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Isotensor Dibaryon in the $pp \to pp\pi^+\pi^-$ Reaction?


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Introduction.—Multiquark states like tetra-, penta-, and hexaquark (dibaryon) systems, be they of compact or moleculelike structure, are a topical issue at present, extending largely our quark-based view of hadrons [1]. The existence of dibaryons has far-reaching consequences, e.g., for the formation of neutron stars [2]. Within systematic studies of two-pion production in nucleon-nucleon (NN) collisions at CELSIUS [3–11] and COSY [12–19], the first clear-cut evidence for a dibaryon resonance with \( I(J^P) = 0(3^+) \) was observed recently in the \( pp \rightarrow d \pi^0 \pi^0 \) reaction [11,15,16]. Subsequent measurements of all relevant two-pion production channels [17–22] revealed that all channels which contain isoscalar contributions exhibit a signal of this resonance—now called \( d^* \) (2380) after observation of its pole in \( pn \) scattering [23–25]. Its structure is presently heavily disputed in various theoretical investigations [26–29]. Remarkably, it corresponds very well to \( D_{03} \), predicted already in 1964 by Dyson and Xuong [30] as one of six nonstrange dibaryon states. Other members of that dibaryon multiplet are the deuteron ground state \( (D_{01}) \) and the virtual \( 1S_0 \) state \( (D_{10}) \), as well as the \( \Delta N \) threshold states \( D_{12} \) and \( D_{21} \)—with the latter of these being still purely hypothetical. But recent state-of-the-art Faddeev calculations also predict the existence of these states [31].

According to the standard theoretical description, the two-pion production process at the energies of interest here is dominated by \( t \)-channel meson exchange, leading to excitation and decay of the Roper resonance \( N^0(1440) \) and of the \( \Delta(1232)\Delta(1232) \) system [32,33]. Whereas in the near-threshold region the Roper process dominates, the \( \Delta \Delta \) process takes over at incident energies beyond 1 GeV. Such calculations give quite a reasonable description of the data, if for the Roper resonance the up-to-date decay branchings [34,35] are used and if the \( \rho \) exchange contribution of the \( \Delta \Delta \) process is tuned to describe quantitatively the \( pp \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) data (“modified Valencia” calculations) [9]—and if in the \( pn \)-induced channels the \( d^* \) (2380) resonance is taken into account.

However, in reexamining the \( pp \)-induced two-pion production channels, we find that for the \( pp \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) reaction beyond 0.9 GeV, the calculated cross sections now come out much too low (see dashed line in Fig. 1). The reason is the underlying isospin relations between the various two-pion production channels. The purely isospin-based prediction obtained from isospin decomposition of \( pp \)-induced two-pion production [7] is shown by the shaded band in Fig. 1. The small differences between model calculation and isospin prediction are due to the neglect of small terms in the latter. For details, see Ref. [36].

The discrepancy in the \( pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) cross section appears just in the region where the isotensor dibaryon state \( D_{21} \) with \( I(J^P) = 2(1^+) \) was predicted by Dyson and Xuong [30] and recently calculated by Gal and Garcilazo [31]. Since all \( pp \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) data beyond 0.8 GeV stem from early low-statistics bubble-chamber measurements [37–43], it appeared appropriate to reinvestigate this region by exclusive and kinematically complete measurements.

Experiment.—The \( pp \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) reaction was measured by the use of the quasifree process in \( pd \) collisions. The experiment was carried out at COSY (Forschungszentrum Jülich) with the WASA detector setup by using a proton beam of lab energy \( T_p = 1.2 \) GeV impinging on a deuterium pellet target [44,45]. By exploiting the quasifree scattering process \( pd \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- + n_{\text{spectator}} \) we cover the energy region \( T_p \approx 1.08–1.36 \) GeV corresponding to \( \sqrt{s} \approx 2.35–2.46 \) GeV.

The hardware trigger utilized in this analysis required two charged hits in the forward detector as well as two recorded hits in the central detector.

FIG. 1. Total cross section in dependence of the incident proton energy \( T_p \) for the reaction \( pp \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \). The solid dots show results from this work. Other symbols denote results from previous measurements [3–5,14,37–41]. The shaded band displays the isospin-based prediction. The dashed line gives the modified Valencia calculation [9]. The solid line is obtained, if an associatedly produced \( D_{21} \) resonance is added according to the process \( pp \rightarrow D_{21} \pi^- \rightarrow pp \pi^+ \pi^- \) with a strength fitted to the total cross section data.
The quasifree reaction \(pd \rightarrow ppp^+\pi^- + n_{\text{spectator}}\) was selected in the offline analysis by requiring two proton tracks in the forward detector as well as a \(\pi^+\) and a \(\pi^-\) track in the central detector.

That way, the nonmeasured spectator four-momentum could be reconstructed by a kinematic fit with one over-constraint. The achieved resolution in \(\sqrt{s}\) was about 20 MeV.

The charged particles registered in the segmented forward detector of WASA have been identified by use of the \(\Delta E - E\) energy loss method. For its application in the data analysis, all combinations of signals stemming from the five layers of the forward-range hodoscope have been used. The charged particles in the central detector have been identified by their curved track in the magnetic field as well as by their energy loss in the surrounding plastic scintillator barrel and electromagnetic calorimeter.

The requirement that the two protons have to be in the angular range covered by the forward detector and that two pions have to be within the angular range of the central detector reduces the overall acceptance to about 30%. The total reconstruction efficiency including all cuts and the kinematical fit has been 1.1%. In total, a sample of about 26 000 \(ppp^+\pi^-\) events has been selected, which satisfy all cuts and conditions.

Efficiency and acceptance corrections of the data have been performed by MC simulations of the reaction process and detector setup. For the MC simulations, pure phase-space and model descriptions have been used. The latter will be discussed in the next section. Since WASA does not cover the full reaction phase space, albeit a large fraction of it, these corrections are not fully model independent. The hatched grey histograms in Figs. 2 and 3 give an estimate for these systematic uncertainties. As a measure of these, we take the difference between model-corrected results and those obtained by assuming the modified Valencia calculations for the acceptance.

The absolute normalization of the data has been obtained by comparison of the simultaneously measured quasifree single-pion production process \(pd \rightarrow ppp^0 + n_{\text{spectator}}\) to previous bubble-chamber results for the \(pp \rightarrow ppp^0\) reaction [38,40]. That way, the uncertainty in the absolute normalization of our data is essentially that of the previous \(pp \rightarrow ppp^0\) data, i.e., in the order of 5%–15%. Details of the data analysis and of the interpretation are given in Ref. [36].

Results and discussion.—In order to determine the energy dependence of total and differential cross sections for the quasifree process, we have divided our background-corrected data into bins of 50 MeV width in the incident energy \(T_p\). The resulting total cross sections are shown in Fig. 1 (solid circles) together with results from earlier measurements (open symbols) [3–5,14,37–41]. Our data for the total cross section are in reasonable agreement with the earlier measurements.

In order to compare with theoretical expectations, we plot in Fig. 1 the results of the modified Valencia calculations by the dashed line. These calculations do very well at low energies, but they underpredict substantially the data at higher energies. The reason is that by isospin relations, the \(ppp^0\pi^0\) and \(ppp^+\pi^-\) channels have to behave qualitatively similarly, if only \(t\)-channel Roper and \(\Delta\Delta\) processes contribute. So, if the kink around \(T_p \approx 1.1\) GeV in the \(ppp^0\pi^0\) data [9] is reproduced by any such model calculation, then the \(ppp^+\pi^-\) channel also has to behave such (shaded band in Fig. 1); if not, a new strong and very selective \(\rho\) channel \(\pi^+\pi^-\) production process enters [36].

Next, we consider the differential cross sections. For a four-body, axially symmetric final state there are seven independent differential observables. For a better
discussion of the physics issue, we choose to show in this Letter nine differential distributions, namely those for the center-of-mass (c.m.) angles for protons and pions, denoted by \( \theta_{p}^{m} \), \( \theta_{\pi}^{m} \), and \( \theta_{\pi}^{m} \), as well as those for the invariant masses \( M_{pp} \), \( M_{\pi\pi} \), \( M_{pp\pi} \), \( M_{pp\pi} \), and \( M_{pp\pi} \). These distributions are shown in Figs. 2 and 3.

There are no data to compare with from previous experiments in the energy range considered here. All measured differential distributions are markedly different from pure phase-space distributions (shaded areas in Figs. 2 and 3). With the exception of \( \theta_{\pi}^{m} \), \( M_{\pi\pi} \), and \( M_{pp\pi} \) spectra, the differential distributions are reasonably well reproduced by the modified Valencia model calculations (dashed curves). For better comparison, all calculations are adjusted in area to the data in Figs. 2 and 3.

The proton angular distribution is strongly forward-backward peaked, as expected for a peripheral reaction process. The \( \pi^- \) angular distribution is rather flat, in tendency slightly convex curved, as is also observed in the other \( NN\pi \) channels in this energy range.

But surprisingly, the \( \pi^+ \) angular distribution exhibits an opposite curvature, a strikingly concave shape. Such a behavior, which is in sharp contrast to the theoretical expectations, has been observed so far in none of the two-pion production channels [36].

Also, the \( M_{\pi\pi} \) and \( M_{pp\pi} \) spectra are markedly different from the \( M_{pp\pi} \) and \( M_{pp\pi} \) spectra, respectively. In the case of the \( t \)-channel \( \Delta\Delta \) process, which is usually considered to be the dominating one at the energies of interest here, \( \Delta^+ \) and \( \Delta^0 \) get excited simultaneously and with equal strength. Hence, the \( M_{\pi\pi} \) \( M_{pp\pi} \) spectrum should be equal to the \( M_{\pi\pi} \) \( M_{pp\pi} \) one, and the \( \pi^+ \) angular distribution should equal the \( \pi^- \) angular distribution.

This model-independent observation supported by the failure of the modified Valencia calculation to describe properly both the total cross section and the differential distributions suggests that the \( t \)-channel \( \Delta\Delta \) process is not the leading one here.

It appears that an important piece of reaction dynamics is missing, which selectively affects the \( \pi^+, pp\pi^- \), and \( pp\pi^- \) subsystems in the \( pp\pi^-\pi^- \) channel. Since there is no baryon excitation, which could cure these problems here, and since the discrepancy between data and the modified Valencia description opens up scissorslike around \( T_p \approx 0.9 \) GeV, it matches the opening of a new channel, where a \( \Delta N \) system is produced associated with another pion. In addition, the \( \Delta N \) system has to be isotensor, in order to have the \( \Delta \) excitation only in the \( pp\pi^- \) system as observed in the data. Such a state with the desired properties could be the isotensor \( D_{21} \) state with \( I(J^P) = 2(1^+) \) predicted already by Dyson and Xuong [30] with a mass in the region of its isospin partner \( D_{12} \) with \( I(J^P) = 1(2^+) \). The latter has been observed with a mass of about 2144–2148 MeV [46,47], i.e., with a binding energy of a few MeV relative to the nominal \( \Delta N \) threshold and with a width compatible to that of the \( \Delta \). For a recent discussion about the nature of this \( D_{12} \) state see, e.g., Ref. [48].

Due to its isospin, \( I = 0 \) \( D_{21} \) cannot be reached directly by the initial \( pp \) collisions, but can only be produced associated with an additional pion. The hypothetical isotensor state \( D_{21} \) strongly favors the purely isotensor channel \( pp\pi^+ \) in its decay. In addition, \( J^P = 1^+ \) can be easily reached by adding a \( p \)-wave pion (from \( \Delta \) decay) to a \( pp \) pair in the \( ^3S_0 \) partial wave. Hence—as already suggested by Dyson and Xuong [30]—the favored production channel should be \( pp \to D_{21}\pi^- \to pp\pi^-\pi^- \).

Quantitatively, the process can be described by using the formalism outlined in Refs. [36,49] by adding the \( D_{21} \) production on the amplitude level. The \( D_{21} \) resonance can be formed together with an associated produced pion in either a relative \( s \) or \( p \) wave. In the first instance, the initial \( pp \) partial wave is \( ^3P_1 \); in the latter one, it is \( ^3S_0 \) or \( D_2 \). The first case is special, since only this one yields a \( \sin \theta_{\pi}^{m} \) dependence for the angular distribution of the pion originating from the \( D_{21} \) decay—exactly what is needed for the description of the data for the \( \pi^+ \) angular distribution being associated simultaneously with a flat \( \pi^- \) angular distribution.

In fact, if we add such a resonance assuming the process \( pp \to D_{21}\pi^- \to pp\pi^-\pi^- \) with fitted mass \( m_{D_{21}} = 2140 \) MeV and width \( \Gamma_{D_{21}} = 110 \) MeV, we obtain a good description of the total cross section by adjusting the strength of the assumed resonance process to the total cross section data (solid line in Fig. 1). Simultaneously, the addition of this resonance process provides a quantitative description of all differential distributions (solid lines in Figs. 2 and 3), in particular also of the \( \theta_{\pi}^{m} \), \( M_{\pi\pi} \), and \( M_{pp\pi} \) distributions. Since the \( D_{21} \) decay populates only \( \Delta^{++} \), its reflection in
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comparatively small cross section at the energies of interest 

since such a state may decay also into 

NNπ channels other than 

ppπ±—though with much smaller branchings due to isospin coupling. In consequence, it may also 

contribute to other two-pion production channels. This is 

particularly relevant for the 

pp → 

ppπ0π0 reaction with its comparatively small cross section at the energies of interest here. But the 

D21 production via the \( \hat{D}_1 \) partial wave leaves the two pions in the relative p-wave, hence they are also in 
an isovector state by Bose symmetry. Since such a \( \rho \)-channel situation is not possible for identical pions, 

there are no contributions from 

D21 in 

ppπ0π0 and 

nππ+π+ channels; i.e., there is no consistency problem. 

From a fit to the data we obtain a mass 

M_{D_{21}} = 2140(10) \ MeV and a width \( \Gamma_{D_{21}} = 110(10) \ MeV. The mass is in good agreement with the prediction of Dyson and Xuong [30]. Both the mass and width are just slightly smaller than those calculated by Gal and Garcilazò [31].

Summary and conclusions.—Total and differential cross sections of the 

pp → 

ppπ±π− reaction have been measured exclusively and kinematically complete in the energy range \( T_p = 1.08–1.36 \ GeV by use of the quasifree process 

pd → 

ppπ±π− + spectator. The results for the total cross section are in good agreement with previous bubble-chamber data. For the differential cross sections, no data from previous measurements are available.

The \( M_{π^-}, M_{ppπ^-}, \) and \( \theta_{π^-} \) distributions are observed to be strikingly different from their counterparts, the \( M_{π^+}, M_{ppπ^+}, \) and \( \theta_{π^+} \) distributions, respectively. Hence, the originally anticipated t-channel \( \Delta \Delta \) mechanism cannot be the dominating process here.

The problem can be overcome, if there is an opening of a new reaction channel near \( T_p \approx 0.9 \ GeV, i.e., \) near the \( ΔNπ \) threshold, which nearly exclusively feeds the 

ppπ±π− channel. Such a process is the associated production of the theoretically predicted isotensor \( ΔN \) state 

D21 with specific signatures in invariant mass spectra and in the \( π^+ \) angular distribution. We have demonstrated that such a process provides a quantitative description of the data for the 

pp → 

ppπ±π− reaction—both for the total cross section and for all differential distributions.

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