Measurement of the Parity-Violating Asymmetry in Electron-Deuteron Scattering in the Nucleon Resonance Region

(The Jefferson Lab Hall A Collaboration)

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We report on parity-violating asymmetries in the nucleon resonance region measured using inclusive inelastic scattering of $5-6$ GeV longitudinally polarized electrons off an unpolarized deuterium target. These results are the first parity-violating asymmetry data in the resonance region beyond the $\Delta(1232)$, and provide a verification of quark-hadron duality – the equivalence of the quark- and hadron-based pictures of the nucleon – at the 10-15% level in this electroweak observable that is dominated by contributions from the nucleon electroweak γZ interference structure functions. In addition, the results provide constraints on nucleon resonance models relevant for calculating background corrections to elastic parity-violating electron scattering measurements.

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While QCD is the well-established theory of the strong nuclear force, it remains a challenge to describe the transition from quark and gluon to hadron degrees of freedom. Measurements of the structure functions in electron scattering from nuclei, spanning from the low invariant mass regime ($W < 2$ GeV) of resonance production to the deep inelastic scattering (DIS) regime, aim to bridge this transition. Inclusive measurements from nucleons have demonstrated a remarkable feature called "quark-hadron duality", first pointed out by Bloom and Gilman [1], in which the low-energy (few GeV) cross sections averaged over the energy intervals of the resonance structures resemble those of asymptotically high energies. Over the past decade, duality has been verified in the unpolarized structure functions F_2 and F_L at four-momentum-transfer-squared Q^2 values below 1 (GeV/c)^2 [2–6], the proton spin asymmetry A_1^p down to $Q^2 = 1.6$ (GeV/c)^2 [7], the spin structure function g_1 down to $Q^2 = 1.7 - 1.8$ (GeV/c)^2 [8, 9], the helicity-dependent structure functions $H_{1/2,3/2}$ [10], and for charged pion electroproductions in semi-inclusive scattering [11]. It was speculated that duality is a universal feature of quark-hadron transition that should be exhibited not only in electromagnetic interactions, but also in weak interactions of charged lepton scattering [12], and perhaps other processes as well. First attempts to understand duality from the first principles of QCD were made soon after it was first observed [13], and is even more desired now with such solid experimental verifications. For a recent review of both the experimental and theoretical status of duality, see Ref. [14]. Establishing duality, either experimentally or theoretically, also has practical advantages in our study of the nucleon structure. For example, the valence quark structure which is typically difficult to explore due to the high Q^2 required in DIS, may be studied alternatively by averaging resonance data at lower Q^2 values [5, 6, 10, 15, 16].

To study quark-hadron duality in weak interactions, it is natural to start with parity-violating electron scattering (PVES) asymmetries $A_{PV} = (\sigma_R - \sigma_L)/(\sigma_R + \sigma_L)$, where $\sigma_{R(L)}$ is the cross-section for electrons polarized parallel (anti-parallel) to their momentum. The PVES asymmetry on a nucleon or nuclear target is dominated by the electroweak γZ interference structure functions [17]:

$$A_{PV} = \left(-\frac{G_F Q^2}{4\sqrt{2}\pi\alpha}\right)\left(2g_A^e Y_1 \frac{F_1^{\gamma Z}}{F_1^\gamma} + g_V^e Y_3 \frac{F_3^{\gamma Z}}{F_1^\gamma}\right) , \quad (1)$$

where G_F is the Fermi weak coupling constant, α is the fine structure constant, Y_1 and Y_3 are kinematic factors, $g^e_{V,A}$ are the $e - Z^0$ vector and axial couplings, and $F_{1,3}^{\gamma,\gamma Z}$ are the electromagnetic and the γZ interference structure functions where the γZ functions depend also on $g^q_{V,A}$, the quark$-Z^0$ vector and axial couplings. In the Standard Model, the electron (quark) vector and axial couplings are related to the electron's (quark's) quantum numbers and the weak mixing angle $\sin^2\theta_W$. In reality, the structure functions $F_{1,3}^{\gamma,\gamma Z}$ are calculated using either parton distribution functions (for deep inelastic scattering) or nucleon and nuclear models (for elastic scattering or nucleon resonances), which provide predictions for asymmetries that can be compared with the measured values to either allow extraction of electroweak parameters such as $\sin^2\theta_W$, or to test models used in structure function calculations. The first PVES experiment [18] provided the first measurement of $\sin^2\theta_W$, and established the $SU(2)\times U(1)$ gauge model of Weinberg, Glashow, and Salam [19] as the correct theory for electroweak interactions. In the past decade, with the increasing precision accessible to modern experiments [20], PVES has become a powerful tool to measure not only $\sin^2\theta_W$, but also $g^{e,q}_{A,V}$ through DIS measurements [21], the nucleon strange form factors via elastic scattering [22–26] (for a review see Ref. [27]), the weak charge and neutron densities of nuclei [28, 29], and possibly isospin symmetry violation in the parton distribution functions (PDFs) [30, 31]. However, measurements of the PVES asymmetry in the nucleon resonance region are scarce. The only existing data are from the $G0$ experiment in which the asymmetry was measured from a proton target near the $\Delta(1232)$ region with statistical and systematic uncertainties of approximately 15% each [32].

Measurements of PVES asymmetries in the resonance region will also help test our understanding of the nucleon resonance structures. In the resonance region, the PV structure functions can be described in terms of longitudinal, transverse, and axial PV response functions to specific resonance states, together with a non-resonant background. These electroweak structure functions can be decomposed in terms of their isospin content, providing new and unique sensitivity to combinations of quark currents weighted by their electroweak couplings to the incident electrons [33]. The asymmetry for the first nucleon resonance, the $N \to \Delta(1232)$ transition, was first calculated by Cahn and Gilman [17]. Subsequently, precise calculations in the resonance region have been performed [33]. Based on these calculations, the $\Delta(1232)$ asymmetry from the proton reported by $G0$ was used to extract the axial form factor $G^A_{N\Delta}$ [32].

In this paper, we present parity-violating asymmetries for scattering longitudinally-polarized electrons from an unpolarized deuterium target at four combinations of Q^2 and invariant mass W spanning the whole nucleon resonance region, obtained during a recent experiment [21] at Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (JLab). These results provide a test of local quark-hadron duality in the nucleon electroweak γZ interference structure functions, and are compared to the theoretical models of Matsui, Sato, and Lee [34]; Gorchtein, Horowitz, and Ramsey-Musolf [35]; and the AJM (Adelaide-JLab-Manitoba) collaboration [36]. These results also provide constraints for nucleon resonance models relevant for calculating background corrections to elastic PVES [35–40].

The experiment was performed in experimental Hall A of JLab. A $100 - 105\mu$A polarized electron beam was incident on a liquid deuterium target and scattered events were detected by the Hall A High Resolution Spectrometer (HRS) pair [41] in inclusive mode. The main goal of the experiment was to provide precision PV asymmetries in the DIS region (PVDIS) as a test of the Standard Model [42] and to extract the quark weak axial charges C_{2q} [21]; those measurements will be reported in future publications. The results reported here come from additional data collected in the nucleon resonance region during this experiment: kinematics I-IV were centered at $W = 1.263$, 1.591, 1.857 and 1.981 GeV, respectively. The Q^2 values were just below 1 (GeV/c)^2 except for kinematics IV which was at $Q^2 = 1.472$ (GeV/c)^2. The beam energies were 4.867 GeV for kinematics I-III and 6.067 GeV for IV.

The polarized electron beam was produced by illuminating a strained GaAs photocathode with circularly polarized laser light. The helicity of the electron beam was selected from a pseudorandom [23] sequence every 66 ms, and reversed in the middle of this time window, forming helicity pairs. The data acquisition was gated by this helicity sequence. To reduce possible systematic errors, a half-wave plate (HWP) was inserted intermittently into the path of the polarized laser, which resulted in a reversal of the actual beam helicity while keeping the helicity sequence unchanged. The expected sign flips in the measured asymmetries between the two beam HWP configurations were observed. The laser optics of the polarized source were carefully configured to minimize changes to the electron-beam parameters under polarization reversal [43]. A feedback system [44] was used to maintain the helicity-correlated intensity asymmetry of the beam below 0.1 parts per million (ppm) averaged over the whole experiment. The target was a 20-cm long liquid deuterium cell, with up- and downstream windows made of 0.10- and 0.13-mm thick aluminum, respectively.

In order to count the up-to-600-kHz electron rate and reject the pion photo- and electro-production backgrounds, a data acquisition (DAQ) and electronic system was specially designed for this experiment, which formed both electron and pion triggers. Design of the DAQ, its performance on the particle identification (PID) as well as deadtime corrections on the measured asymmetries, were reported elsewhere [45]. The overall charged pion π^- contamination was found to contribute less than 4×10^{-4} of the detected electron rate. Using the measured asymmetries from the pion triggers, the relative uncertainty on the measured electron asymmetries $\Delta A/A$ due to π^- background was evaluated to be less than 5×10^{-4}. Relative corrections on the asymmetry due to DAQ deadtime were $(0.7-2.5)\%$ with uncertainties $\Delta A/A < 0.5\%$. Regular DAQ of the HRSs was used at low beam currents to precisely determine the kinematics of the experiment. This was realized through dedicated measurements on a carbon multi-foil target which provided data to understand the transport function of the HRSs.

The number of scattered particles in each helicity window was normalized to the integrated charge from the beam current monitors, from which the raw asymmetries $A_{\rm raw}$ were formed. The raw asymmetries were then corrected for helicity-dependent fluctuations in the beam parameters, following $A^{\rm bc}_{\rm raw} = A_{\rm raw} - \sum c_i \Delta x_i$, where Δx_i are the measured helicity window differences in the beam position, angle and energy. The values of the correction coefficients c_i can be extracted either from natural movement of the beam, or from calibration data collected during the experiment, in which the beam was modulated several times per hour using steering coils and an accelerating cavity. The largest of the corrections was approximately 0.4 ppm, and the difference between the two methods was used to estimate the systematic uncertainty in the beam corrections.

The beam-corrected asymmetries $A^{\rm bc}_{\rm raw}$ were then corrected for the beam polarization. The longitudinal polarization of the electron beam was measured by a Møller polarimeter [41] intermittently during the experiment, with a result of $P_b = (90.40 \pm 1.54)\%$ for kinematics I-III and $(89.88 \pm 1.80)\%$ for IV. In both cases, the uncertainty was dominated by the knowledge of the Møller target polarization. The Compton polarimeter [46] measured $(89.45 \pm 1.71)\%$ for kinematics IV where the uncertainty came primarily from the limit in understanding the analyzing power, and was not available for kinematics I-III. The Møller and Compton measurements for kinematics IV were combined to give $(89.65 \pm 1.24)\%$. The passage of the beam through material before scattering causes a small depolarization effect that should be corrected. This was calculated based on Ref. [47] and the beam depolarization was found to be less than 6.1×10^{-4} for all resonance kinematics.

Next, the asymmetries were corrected for various backgrounds. The pair-production background, which results from π^0 decays, was measured at the DIS kinematics of this experiment by reversing the polarity of the HRS magnets and was found to contribute less than 5×10^{-3} of the detected rate. Since pion production is smaller in resonance kinematics than in DIS, and based on the fact that pions were produced at lower Q^2 than electrons of the same momentum and hence typically have smaller PV asymmetries, the relative uncertainty on the measured asymmetries due to this background was estimated to be no more than 5×10^{-3}. Background from the aluminum target endcaps was estimated using Eq. (1), with structure functions $F_{1,3}^{\gamma Z}$ for aluminum constructed from the MSTW DIS PDF [48] extrapolated to the measured $\langle Q^2 \rangle$ and $\langle W \rangle$ values, and the latest world fit on the ratio of longitudinal to transverse virtual photon electromagnetic absorption cross sections $R \equiv \sigma_L/\sigma_T$ [49]. Assuming that the actual asymmetries differ no more than 20% from calculated values due to resonance structure and nuclear effects, the relative correction to the asymmetry is at the $(1-3) \times 10^{-4}$ level with an uncertainty of $\Delta A/A = 0.4\%$ for all kinematics. Target purity adds about 0.06% of relative uncertainty to the measured asymmetry due to the presence of a small amount of hydrogen deuteride. Background from events rescattering off inner walls of the HRS was estimated using the probability of such rescattering and adds no more than 1% relative uncertainty to the measured asymmetry.

Corrections from the beam polarization in the direction perpendicular to the scattering plane can be described as $\delta A = A_n \left[-S_H \sin\theta_{tr} + S_V \cos\theta_{tr}\right]$ where A_n is the beam-normal asymmetry, $S_{V,H,L}$ are respectively the electron polarization components in the vertical, horizontal and longitudinal directions, and θ_{tr} is the vertical angle of the scattered electrons. During the experiment the beam spin components were controlled to $|S_H/S_L| \leqslant 27.4\%$ and $|S_V/S_L| \leqslant 2.5\%$ and the value of θ_{tr} was found to be less than 0.01 rad. Therefore the beam vertical spin dominates this background: $\delta A \approx A_n S_V \cos\theta_{tr} \leqslant (2.5\%) P_b A_n$ where $P_b = S_L$ is the beam longitudinal polarization described earlier. The values of A_n were measured at DIS kinematics and were found to be consistent with previous measurements from electron elastic scattering from the proton and heavier nuclei [50], based on which it was estimated that for resonance kinematics, A_n varies between -38 and -80 ppm depending on the value of Q^2, and its amplitude is always smaller than that of the corresponding measured electron asymmetry. Therefore the uncertainty due to A_n was estimated to be no more than 2.5% of the measured asymmetries.

Radiative corrections were performed for both the internal and the external bremsstrahlung and ionization loss. External radiative corrections were performed based on the procedure first described by Mo and Tsai [51]. As inputs to the radiative corrections, PV asymmetries of elastic scattering from the deuteron were estimated using Ref. [52] and those from quasielastic scattering were based on Ref. [24]. The simulation used to calculate the radiative correction also takes into account the effect of HRS acceptance and PID efficiency variation across the acceptance.

Box diagram corrections refer to effects that arise when the electron exchanges two bosons ($\gamma\gamma$, γZ, or ZZ box) simultaneously with the target, and is dominated by the $\gamma\gamma$ and the γZ box diagrams. For PVES asymmetries, the box diagram effects include those from the interference between Z-exchange and the $\gamma\gamma$ box, the interference between γ-exchange and the γZ box, and the effect of the $\gamma\gamma$ box on the electromagnetic cross sections, and it is expected that there is at least partial cancellation among these three terms. The box-diagram corrections were estimated to be at the (0-1)% level [53], and a $(0.5 \pm 0.5)\%$ relative correction was applied to the asymmetries.

Results on the physics asymmetry $A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$ were formed from the beam-corrected asymmetry $A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}$ by correcting for the beam polarization P_b and backgrounds with asymmetry A_i and fraction f_i using the equation

$$A_{PV}^{\rm phys} = \frac{\left(\frac{A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}}{P_b} - \sum_i A_i f_i\right)}{1 - \sum_i f_i} \ . \tag{2}$$

When all f_i are small with A_i comparable to or smaller than $A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}$, one can define $\bar{f}_i = f_i(1 - \frac{A_i}{A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}} P_b)$ and approximate

$$A_{PV}^{\rm phys} \approx \frac{A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}}{P_b} \Pi_i \left(1 + \bar{f}_i\right) \ , \tag{3}$$

i.e., all corrections can be treated as multiplicative.

Table I shows all kinematics, the beam-corrected asymmetries $A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}$, and the final asymmetry results $A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$ compared to calculations from Matsui, Sato, and Lee [34] [for $\Delta(1232)$ only]; Gorchtein, Horowitz, and Ramsey-Musolf [35]; and the AJM model [36]. In addition, the structure functions $F_{1,3}^{\gamma(Z)}$ in Eq. (1) can be estimated using PDF fits obtained from DIS data, extrapolated to the resonance region, along with the quark-Z^0 vector and axial couplings $g_{V,A}^q$ based on Standard Model values [42]. This approach provides DIS estimations $A_{\rm calc}^{\rm DIS}$ that can be compared to the measured asymmetries to test quark-hadron duality. For these DIS estimations, electroweak corrections were applied to $g_{V,A}^q$ directly, and three PDF fits – MSTW [48], CJ [54] and CT10 [55] – extrapolated to the measured $\langle Q^2\rangle$ and $\langle W\rangle$ values were used along with world data on R [49]. The uncertainty from each PDF fit was below a fraction of ppm and the differences among all three fits were below 1.5 ppm for all kinematics. From Tab. I one can see that the final asymmetry results agree very well with DIS calculations, indicating that for the Q^2 range covered by these measurements, duality holds at $10-15\%$ level throughout the whole resonance region.

In addition to the results in Tab. I, asymmetry results with

Kinematics	I	II	III	IV
E_b (GeV)	4.867	4.867	4.867	6.067
HRS	Left	Left	Right	Left
θ_0	12.9°	12.9°	12.9°	15.0°
p_0 (GeV/c)	4.00	3.66	3.10	3.66
$\langle Q^2\rangle$ [(GeV/c)^2]	0.950	0.831	0.757	1.472
$\langle W\rangle$ (GeV)	1.263	1.591	1.857	1.981
Measured asymmetries with beam-related corrections (ppm)				
$A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}$	-55.11	-63.75	-54.38	-104.04
(stat.)	± 6.77	± 5.91	± 4.47	± 15.26
(syst.)	± 0.10	± 0.15	± 0.24	± 0.26
Physics Asymmetry Results (ppm)				
$A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$	-68.97	-74.12	-61.80	-119.56
$\pm\Delta A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$(stat.)	± 8.47	± 6.87	± 5.08	± 17.54
$\pm\Delta A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$(syst.)	± 3.30	± 2.84	± 2.11	± 5.62
$\pm\Delta A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$(total)	± 9.09	± 7.43	± 5.50	± 18.42
Calculations (ppm)				
$A_{\rm calc}$ [34]	-89.10	–	–	–
$A_{\rm calc}$	-88.94	-70.29	-65.09	-124.74
$\pm\Delta A_{\rm calc}$ [35]	${}^{+9.98}_{-8.76}$	${}^{+14.81}_{-11.09}$	${}^{+11.85}_{-10.95}$	${}^{+20.12}_{-19.49}$
$A_{\rm calc}$	-88.22	-69.63	-65.23	-124.75
$\pm\Delta A_{\rm calc}$ [36]	${}^{+8.10}_{-8.31}$	${}^{+7.05}_{-7.19}$	${}^{+5.19}_{-5.34}$	${}^{+9.11}_{-9.49}$
$A_{\rm calc}^{\rm DIS,CJ}$	-75.63	-66.72	-61.59	-119.13

TABLE I: Asymmetry results on $\vec{e}-{}^2$H parity-violating scattering in the nucleon resonance region. The kinematics shown include the beam energy E_b, which HRS was used (Left or Right), central angle and momentum settings of the HRS θ_0, p_0, and the actual kinematics averaged from the data $\langle Q^2\rangle$ and $\langle W\rangle$. The beam-corrected asymmetries $A_{\rm raw}^{\rm bc}$ are shown along with their statistical precision and systematic uncertainties due to beam-related corrections. Final results on the physics asymmetries $A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$ are compared with calculations from three resonance models [34–36] as well as DIS estimations using CJ [54] PDF fits $A_{\rm calc}^{\rm DIS,CJ}$.

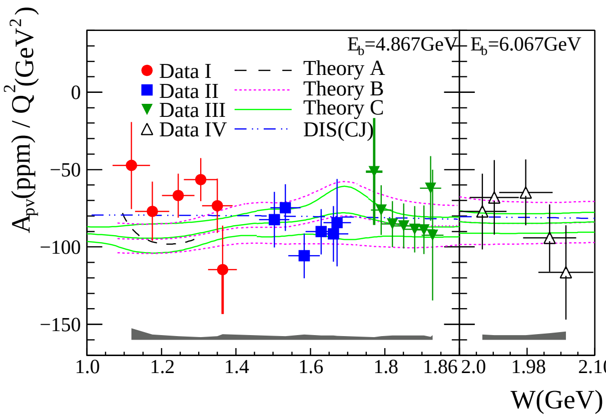

FIG. 1: (*Color online*) W-dependence of the parity-violating asymmetries in $\vec{e}-{}^2$H scattering extracted from this experiment. The physics asymmetry results $A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$ for the four kinematics I, II, III and IV (solid circles, solid squares, solid triangles, and open triangles, respectively), in parts per million (ppm), are scaled by $1/Q^2$ and compared with calculations from Ref. [34] (Theory A, dashed), Ref. [35] (Theory B, dotted), Ref. [36] (Theory C, solid) and the DIS estimation (dash-double-dotted) using Eq. (1) with the extrapolated CJ PDF [54]. The vertical error bars for the data are statistical uncertainties, while the horizontal error bars indicate the root-mean-square values of the W coverage of each bin. The experimental systematic uncertainties are shown as the shaded bands at the bottom. For each of the four kinematics, calculations were performed at the fixed E_b and Q^2 values of Tab. I and with a variation in W to match the coverage of the data. Theories B and C each has three curves showing the central values and the upper and the lower bounds of the calculation. Uncertainties of the DIS calculation were below 1 ppm and are not visible.

smaller bins in W are also available due to the detector segmentation and trigger electronics adopted in this experiment [45]: for each kinematics, six (eight) "group" triggers were formed first from different segments of the detectors, for the Left (Right) HRS, then a logical OR of all group triggers was formed to give a global trigger. While asymmetry results from the global trigger, shown in Tab. I, provided higher statistical precisions, asymmetries extracted from group triggers allowed studies of the detailed W-dependence of the asymmetry within each kinematic setting, with little variation in Q^2. Figure 1 shows the W-dependence of asymmetry results $A_{PV}^{\rm phys}$, scaled by $1/Q^2$, extracted from group triggers. The data between adjacent bins within each kinematics typically have a 20-30% overlap in event samples and are thus correlated, while the lowest and the highest bins of each kinematics have larger overlaps with their adjacent bins.

One can see from Fig. 1 that the measured asymmetries at all kinematics are consistent with the three resonance models, and again agree very well with the DIS estimation. No significant resonance structure is observed in the W-dependence of the asymmetries.

In summary, we report here results on the parity-violating asymmetries in the nucleon resonance region, including the first PV asymmetry data beyond the $\Delta(1232)$ resonance. These results provide important constraints to nucleon resonance models relevant for calculating background corrections to elastic parity-violating electron scattering measurements. The agreement with DIS-based calculations indicates that quark-hadron duality holds for PVES asymmetries on the deuteron at the $10-15\%$ level throughout the resonance region, for Q^2 values just below 1 (GeV/c)^2. These results are comparable to the unpolarized electromagnetic structure functions data which verified duality at the $5-10\%$ level for the proton and 15-20% for the neutron at similar Q^2 values, although the unpolarized measurements provided better resolution in W and covered a broader kinematic range [5, 6, 10]. We have therefore provided the first experimental support for the hypothesis that quark-hadron duality is a universal property of nucleons in both their weak and their electromagnetic interactions.

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