Transverse energy analysis of relativistic heavy ion collisions through the use of identified particles spectra

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN and the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) at the Brookhaven National Laboratory have the ability to collide heavy nuclei, such as those of gold and uranium, at nearly the speed of light, reaching temperatures of trillions of degrees Celcius. These laboratories have provided evidence of the formation of an exotic state of matter, called the quark-gluon plasma (QGP). It only exists for a brief amount of time after such collisions and instantly freezes out into a plethora of new particles, which carry the signatures we can use to deduct QGP properties. It reportedly behaves like an almost perfect quantum fluid with no resistance and exhibits other interesting properties.

One of the methods to probe the properties of this matter is by analyzing the conversion of the beam-direction energy at the time of collision into transverse energy after the collision. This analysis is generally done by using data from the calorimeters placed around the collision site. In this thesis, I use the data collected by the tracking detectors, instead of the conventional calorimeters, to perform the transverse energy analysis.

The organization of the thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2, I attempt to summarize the physical concepts pertaining to nuclear matter, heavy-ion collisions, and the production and detection of QGP. Chapter 3 consists of the formalism of the measurement of transverse energy using calorimeters as well as tracking detectors. It also gives an example of what has been done using calorimeters. Chapter 4 describes the data used to perform the analysis in this thesis and notes down the details of the analysis. In Chapter 5, I present the results and compare them to the ones in literature obtained using a different method. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing it and shedding light on some of its implications.

Chapter 2

Physics Background

2.1 Quantum Chromodynamics

The strong force is one of the four fundamental interactions in physics. At large scale, it is responsible for binding the nucleons together to give the nucleus its structure. At the smaller scale, it binds the fundamental units of subnuclear matter, the quarks, together to form the nucleons. The electrodynamic interaction between charged particles such as protons and electrons is described by quantum electrodynamics (QED) as mediated by photons; the strong interaction, albeit more complicated, is explained under the framework of quantum chromodynamics (QCD) as mediated by gluons. [15, 25] ???? The quarks and gluons of QCD are collectively known as partons.

One of the phenomenological aspects in which QCD is different from QED is the confinement of partons. In QED, the fundamental particles are bound together by the Coulomb potential, which diminishes with distance between the charge-carrying particles, as demonstrated by the relation 2.1:

$$V_C \propto \frac{1}{r} \tag{2.1}$$

where V_C is the Coulomb potential, and r is the spatial separation between the particles. This means that bound QED particles can be isolated by increasing their spatial separation.

The QCD potential, on the other hand, has an extra linear term in it:

$$V_{QCD} = -\frac{4}{3}\frac{\alpha_S}{r} + kr \tag{2.2}$$

where α_S is the QCD fine-structure constant and k is is the strengh of the color interaction (1 GeV/fm). This means that the potential increases linearly with distance at large distances, and so an infinite amount of energy is required to separate quarks. Hence, we never observe isolated quarks and they are said to be confined, not just bound, to form composite structures called hadrons.[23] Composition of a quark and an anti-quark forms a meson and that of three quarks forms a baryon.

2.2 Phase Transitions

In everyday life, we observe matter existing in four distinct phases: solid, liquid, gas, and plasma. Changes in physical conditions can lead to a transition from one of these phases to another, exemplified by the commonly observed coversion of ice to water. Distinctions among the various phases can be represented in a chart called the phase diagram.

The phase diagram consists of thermodynamic observables such as temperature and density on its axes. Curves in the phase diagram represent boundries of physical conditions at which two or more phases of matter can coexist in equilibrium. Crossing a boundary represents an abrupt transition from one phase to another; this abruptness is mathematically characterized by the discontinuity in the change of the derivative of the free energy – a thermodynamic varible – with respect to the physical quantities in the axes. There can also be regions in the diagram representing the ranges of physical conditions in which a smooth phase transition can take place.

One of the main focuses of current experimental and theoretical nuclear physics research is the study of the phase diagram of strongly interacting matter at a range of temperatures and baryon chemical potentials. In experiments involving the collisions of heavy ions at high and low energies, different regions of the phase diagram can be probed by varying the collision energy [3]. For instance, the high-baryon chemical potential regime corresponds to lower beam energies and higher temperatures correspond to higher beam energies. The results of these experiments and model calculations can be used to study the nature of transitions in the QCD phase diagram.

A schematic representing the QCD phase diagram on the temperature (T) and quark chemical potential (μ) plane is shown in Figure 2.1 [7]. A second-order transition is predicted at low baryon chemical potentials (close to baryon-antibaryon symmetry) and high temperatures reminiscent of the early universe. Methods to study this region of the phase space will be explored in this thesis. At low temperatures and high chemical potentials, loose predictions have been made regarding the existence of exotic phases of high density matter, and programs, such as the Compressed Baryonic Matter experiment at the Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research in Germany, are being designed to study this region of the phase diagram.

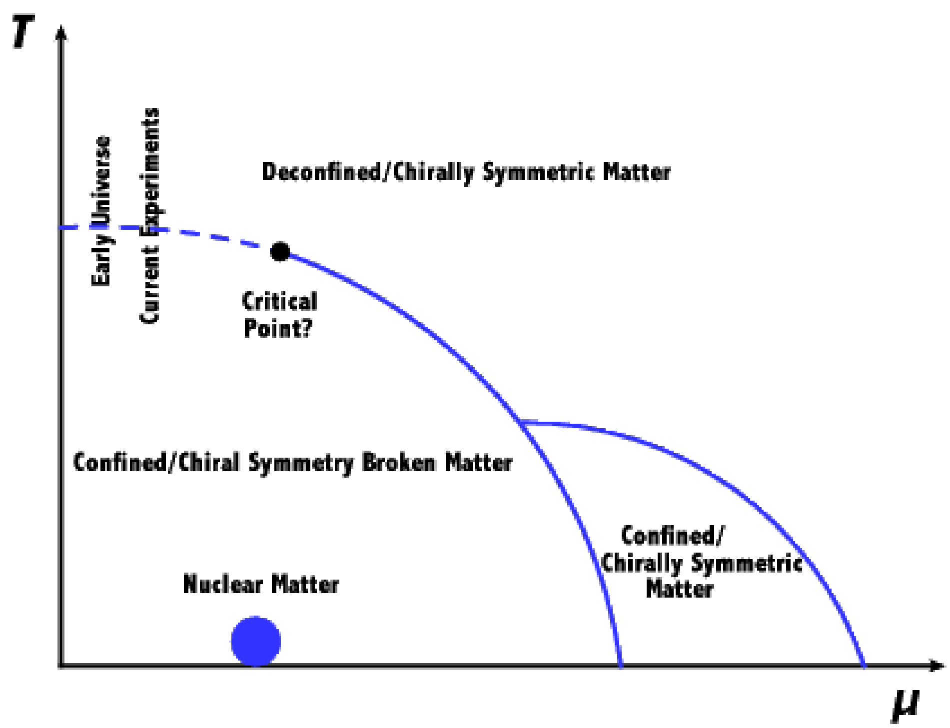

Figure 2.1: Schematic of the QCD phase diagram [7].

2.3 Quark-Gluon Plasma

The confinement of quarks into the hardonic phase of QCD matter, as described in section 2.1, has its limitations. At very high densities, when the wave function of a single hadron encompasses the spatial regions covered by multiple such hadrons, it is impossible to classify which pair or triplet of quarks belongs to which meson or baryon. As long as a particular quark is close enough to the other quarks in the volume, it is deconfined in such a way that it can freely move anywhere in the volume. [23] QCD predicts a phase transition, at energy densities above 0.2-1 GeV/fm^3 [1] and around a critical temperature of about 200 MeV [17], of strongly interacting matter to a phase with quarks and gluons in thermal and chemical equilibrium representing the relevant degrees of freedom and behaving like an almost perfect quantum fluid [9]. This deconfined state of quarks and gluons is termed the quark-gluon plasma (QGP) in analogy to the quantum electrodynamical plasma phase of matter.

2.4 Relativistic Heavy Ion Collisions

The experimental evidences of the theoretically appealing existence of QGP come from the collisions of large nuclei. The signatures of such evidence are described in section 2.4.4. Physicists started noting down such evidences since as far back as 1984, when nuclei were accelerated and collided with stationary targets.[12] They were able to agree on a conclusive discovery of this matter during the 2000s, after colliding accelerated nuclei with other such nuclei or smaller species (protons, deuterons) at unprecedented energies and with improved detection schemes. [26] With further increase in collision energies and enhancement in detector technololgy, modern accelerator facilities have not only added such evidences but also provided estimates of some of the properties as well as the dynamics of the evolution of the QGP. The following subsections describe two such facilities, the physics of the collisions and what happens after the collisions.

2.4.1 RHIC and LHC

2.4.2 Collision Energy, Centrality and Participants

2.4.3 QGP Evolution

2.4.4 Detection of Collision Products

Tracking Detectors

Calorimeters

2.5 Detection of QGP Signatures

http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/0954-3899/25/3/013/meta, and:

The existence and properties of the QGP in the aftermath of high-energy heavy-ion collisions can be probed using different techniques relevant to several theoretical characteristics of the phase. For instance, the interacting nuclei carry no net strangeness before colliding, and so a post-collision observation of strange and multi-strange particles can be a signal for an antecedent existence of deconfined quarks and gluons [11]. This signal, when complemented with an observation of the suppression???????or enhancement of strange particles production, provides a strong hint of the formation of QGP. This can be further complemented with the estimate of the energy density and the temperature attained after the collision.

Analyses of experimental results have thus far provided signatures of the formation of matter with partonic degrees of freedom at the early stages of the collisions. Such signatures include suppression of high monentum hadrons, known as jet quenching, because the QGP is nearly opaque to colored probes, and large azimuthal anisotropies, indicating that the medium is a liquid of quarks and gluons [2]?????. Experiments also reveal the initial energy density of this matter to be about two orders of magnitude larger than that of low energy nuclear matter – comfortably more than the deconfinement phase transition critical density predicted by lattice QCD [14].

The state of the colliding nuclei before the collision at LHC and top RHIC energies has indications of being a Color Glass Condensate – strongly interacting, weakly coupled highly coherent gluonic matter [18]. The characteristics of the initial states of these nuclei affect the partonic distributions within the nuclei and ultimately the products of the collision. The collision products are also affected by variables such as the initial energy and entropy densities of the partonic matter [14].

Different observables can be used to study different aspects of heavy ion collisions. The charged particle multiplicity, $\langle N_{ch} \rangle$, is a global variable that relates to the entropy production during the collision (analysis note). The transverse energy, E_T, a global variable related to $\langle N_{ch} \rangle$, provides information about the conversion of the initial beam-direction kinetic energy into energy flowing in the transverse direction after the collision. Together, the studies of the fluctuation of the $\langle N_{ch} \rangle$ and the E_T pseudorapidity [footnote] density with respect to the beam energy and the collision centrality [footnote] help probe the characteristics of the initial conditions at the time of the collision. One can study, for instance, the distinctions between models based on quark participants against those based on nucleon participants [analysis note]. These quantities can also lead to the rough estimate of the initial energy density through the use of the Bjorken formula [19]:

$$\epsilon \geq \frac{\frac{dE_T}{d\eta}}{\tau_0 \pi R^2} = \frac{3}{2} \langle \frac{E_T}{N} \rangle \frac{\frac{dN_{ch}}{d\eta}}{\tau_0 \pi R^2} \tag{2.3}$$

The transverse energy and the charged particle pseudorapidity densities have conventionally been calculated by using the transverse energy measurements obtained from calorimeters. This thesis details the use of particle spectra, reported as $\frac{d^2N}{dydp_T}$, from Au+Au collisions at RHIC to calculate the same global variables and serve as a method to cross check the ones involving calorimeters.

2.5.1 Bjorken Energy Density

2.5.2 Collective Flow

2.5.3 Strangeness Enhancement

2.5.4 Jet Quenching

2.5.5 Photon Production

Why does large elliptic flow suggest large rescattering among partons and early thermalization of high pT partons?

2.6 Transverse Energy

2.7 RHIC Beam Energy Scan Program

Chapter 3

Measurement of Transverse Energy

This chapter indroduces the definitions of transverse energy, ways to measure it using different detectors, and particular examples from the STAR detector.

3.1 Definition of Transverse Energy

In theory, E_T from a collision can be defined as the sum of the transverse masses, m_T, of all the particles produced in the collision, i.e.,

$$E_T \equiv \sum_i m_{T,i} \tag{3.1}$$

with

$$m_T \equiv \sqrt{p_T^2 + m^2} \tag{3.2}$$

where m is the rest mass of the particle and p_T is its transverse momentum. Using this definition to calculate the E_T requires perfect identification of all the particles. It has not been possible to do so in experiments, and so a more feasible, operational definition of E_T is fabricated. A commonly accepted definition in case of the feasibility of calorimetric measurements is [4, 9]:

$$E_T = \sum_i E_i \sin\theta_i, \tag{3.3}$$

$$\frac{dE_T}{d\eta} = \sin\theta \frac{dE}{d\eta}, \tag{3.4}$$

where the index i runs over all the particles going into a fixed solid angle for each event, θ is the polar angle, i.e, the angle with respect to the beam axis, η is the pseudorapidity defined as

$$\eta \equiv -\ln\tan\frac{\theta}{2}, \tag{3.5}$$

and E_i is the energy deposited in the calorimeter by the i^{th} particle. E_i is considered to be, by convention [5], the following

$$E_i = \begin{cases} E_i^{tot} - m_0 & \text{for baryons} \\ E_i^{tot} + m_0 & \text{for anti-baryons} \\ E_i^{tot} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{3.6}$$

where E_i^{tot} is the total energy of the i^{th} particle defined canonically as

$$E^{tot} \equiv \sqrt{p^2 + m_0^2} \tag{3.7}$$

and m_0 is the particle's rest mass. In order to account for the portion of the emitted transverse energy not detected or overestimated by the calorimeters, corrections are made based on GEANT simulations.

3.2 E_T Measurement with Calorimeters

3.3 E_T Measurement with Tracking Detectors

Transverse energy analysis can be done using tracking detectors as well if they are able to produce measurements of other physical quantities that implicitly contain information about the transverse energy. Specifically, the charged particle multiplicity distributions with respect to the transverse momenta can be used to calculate the particle's transverse energy pseudorapidity density. In fact, since the corrections related to the tracking detectors are very different from those related to the calorimeters, results from the two different methods can be used to test the assumptions involved in each.

The tracking detectors in experiments such as the STAR (Solenoidal Tracker At RHIC) experiment and ALICE (A Large Ion Collider Experiment) at CERN include Time Projection Chambers (TPCs) and Time-of-Flight (TOF) detectors that can give us the p_T spectra, yields and particle ratios of the identified charged hadrons [22, 2]. The TPCs provide measurements of particle trajectories – that can be used to determine the momenta for low-momentum particles – and of their specific energy loss,

$$\frac{dE}{dx}, \tag{3.8}$$

which can be used with the trajectories to make particle identifications (PID) using the Bethe-Bloch formula [8]. TOF detectors, on the other hand, cover the high-momentum part of the measurements. In ALICE, the combination of the measurements of the TPC with those of the Inner Tracking System (ITS) effectively adds the tracking length, thereby improving the resolution of the measured p_T spectrum. Details about the PID and momentum determination capabilities of the detectors in ALICE can be found in [10].

The p_T spectra, available as the counts $\frac{d^2N}{dydp_T}$ with respect to p_T, can be used to calculate $\frac{dE_T}{d\eta}$ as formulated in the following section.

3.3.1 Calculation of $\frac{dE_T}{d\eta}$ from p_T spectra

In relativistic heavy ion collisions, rapidity (y) is defined as follows:

$$y \equiv \frac{1}{2} \ln \frac{E + p_z}{E - p_z}, \tag{3.9}$$

where E is given by equation 3.7 and p_z is the component of the momentum parallel to the beam axis. Pseudorapidity, η, is just y with $m_0 = 0$:

$$\begin{aligned}
\eta &= \frac{1}{2}\ln\frac{p+p_z}{p-p_z} \\
&= \frac{1}{2}\ln\frac{1+\cos\theta}{1-\cos\theta} \\
&= \frac{1}{2}\ln\frac{2\cos^2\frac{\theta}{2}}{2\sin^2\frac{\theta}{2}}
\end{aligned}$$

$$\therefore \eta = -\ln\left|\tan\frac{\theta}{2}\right| \tag{3.10}$$

Note that the absolute value is not necessary for $0 \leq \theta \leq \pi$. Then, taking the exponential of both sides of the above equation and using Euler's formula, we get:

$$\sin\theta = \frac{1}{\cosh\eta}. \tag{3.11}$$

Hence,

$$\begin{aligned}
p &= \frac{p_T}{\sin\theta} \\
&= p_T\cosh\eta,
\end{aligned}$$

and so we have

$$E_T = E\sin\theta = \frac{\sqrt{p_T^2\cosh^2\eta + m_0^2}}{\cosh\eta} \tag{3.12}$$

The Jacobian for the transformation from y-space to η-space is derived, by differentiating y with respect to η (obtained form equations 3.9 and 3.10), to be:

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial\eta} = \frac{p_T\cosh\eta}{\sqrt{m_0^2 + p_T^2\cosh^2\eta}} \tag{3.13}$$

From equations 3.12 and 3.13, we can see that the product of E_T with the Jacobian is equal to p_T. That leads to a formulation of $\frac{dE_T}{d\eta}$ as a function of only η and p_T:

$$\frac{dE_T}{d\eta} = \frac{1}{2a}\int_0^{10GeV/c}\int_{-a}^{a} p_T \frac{d^2N}{dydp_T}\, d\eta\, dp_T \tag{3.14}$$

where a and $-a$ are the bounds for η.

3.3.2 Tracking Detectors in STAR

In the STAR experiment, the TPC is the primary tracking detector. It is 4.2 m long and it cylindrically enshrouds the accelerator beam pipe from its outside, with an inner diameter of 1 m and an outer diameter of 4 m [20]. It covers a pseudorapidity range of $|y| < 1.8$ in all of azimuth in terms of acceptance of charged particles. It can identify particles with momenta over 100 MeV/c up to about 1 GeV/c as well as measure their momenta from 100 MeV/c to 30 GeV/c [6]. Figure 3.1 shows the PID capability of the STAR TPC for very high-multiplicity events [13]. Separation of pions from protons is demonstrated up to a little more than 1 GeV/c. At higher momenta, separating particles is more difficult because their energy loss has lower dependence on the rest mass [6]. The TOF system in STAR, with a time resolution of $\lessapprox$ 100 ps, aids PID at higher momenta. However, at intermediate p_T, between $\approx$ 2.0 and 4.0 GeV/c, the TPC by itself cannot distinguish between pions and protons and the TOF by itself cannot separate pions from kaons. This problem is resolved by utilizing the fact that the dependence of the particle velocity on p_T – in case of the TPC – is different from that of the energy loss on p_T in case of the TPC; combining the results from the two, hence, makes PID feasible in this p_T range. [24]

3.4 The Beam Energy Scan Program

The RHIC, in 2010, started a multi-phase Beam Energy Scan (BES) program to study the QCD phase diagram. The collider has the unique facility to collide nulclei at a range of center-of-mass energies per nucleon, $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$. It also has two different detectors that are currently operational, STAR and PHENIX (Pioneering High Energy Nuclear Interactions

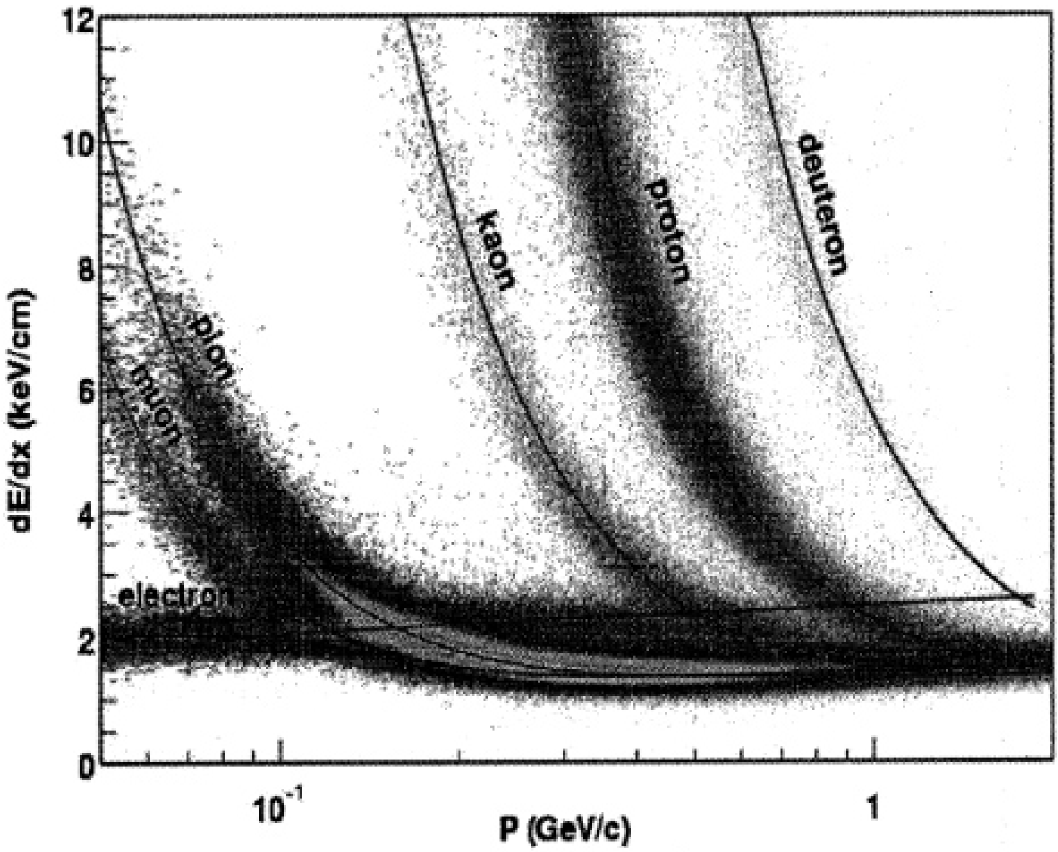

Figure 3.1: Energy loss distribution in the STAR TPC for primary and secondary particles. [13].

eXperiment), which facilitate the cross-checking of results. Between 2010 and 2011, under the exploratory phase I of the BES program, 7.7, 11.5 (not completed in PHENIX), 19.6, 27, and 39 GeV collisions were completed using pairs of Au nuclei. Together with the data formerly collected by the RHIC at higher collision energies, BES phase I data can scan the interval from 450 MeV to 20 MeV in μ_B space [21, 16]. One of the things that can be studied with the data associated with this region of the phase space is statedly the possibility of a "turn-off of new phenomena already established at higher RHIC energies" (https://drupal.star.bnl.gov/STAR/starnotes/public/sn0493). Results corresponding to the high-μ_B region might provide evidence of a first order phase transition, and possibly the critical point [16].

The manifestation of such phenomena would be in terms of the fluctuations in the properties of the post-collision system. One can, for instance, study the scaling of the transverse energy after the collision with the longidutional energy at the time of the collision, $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$. This can be done in multiple ways for a detector like STAR or PHENIX that is made up of sub-systems such as the TOF detectors, TPCs/Time Expansion Chambers, as well as calorimeters.

3.4.1 BES Calorimetry

Adare et al. [3] use calorimetry in PHENIX to analyze the transverse energy corresponding to several different pairs of species colliding at a range of energies. They use the raw transverse energy measured by the EMCal, E_{TEMC}, to obtain the total hadronic E_T by making corrections in three different steps. They first scale the data by a constant factor calculated to account for the fiducial acceptance in azimuth and pseudorapidity. The second factor is calculated to adjust for the effects of the calorimeter towers that are disabled. The third factor, k, is computed as follows

$$k = k_{response} \times k_{inflow} \times k_{losses} \tag{3.15}$$

where $k_{response}$ corresponds to hadronic particles only depositing a fraction of their total energy while passing through the EMCal, k_{inflow} is attributable to the energy deposited by particles coming from outside the EMCal's fiducial aperture, and k_{losses} accounts for the energy not registered in the EMCal due to energy thresholds, edge effects, and more importantly due to the particles that make it into the fiducial aperture but decay into products outside the aperture.

3.4.2 BES p_T spectra

This thesis details the method of transverse energy analysis through the use of p_T spectra from the STAR BES data. As described in section 3.3.2, the TPCs and TOF detectors in STAR can identify particles as well as their trajectories and ultimately their multiplicity distributions with respect to the momenta. Adamczyk et al. [2] report the results for the p_T spectra for six different identified hadrons, π^+, π^-, K^+, K^-, p, and $\bar{p}$, from the STAR experiment. The spectra come from Au+Au collisions – at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 7.7, 11.5, and 39 GeV in the year 2010 and at $\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ = 19.6 and 27 GeV in 2011 – under the BES Program. Figure 3.2 [2] shows the spectra corresponding to 39 GeV collisions categorized into seven different collision centralitiy classes. These spectra, and their counterparts for the rest of the energies, were used to calculate an estimate of the total transverse energy per event per particle species. This result was then used to estimate the total transverse energy due to all the collision products.

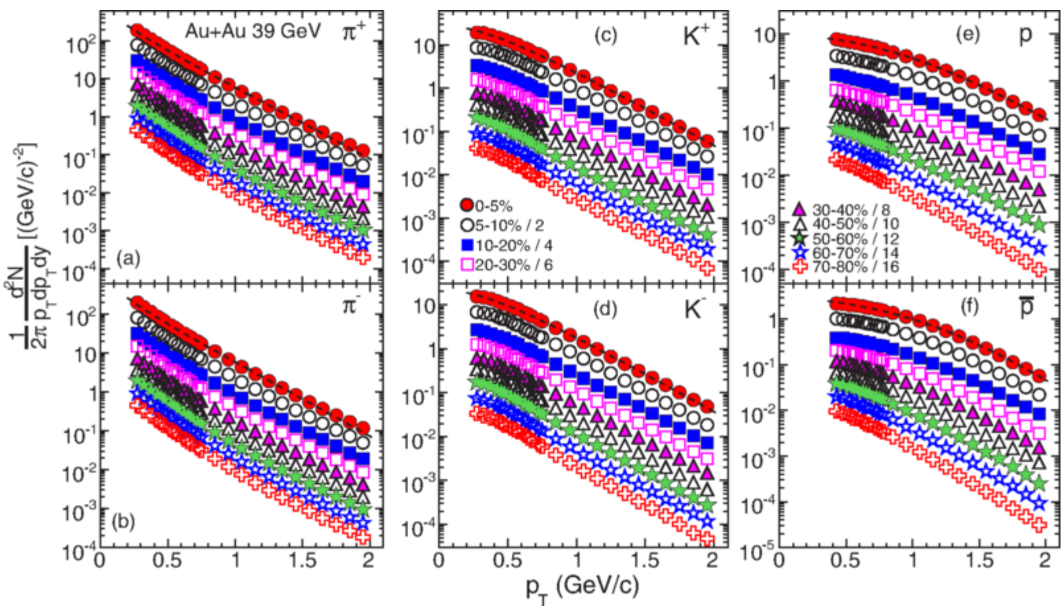

Figure 3.2: Transverse momentum spectra for π^+, π^-, K^+, K^-, p, and $\bar{p}$ at midrapidity ($|y| < 0.1$) from 39 GeV Au+Au collisions at RHIC. The fitting curves on the 0-5% central collision spectra for pions, kaons, and protons/anti-protons represent, respectively, the Bose-Einstein, m_T-exponential, and double-exponential functions. [2].

The corrections applied by Adamczyk et al. [2] to the raw data to obtain the spectra and the reported systematic uncertainties in their results are discussed below (under construction)

// Next section will contain the method of extrapolation and the section after that will explain the analysis using the root framework. Then comes the results section, which I will add after I finish analyzing all the data and get all the results including for lambdas.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.1 Extrapolation of Spectra

4.1.1 Boltzmann-Gibbs Blast Wave

Chapter 5

Results

Present results and comparisons to Adare et al.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Summary and implications

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Appendices