

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 [? ? ? ? ? ? ?]. 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 [? ?]. 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 [? ? ? ?]. However, in contrast to SRCs, they were related mostly to the final state structure of nuclei rather than to its initial state (see, e.g., Ref.[? ?]).

The most direct way to study the short range structure of the deuteron wave function (or equivalently, its high momentum component) 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 plane wave impulse approximation (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 addition to the PWIA picture, the ejected nucleon undergoes final state interactions (FSI) with the recoiling nucleon. Other contributing processes are the photon coupling to the exchanged mesons in the  $pn$  system, generating meson exchange currents (MEC), or the photon exciting the bound nucleon into the resonating state (mainly  $\Delta$ -isobar) with subsequent  $\Delta N \rightarrow NN$  rescattering, referred to as isobar currents (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)<sup>2</sup> and Bjorken  $x_{\text{Bj}} \equiv Q^2/2M_p\omega > 1$ , where  $M_p$  and  $\omega$  are the proton mass and photon energy transfer, respectively[? ?]. 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/c<sup>2</sup> and  $\Lambda^2 \sim 0.8 - 1$  (GeV/c)<sup>2</sup> [? ?]. Note that other meson exchange contributions that take

place before the virtual photon interaction are included in the definition of the ground state wave function of the deuteron. IC can be suppressed kinematically by selecting  $x_{\text{Bj}} > 1$ , where one probes the lower energy ( $\omega$ ) 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)<sup>2</sup>) (see Section 5 of Ref. [? ?]) have helped quantify the contributions from FSI, MEC and IC to the  ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$  cross sections 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) [? ? ?], which predicts a strong dependence of FSI on neutron recoil angles  $\theta_{nq}$ . 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)<sup>2</sup>) were carried out at Jefferson Lab (JLab) in Halls A [? ?] and B [? ?]. 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 [? ?] 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  $\sim 300$  MeV/c.

In the Hall A experiment [? ?], 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 ( $\theta_{nq}$ ) reaching recoil momenta up to  $p_r = 550$  MeV/c at  $Q^2 = 3.5 \pm 0.25$  (GeV/c)<sup>2</sup>. 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  $\theta_{nq} = 75^\circ$  [? ?].

The experiment presented in this Letter takes advantage of the kinematic window previously found in the Hall A experiment [? ?] and extends the  ${}^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$  cross section measurements to  $Q^2 = 4.5 \pm 0.5$  (GeV/c)<sup>2</sup> and neutron recoil momenta up to  $p_r \sim 1$  GeV/c, which is almost double the maximum recoil momentum measured in Hall A [? ?]. 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  $35^\circ$  and  $45^\circ$ , 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 ( $\text{LD}_2$ ). 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  $\mu\text{A}$  and the beam was rastered over a  $2 \times 2 \text{ mm}^2$  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 [?] used for triggering, a pair of drift chambers [?] used for tracking, and a calorimeter [?] and gas Čerenkov [?] used for electron identification. For each spectrometer, a logic 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  $750 \text{ MeV/c}$ . 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  $2.4 \lesssim |\vec{q}| \lesssim 3.2 \text{ GeV/c}$ , 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  $p_r = 80 \text{ MeV/c}$  setting for cross-checks with the spectrometer acceptance model using the Hall C Monte Carlo simulation program, SIMC [?]. 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 [?].

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 ( $\delta$ ) 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  $\sim 2.22 \text{ MeV}$  for the deuteron) to select true  $^2\text{H}(e, e'p)n$  coincidences, a coincidence time cut to select true coincidence events, a particle identification (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%) [?] and target boiling inefficiency (4.2%) [?]. The values in parentheses were averaged over all missing 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 [?] 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 on 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. This result was then added quadratically to the systematic uncertainties due to proton loss in HMS (0.49%), total live time (3.0%) and total charge (2.0%), which were the same for every setting, to define the overall normalization uncertainty ( $\leq 4.2\%$ ).

The systematic uncertainties due to the systematic error on the absolute beam energy and spectrometer angle/momentum settings were determined point-to-point in  $(\theta_{nq}, p_r)$  bins for each missing momentum setting, and added in quadrature for overlapping  $p_r$  bins. For  $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$  and  $75^\circ$  (presented in this Letter) the overall kinematic uncertainty varied below 6.5%. The total uncertainty was defined as the quadrature sum of the normalization ( $\leq 4.2\%$ ), kinematic ( $\leq 6.5\%$ ) and

statistical ( $\sim 20 - 30\%$  on average) uncertainties.

The data were radiatively corrected for each bin in  $(\theta_{nq}, p_r)$  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 [? ]. For each bin in  $(\theta_{nq}, p_r)$ , 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 uncertainties associated with the radiative and bin-centering corrections were investigated using the Laget PWIA and FSI models but negligible effects on the cross sections were found. The experimental and theoretical reduced cross sections were extracted and are defined as follows: 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,  $f_{\text{rec}} \equiv \frac{2p_f^2 E_r}{2p_f^2 E_r - (q^2 - (p_f^2 + p_r^2))E_f}$  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  $\sigma_{\text{cc1}}$  is the de Forest [? ] electron-proton off-shell cross section calculated using the FF parametrization of Ref. [? ]. Within the PWIA,  $\sigma_{\text{red}}$  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 [? ] 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) [? ], Argonne  $v_{18}$  (AV18) [? ], Paris [? ] and WJC2 [? ]  $NN$  potentials. The theoretical calculations for the CD-Bonn (magenta) and AV18 (green) potentials were performed by Sargsian [? ] within the GEA, referred to as MS, and those for the Paris potential (blue) were by Laget [? ] within the diagrammatic approach, referred to as JML. For the WJC2 (orange) potential, the calculations were carried out by Ford, Jeschonnek and Van Orden [? ] 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. [? ] while the JML calculations used the conventional dipole parametrization for the proton and neutron magnetic FF, the Galster [? ] parametrization for

the neutron electric FF, and the results from the Hall A experiment of Ref. [? ] for the proton electric FF parametrization. The JVO calculations used two different FF parametrizations (GKex05 [? ], AMT [? ]) 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) [? ? ? ? ] which requires 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 effects of these local approximations on the  $NN$  potential are shown in Fig. 2 of Ref. [? ].

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  $45^\circ$  (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

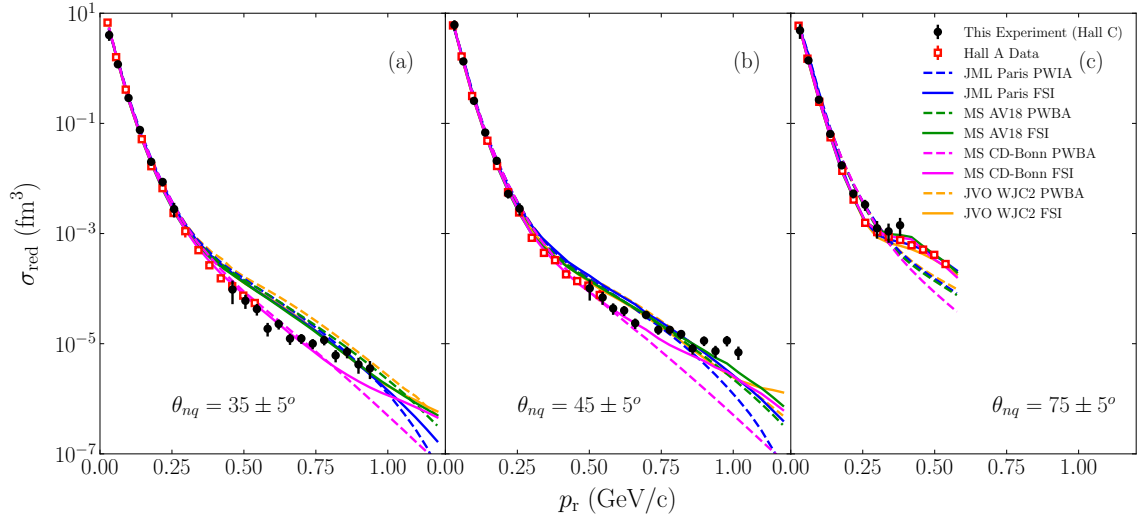


FIG. 1. (Color online). The reduced cross sections  $\sigma_{\text{red}}(p_r)$  as a function of neutron recoil momentum  $p_r$  are shown in (a)-(c) for recoil angles  $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$  and  $75^\circ$ , respectively, with a bin width of  $\pm 5^\circ$ . The data are compared to the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

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 contribution 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 ( $\sigma_{\text{red}}$ ) to the deuteron momentum distribution calculated using the CD-Bonn potential ( $\sigma_{\text{red}}^{\text{CD-Bonn PWIA}}$ ) [?] is shown in Fig. 2.

For  $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ$  and  $45^\circ$  (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  $\sim 600$  MeV/c, respectively. Furthermore, the agreement between the Halls A and C data validates the Hall A approach of selecting a kinematic region where recoil angles are small 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, show a 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 sections were 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 at lower recoil momenta where they overlap. 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 the higher missing momenta provided by this experiment ( $p_r > 700$  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.

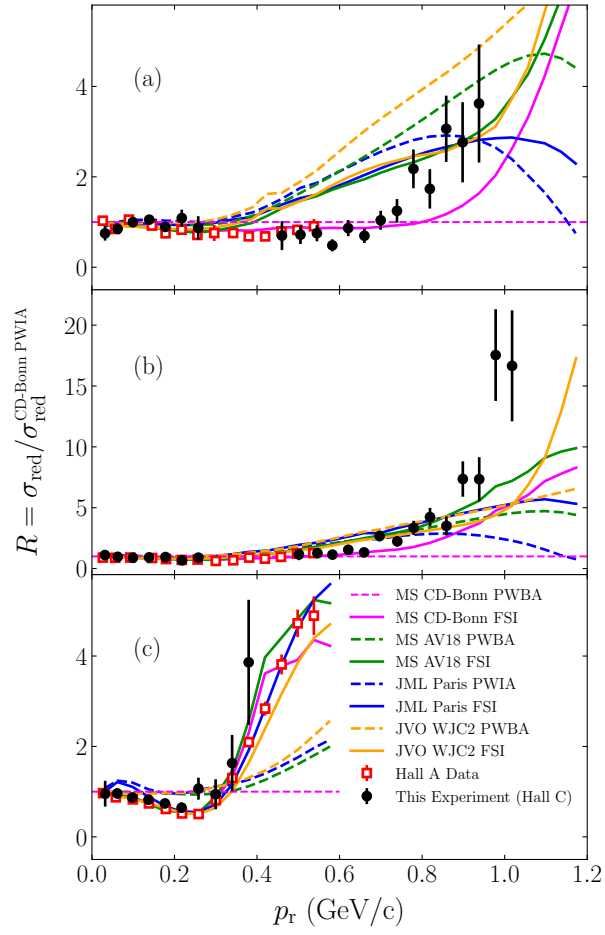


FIG. 2. (Color online). The ratio  $R(p_r)$  is shown in (a)-(c) for  $\theta_{nq} = 35^\circ, 45^\circ$  and  $75^\circ$ , respectively, each with a bin width of  $\pm 5^\circ$ . The dashed reference (magenta) line refers to MS CD-Bonn PWIA calculation (or momentum distribution) by which the data and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