Measurement of the Neutron Spin Structure Function $g_1^n$ with a Polarized $^3$He Internal Target

The HERMES Collaboration


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Deep inelastic scattering with lepton beams is an important tool for understanding the quark-gluon structure of the nucleon. With polarized beams and targets, the spin structure of the nucleon is probed via scattering of the nucleon. Important in this is determined from the virtual photon asymmetries \( g_1(x, Q^2) \) in deep inelastic scattering using 27.5 GeV longitudinally polarized positrons incident on a polarized \(^3\)He internal gas target. The data cover the kinematic range \( 0.023 < x < 0.6 \) and \( 1 \text{ (GeV/c)}^2 < Q^2 < 15 \text{ (GeV/c)}^2 \). The integral \( \int_{0.023}^{0} g_1^x(x) \) evaluated at a fixed \( Q^2 \) of 2.5 (GeV/c) is \( -0.034 \pm 0.013 \text{(stat.)} \pm 0.005 \text{(syst.)} \). Assuming Regge behavior at low \( x \), the first moment \( \Gamma_1^p = \int_0^1 g_1^p(x) dx \) is \( -0.037 \pm 0.013 \text{(stat.)} \pm 0.005 \text{(syst.)} \pm 0.006 \text{(extrapol.)} \). The fractional statistical error for a single 60 s polarized positron beam in a high-energy storage ring \[20\]. The polarization was measured continuously using Compton backscattering of circularly polarized laser light. Values of the equilibrium polarization in the range 40% to 65% were obtained under normal running conditions. Experimental data were analyzed only when the polarization was above 40% to reduce sensitivity to systematic effects. The average polarization for the analyzed data was 55%. The fractional statistical error for a single 60 s polarization measurement was typically 1-2% and the overall fractional systematic error was 5.4%, dominated by the uncertainty in the calibration of the beam polarimeter. A single beam polarization direction was used for the present measurements.

The \(^3\)He target atoms were polarized by spin exchange collisions with \(^3\)S metastable \(^3\)He atoms in a glass cell. The \(^3\)S atoms were produced by a weak RF discharge and polarized by optical pumping with 1083 nm laser light \[21\]. The polarized atoms diffused from the glass pumping cell into a 400 mm long open ended thin-walled storage cell inside the positron ring \[22\]. The storage cell was constructed of 125 \( \mu \)m thick ultrapure aluminum and was cooled to typically 25 K \[23\]. This provided a target of pure atomic species with an areal density of approximately \( 3.3 \times 10^{14} \) atoms/cm\(^2\). The polarization direction was defined by a 3.5 mT magnetic field parallel to the beam direction.

The polarization of the \(^3\)He gas in both the pumping and the storage cells was measured continuously with op-
tactical polarimeters [24]. The nuclear polarization in the pumping cell was determined from the polarization of emitted photons produced via atomic excitation by the RF discharge. A second polarimeter monitored the polarization in the storage cell by measuring the polarization of photons emitted from atoms that were excited by the positron beam. These measurements were used to investigate the possibility that atoms were depolarized in the storage cell. No evidence for such effects was found. Cell wall depolarization was measured at lower temperatures using this technique in dedicated test measurements [25]. The average value of the target polarization during the experiment was 46% with a fractional uncertainty of 5%. The target polarization direction was reversed every 10 min by reversing the laser helicity.

The luminosity was measured by detecting Bhabha scattered target electrons in coincidence with the scattered positrons in a pair of NaBi(WO$_4$)$_2$ electromagnetic calorimeters. During the course of one positron fill (typically 8 hr), the positron current in the ring decreased from typically 30 mA at injection to $\sim 10$ mA, at which point the positron beam was dumped.

A schematic diagram of the apparatus [13] is shown in Fig. 4. It consists of a large dipole magnet surrounding the positron and proton beam pipes of HERA. The beam is shielded from the spectrometer’s magnetic field by a horizontal iron plate. The spectrometer is constructed as two identical halves, mounted above and below the region of the beam pipes and the horizontal plate. The scattering angle acceptance of the spectrometer is 40 mrad $< \theta < 220$ mrad. Each half contains thirty-six drift chamber planes for tracking. A pattern-matching algorithm and momentum look-up method [26] provides fast track reconstruction. A momentum resolution of 1 - 2% for positrons, depending on kinematics, and an average angular resolution of 0.6 mrad was achieved.

The trigger was formed from a coincidence between a pair of scintillator hodoscope planes and a Pb-glass calorimeter. The trigger required an energy of greater than 3.5 GeV deposited in the calorimeter, resulting in a typical event rate of 50 Hz. Positron identification was accomplished using the calorimeter, the second hodoscope, which was preceded by 2 radiation lengths of Pb and functioned as a preshower counter, six transition radiation detector modules, and a N$_2$ threshold gas Cerenkov counter. This system provided positron identification with an average of 98% efficiency and a hadron contamination $< 1%$. A two-stage collimator system mounted upstream of the target cell provided shielding from the synchrotron radiation generated in the beam bending and focussing components and from beam-halo positrons. With proper beam tuning, the detector system was essentially free of electromagnetic background from such processes. A negligible number of triggers from particles scattering from the storage cell walls were observed.

The structure function $g_1^H$ was extracted from the measured longitudinal asymmetry $A_{ll}$ of the scattering cross section using Eq. (1) with $A_1 = A_{ll}/D - \eta A_2$ and $F_1 = F_2(1 + \gamma^2)/(2\gamma^2 + 4(1 - y) + \gamma^2 y^2)$ is the virtual photon depolarization factor, $\epsilon = [4(1 - y) - \gamma^2 y^2]/[2y^2 + 4(1 - y) + \gamma^2 y^2]$ is the degree of transverse polarization of the virtual photon, $\eta = \cos \gamma y/[1 - \epsilon(1 - y)]$, $R = \sigma_L/\sigma_T$ is the longitudinal-to-transverse virtual photon cross-section ratio, $y = \nu/E$ and $E$ is the beam energy. The magnitude of $A_2$ is constrained to be less than $\sqrt{R}$ and has been measured previously [23] to be consistent with zero within large errors. Thus its contribution to $g_1$ was neglected but its uncertainty was included as a systematic error.

The value of $A_{ll}/D$ for $^3$He was extracted from the measured counting rates using the formula

$$\frac{A_{ll}}{D} = \frac{N^- L^+ - N^+ L^-}{D(N^- L^-_p + N^+ L^+_p)},$$

(3)

where $N^+ (N^-)$ is the counting rate for target spin parallel (anti-parallel) to the beam spin, $L^\pm$ are the deadtime-corrected luminosities for each target spin state, and $L^\pm_p$ are the deadtime-corrected luminosities weighted by the product of the magnitudes of the beam and target polarizations for each spin state. This quantity was binned in $x$ and $y$ to take into account the strong variation of $D$ with $y$ and was determined separately for each positron fill.

After applying data quality criteria and kinematic cuts ($Q^2 > 1$ (GeV/c)$^2$, $W^2 > 4$ (GeV/c)$^2$ and $y < 0.85$) $2.7 \times 10^6$ events were available for the asymmetry analysis. Corrections were applied to account for background from charge symmetric processes (eg. $\gamma \rightarrow e^+ e^-$), and from misidentified hadrons. Whereas the asymmetry of the former source was consistent with zero, the latter exhibited a non-zero asymmetry which was typically 20-50% of the positron asymmetry. The corrections from both backgrounds were at most 2% of the asymmetry for the smallest $x$ bins and were negligible for large $x$ values. QED radiative corrections were applied using the standard procedure [28], with corrections of typically 20% of the observed asymmetry. Monte Carlo simulations showed that smearing corrections due to the finite resolution of the spectrometer are negligible.

Corrections for nuclear effects are required to determine the neutron structure function $g_1^n$ with a $^3$He target. The wave function for $^3$He is dominated by the configuration with the protons paired to zero spin. Therefore, most of the asymmetry from $^3$He is due to the neutron [29]. A detailed calculation [30] shows that binding effects and Fermi motion are negligible in extracting $g_1^n$ from polarized $^3$He data, and that nuclear effects can be largely treated as a dilution due to scattering from the two largely unpolarized protons. A correction for the non-zero polarization of the protons ($-0.028 \pm 0.004$), using the E-143 results for $A_1^p$ [33] and the neutron polarization ($0.86 \pm 0.02$) [40] has been included.
The extracted virtual photon asymmetry $A_V^p(x)$ is presented in Fig. 3(a). The averaged kinematic quantities and asymmetry results are listed in Table 1. The corresponding $g_1^n(x)$, extracted from equation (1) and using parameterizations of the unpolarized structure function $F_2$ [31] and $R$ [32], is shown in Fig. 3(b) and compared with the previous $^3$He experiment from SLAC E-142 [7]. The systematic uncertainties in the present experiment are small compared to the statistical uncertainties, as indicated by the error bands in Fig. 3. The statistical uncertainties have been extracted from the observed fluctuations of the positron yields and exceed the uncertainty calculated from the number of events by 10%. The dominant sources of systematic errors on $A_1$ or $g_1$ are the uncertainties in the measured beam and target polarization. In addition for $g_1^n$ there are contributions of similar size which result from uncertainties in radiative corrections and nuclear corrections, and smaller contributions from the uncertainties in the knowledge of $R_0$, $A_2$ and $R$.

For an evaluation of the Ellis-Jaffe sum rule the integral of $g_1^p(x)$ must be determined at a fixed $Q^2$ and an extrapolation into the unmeasured $x$ regions must be made. This requires an assumption on the $Q^2$ dependence of either $A_1$ or $g_1$. To evolve $g_1$ to a fixed value of $Q_0^2 = 2.5$ (GeV/c)$^2$, which is near to the mean $Q^2$ value of the data ($2.3$ (GeV/c)$^2$), the assumption that $A_1$ is independent of $Q^2$ over the limited $Q^2$ range of our data has been used. This assumption is consistent with existing data [27]. Next-to-Leading-Order (NLO) QCD evolution [33] gives a slightly different result that changes the integral of $g_1^p$ over the measured $x$ range by $< 5\%$. Including this difference in the systematic error yields

$$\int_{0}^{0.6} g_1^p(x, Q_0^2) \, dx = -0.034 \pm 0.013 \, \text{(stat.)} \pm 0.005 \, \text{(syst.)}$$

For the large $x$ extrapolation, we used a parametrization for $F_2^p$ [31] and assumed several models for the behavior of $A_1^p$ for $x > 0.6$. Since $A_1^p$ is expected [34] to approach unity for $x \rightarrow 1$, we considered a linear increase for $A_1$ from 0 at $x = 0.6$ to 1 at $x = 1$ as well as the parameterization of ref. [35]. These studies indicate that

$$\int_{0.6}^{1} g_1^n(x) \, dx = 0.002 \pm 0.003.$$ 

For the low $x$ extrapolation there is no clear prediction. For comparison with previous measurements [31, 36, 37], we quote the integral $\Gamma_0$ assuming a simple Regge parameterization at low $x$ of $g_1 \propto x^{-\alpha}$ with $\alpha$ in the range $-0.5 \rightarrow 0$ fitted to the data for $x < 0.1$. This gives

$$\int_{0}^{0.023} g_1^n(x) \, dx = -0.005 \pm 0.005,$$

where a 100% uncertainty has been assigned to the value. However, it should be noted that recent work [34] indicates that a NLO treatment of the low $x$ region could yield different results for the low $x$ extrapolation. Combining the contributions from different $x$ regions leads to a total integral of

$$\int_{0}^{1} g_1^n(x, Q_0^2) \, dx = -0.037 \pm 0.013 \, \text{(stat.)} \pm 0.005 \, \text{(sys.)} \pm 0.006 \, \text{(extrapol.)}$$

in good agreement with the value from experiment E-142 [7] using $^3$He and the SMC [14, 15] and E-143 [16, 17] experiments using the difference of deuteron and proton.

In summary, the neutron spin structure function $g_1^n$ has been measured with a polarized $^3$He target. The results are in agreement with those of the SLAC E-142 experiment, but have been determined with an entirely new technique – a windowless polarized internal target with pure atomic species in a positron storage ring. Semi-inclusive asymmetries extracted from the present data set will be presented in a future publication.

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FIG. 1. Schematic diagram of the experimental apparatus (side view).
FIG. 2. The spin asymmetry $A_1^n$ (a) and the spin structure function $g_1^n$ (b) of the neutron as a function of $x$. The values are given for the measured $\langle Q^2 \rangle$. The error bars are statistical uncertainties. The error bands show the systematic uncertainties. The data points from E-142 have been displaced slightly in $x$ for comparison with the present experiment.

TABLE I. Results on $A_1^n(x)$ and $g_1^n(x)$ at the measured $Q^2$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>x-range</th>
<th>$\langle x \rangle$</th>
<th>$\langle Q^2 \rangle$ [GeV/c$^2$]</th>
<th>$A_1^n\pm$stat.$\pm$syst.</th>
<th>$g_1^n\pm$stat.$\pm$syst.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.023-0.040</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>$-0.111 \pm 0.048 \pm 0.018$</td>
<td>$-0.367 \pm 0.157 \pm 0.052$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.040-0.055</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>$-0.117 \pm 0.052 \pm 0.013$</td>
<td>$-0.263 \pm 0.124 \pm 0.028$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.055-0.075</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>$-0.077 \pm 0.055 \pm 0.011$</td>
<td>$-0.135 \pm 0.100 \pm 0.016$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.075-0.10</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>$-0.126 \pm 0.064 \pm 0.014$</td>
<td>$-0.172 \pm 0.088 \pm 0.015$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.10-0.14</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>$-0.097 \pm 0.068 \pm 0.015$</td>
<td>$-0.096 \pm 0.069 \pm 0.012$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.14-0.20</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>$-0.158 \pm 0.085 \pm 0.020$</td>
<td>$-0.104 \pm 0.057 \pm 0.010$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.20-0.30</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>$-0.078 \pm 0.113 \pm 0.019$</td>
<td>$-0.031 \pm 0.046 \pm 0.005$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.30-0.40</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>$+0.146 \pm 0.219 \pm 0.052$</td>
<td>$+0.031 \pm 0.046 \pm 0.005$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.40-0.60</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>$-0.149 \pm 0.374 \pm 0.103$</td>
<td>$-0.013 \pm 0.033 \pm 0.003$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>