^2 E_r - (q^2 - (p_f^2 + p_e^2))E_f}$ is a recoil factor obtained by integrating over the missing energy of the bound state in the 6-fold differential cross section where E_r is the neutron recoil energy, and σ_{cc1} is the de Forest [24] electron-proton off-shell cross section calculated using the FF parametrization of Ref. [22]. Within the PWIA, σ_{red} corresponds to the PWIA cross section from the scattering of a proton in the deuteron.

Figure 1 shows the extracted experimental and theoretical reduced cross sections as a function of neutron recoil momentum p_r for three recoil angle settings at $Q^2 = 4.5 \pm 0.5$ (GeV/c)². For the two highest momentum settings ($p_r = 580, 750$ MeV/c), a weighted average of the cross sections were taken in the overlapping regions of p_r . The results from the previous experiment [13] at a $Q^2 = 3.5 \pm 0.25$ (GeV/c)² are plotted as well (red square). The good agreement between the Hall A and C data at lower p_r gives us confidence in the measurements made at higher missing momentum settings for which no previous data exist. The data are compared to theoretical calculations using wave functions determined from the charge-dependent Bonn (CD-Bonn) [25], Argonne v_{18} (AV18) [26], Paris [27] and WJC2 [28] NN potentials. The theoretical calculations for the CD-Bonn

(magenta) and AV18 (green) potentials were performed by Sargsian [29] within the GEA, referred to as MS, and those for the Paris potential (blue) were by Laget [23] within the diagrammatic approach, referred to as JML. For the WJC2 (orange) potential, the calculations were carried out by Ford, Jeschonnek and Van Orden [30] using a Bethe-Salpeter-like formalism for two-body bound states, which will be labeled JVO. The MS calculations used the FF parametrization of Ref. [31] while the JML calculations used the conventional dipole parametrization for the proton and neutron magnetic FF, the Galster [32] parametrization for the neutron electric FF, and the results from the Hall A experiment of Ref. [33] for the proton electric FF parametrization. The JVO calculations used two different FF parametrizations (GKex05 [34], AMT [35]) where a difference of $\sim 5.8 - 6.6\%$ was found between the respective JVO reduced cross sections. Figure 1 shows the results using only the GKex05 parametrization.

The difference between the deuteron wave functions with CD-Bonn, Paris, AV18 and WJC2 potentials is how the NN potential is modeled based on the empirical NN scattering data. The CD-Bonn model is based on the One-Boson-Exchange Potential (OBEP) approach in which the nucleon-meson-meson couplings are constrained to describe the NN scattering phase shifts extracted from the data. The interaction potential represents the static limit of this potential. In contrast, the WJC2 is a OBEP derived within the Covariant Spectator Theory (CST) [36–39] which require comparatively few parameters while still producing a high-precision fit to

the NN scattering data. The Paris and AV18 are purely phenomenological potentials where a Yukawa type interaction is introduced and parameters are fitted to describe the same NN scattering phase-shifts. The major difference between the CD-Bonn and Paris/AV18/WJC2 potentials is that the former predicts a much softer repulsive interaction at short distance which results in a smaller high momentum component in the deuteron wave function in momentum space. The effect of these local approximations on the NN potential are shown in Fig. 2 of Ref. [25].

For all recoil angles shown in Fig. 1 at recoil momenta $p_r \leq 250$ MeV/c, the cross sections are well reproduced by all models when FSI are included. The agreement at $p_r \leq 250$ MeV/c can be understood from the fact that this region corresponds to the long-range part of the NN potential where the One Pion Exchange Potential (OPEP) is well known and common to all modern potentials.

Beyond $p_r \sim 250$ MeV/c at $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$ and 45° (Figs. 1(a), 1(b)), the JML, MS AV18 and JVO models increasingly differ from the MS CD-Bonn calculation. In this region, the JML and MS AV18 cross sections are dominated by the PWIA and in good agreement up to $p_r \sim 700$ MeV/c whereas the JVO PWIA falls off with a comparatively smaller cross section at $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$. The MS CD-Bonn cross sections in contrast are generally smaller than the JML, MS AV18 and JVO in this region. In addition, for $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$, they are dominated by the PWIA up to $p_r \sim 800$ MeV/c (Fig. 1(a)) while for $\theta_{nq} = 45^\circ$ FSI start to contribute already above 600 MeV/c (Fig. 1(b)).

For recoil momenta $p_r \sim 0.55 - 1.0$ GeV/c (Figs. 1(a), 1(b)), all models exhibit a steeper fall-off compared to data. This discrepancy was quantified by doing a linear fit to the data and each of the PWIA calculations. A difference of at least 4.2 standard deviations was found between the data and theory slopes which corresponds to a probability $\leq 1.1 \times 10^{-5}$ (very unlikely) that the observed discrepancy is due to a statistical fluctuation.

At $\theta_{nq} = 75^\circ$ (Fig. 1(c)) and $p_r > 180$ MeV/c, FSI become the dominant contributions to the cross sections for all models which exhibit a similar behavior (smaller fall-off) that overshadows any possibility of extracting the approximate momentum distributions.

To quantify the discrepancy observed between data and theory in Fig. 1, the ratio of the experimental and theoretical reduced cross sections (σ_{red}) to the deuteron momentum distribution calculated using the CD-Bonn potential ($\sigma_{\text{red}}^{\text{CD-Bonn PWIA}}$) [25] is shown in Fig. 2.

For $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$ and 45° (Figs. 2(a),(b)), the data are best described by the MS CD-Bonn PWIA calculation for recoil momenta up to $p_r \sim 700$ MeV/c and ~ 600 MeV/c, respectively. Furthermore, the agreement between the Halls A and C data confirm the Hall A approach of selecting a kinematic region where recoil angles are small

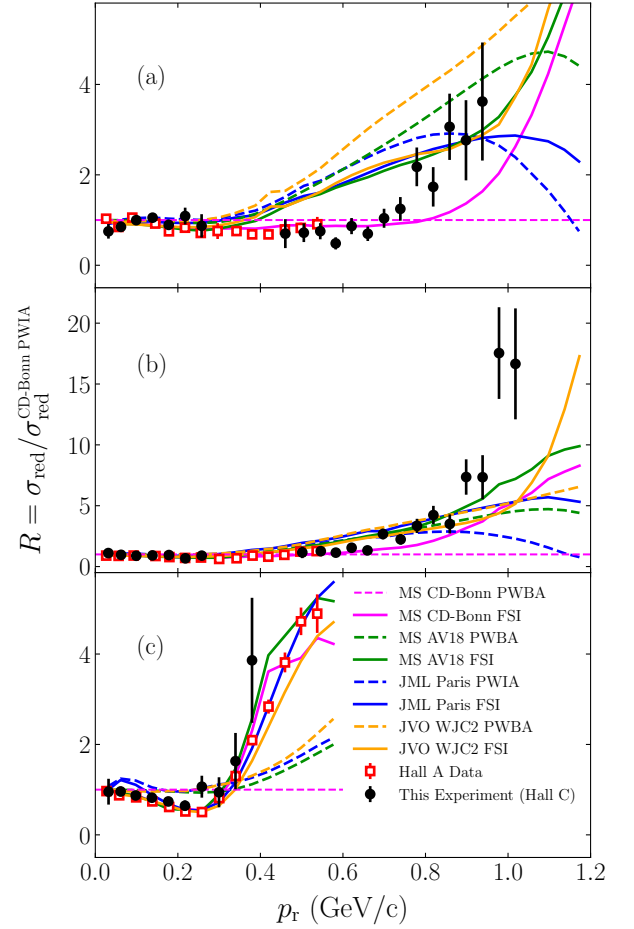


FIG. 2. The ratio $R(p_r)$ is shown in (a)-(c) for $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$ and 75° , respectively, each with a bin width of $\pm 5^\circ$. The dashed reference (magenta) line refers to MS CD-Bonn PWIA calculation (or momentum distribution) by which the data and all models are divided.

and FSI are reduced.

At larger recoil momenta, where the ratio $R > 1$ and increasing with p_r , for $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$ FSI start to dominate for missing momenta typically above 800 MeV/c for the MS CD-Bonn calculation while the other models predict still relatively small FSI below 900 MeV/c. At $\theta_{nq} = 45^\circ$, the FSI dominance starts earlier for all models above 800 MeV/c and for the MS CD-Bonn based calculation above 600 MeV/c.

Overall, it is interesting to note that none of the calculations can reproduce the measured p_r dependence above 600 MeV/c in a region where FSI are still relatively small ($< 30\%$). This behavior of the data is new and additional data in this kinematic region are necessary to improve the statistics.

At $\theta_{nq} = 75^\circ$ (Fig. 2(c)), FSI are small below $p_r \sim 180$ MeV/c, but do not exactly cancel the PWIA/FSI interference term in the scattering amplitude which results in a small dip in this region in agreement with the data. At

$p_r > 300$ MeV/c and $\theta_{nq} = 75^\circ$, the data were statistically limited as our focus was on the smaller recoil angles. The Hall A data, however, shows reasonable agreement with the FSI from all models which gives us confidence in our understanding of FSI at the smaller recoil angles.

To summarize, this experiment extended the previous Hall A cross section measurements on the $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ reaction to very high neutron recoil momenta ($p_r > 500$ MeV/c) at kinematics where FSI were expected to be small and the cross section was dominated by PWIA and sensitive to the short range part of the deuteron wave function. The experimental reduced cross sections were extracted and found to be in good agreement with the Hall A data. Furthermore, the MS CD-Bonn model was found to be significantly different than the JML, MS AV18 or JVO models and was able to partially describe the data over a larger range in p_r . At higher missing momenta ($p_r > 700$ MeV/c), however, all models were unable to describe the data. Additional measurements of the $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$ would be required to reduce the statistical uncertainties in this very high missing momentum region ($p_r > 500$ MeV/c) to better understand the large deviations observed between the different models and data.

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* ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5658-1065>

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