

PR12-26-012

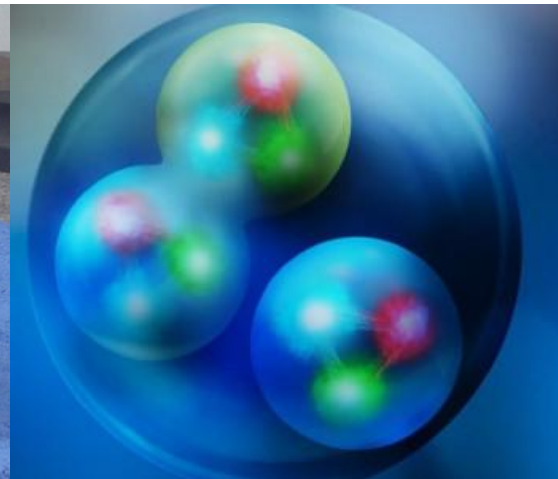
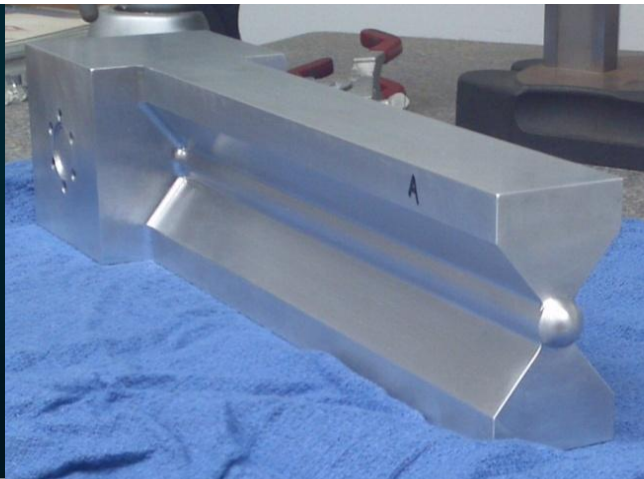
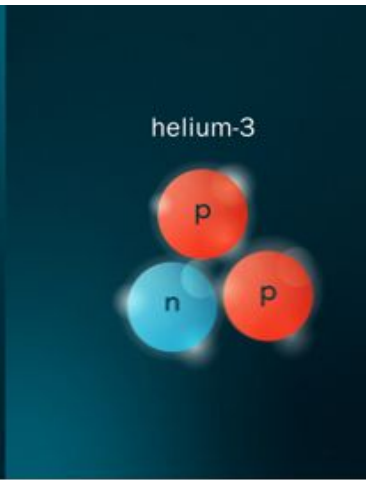
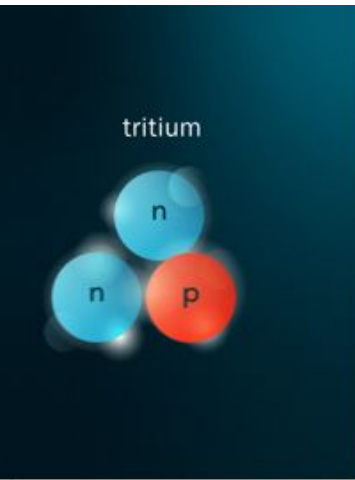
Probing the isospin and momentum structure of three-nucleon short-range correlations in the $^3\text{H}/^3\text{He}$ mirror system

A run group proposal to PAC54

Spokespersons:

John Arrington (LBNL), Shujie Li (LBNL)

PAC54@JLab, July 7, 2026



A Clean $A=3$ Test of 3N-SRC Scaling

Question: Can 3N-SRCs be isolated in the simplest 3-body nuclei through α and Q^2 scaling?

Method:

- Measure $^3\text{H}/^3\text{He}$ inclusive QE ratios at $Q^2 \approx 1.6$ and 2.7 GeV^2 with **SHMS**. (in parallel with PR12-26-011)
- Same Hall A tritium target design with added collimation
- Hall A $\rightarrow$ Hall C SHMS: larger acceptance, higher Q^2

Why $A=3$: mirror cancellation, fixed nnp/npp configurations, small Fermi motion, no 3N center-of-mass (COM) smearing

Possible outcomes:

- ❖ Map out the 2N-SRC to 3N-SRC transition, and provide stringent constraints to 3N system
- ❖ If scaling is established $\rightarrow$ isolated 3N-SRC benchmark

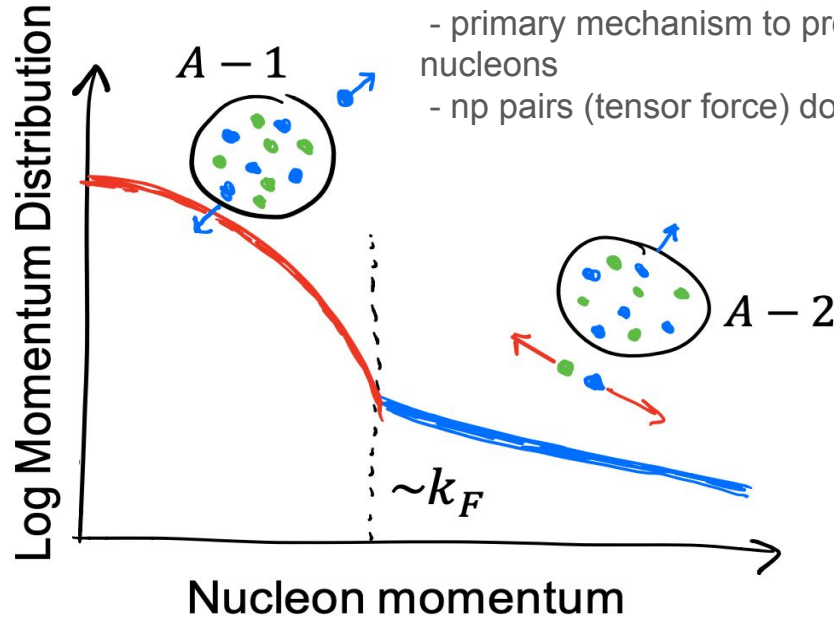
Short-range Correlations in Nuclei

1. Independent particle shell model

- mean-field motion up to Fermi motion k_F

2. High-momentum 2N-SRC pairs.

- large back-to-back momentum
- low center-of-mass (COM) motion
- primary mechanism to produce $>k_F$ nucleons
- np pairs (tensor force) dominant



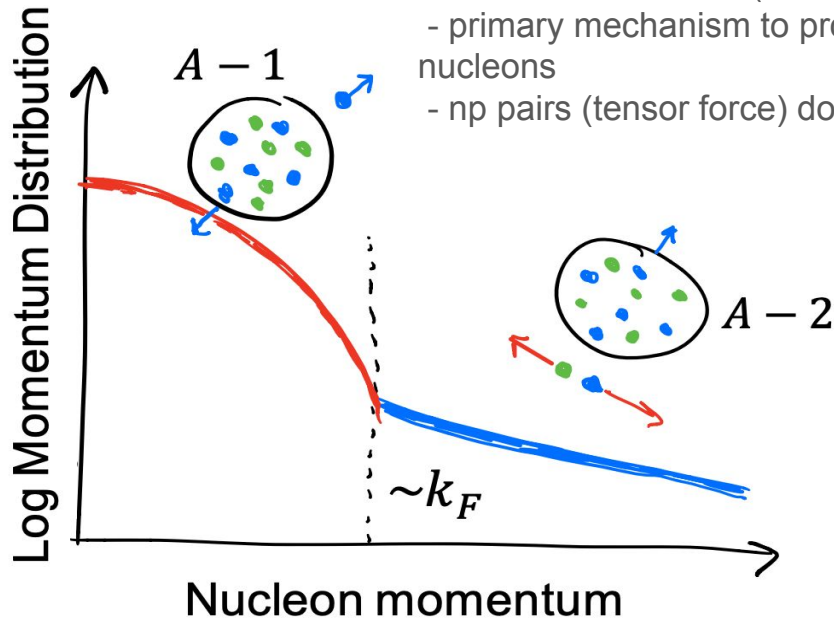
Short-range Correlations in Nuclei

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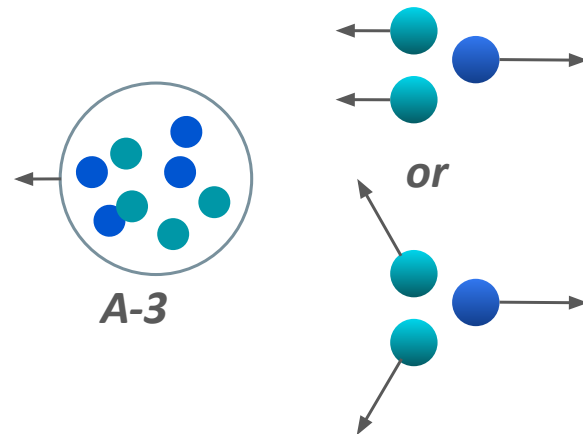
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3. 3N SRC configuration:

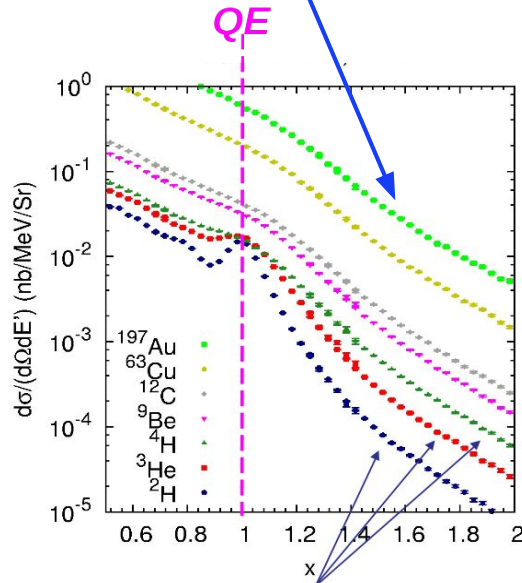
- 3 nucleons with correlated large ($>k_F$) momentum but small COM
- Isolate 3N SRC in electron scattering to study:
 - Isospin configurations
 - ppp, nnn, **ppn**, **nnp**
 - Which nucleon gets the highest momentum?



2N SRC Scaling in (e,e')

Isolate 2N SRC by suppressing low-momentum contributions

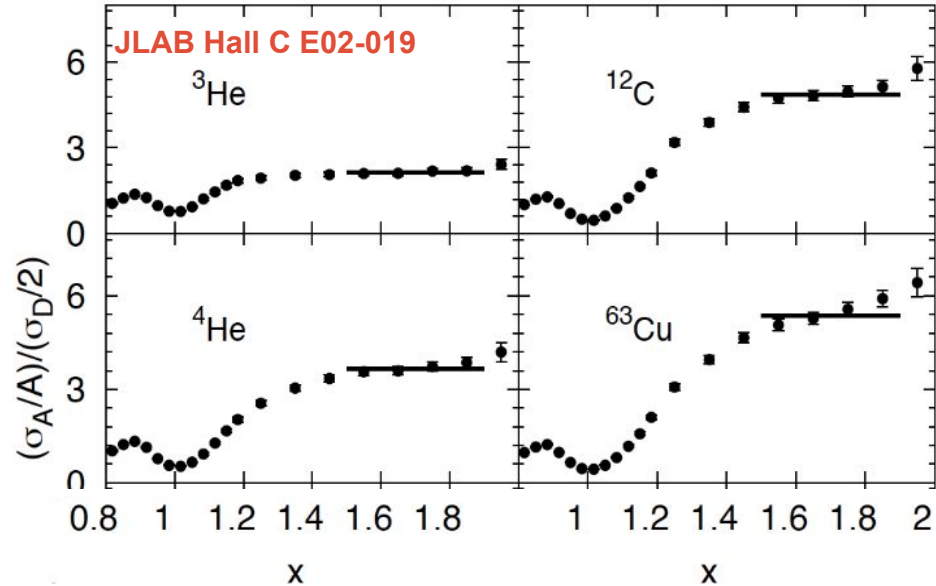
$$\sigma_A = \sigma_{QE} + a_2(A)\sigma_2 + a_3(A)\sigma_3 + \dots$$



High momentum tails should yield constant ratio if SRC-dominated

N. Fomin, et al., PRL 108 (2012) 092052

Plateaus in A/D cross section ratio



3N-SRC Scaling Search in 6 GeV Era

The usual path:

- In (e,e'), isolate 3N SRC by suppressing mean-field and 2N contributions at **high Q^2** ,
Looking for $A^3\text{He}$ scaling at $x > 2$:

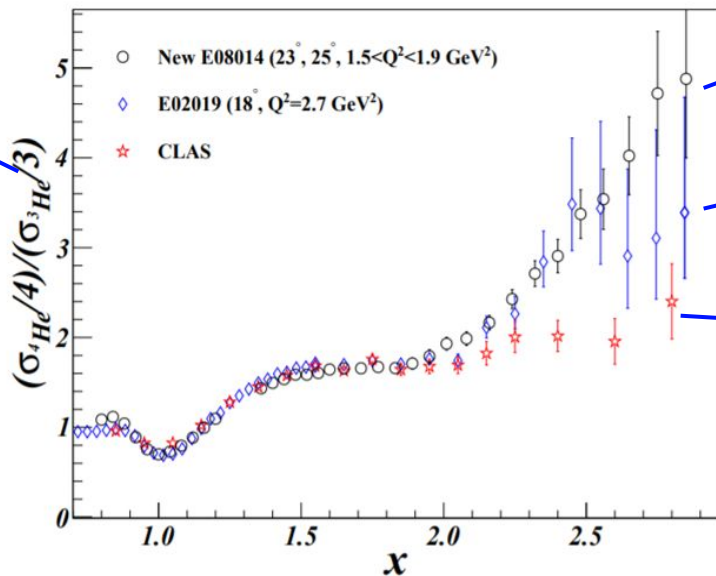
$$\sigma_A = \sigma_{QE} + a_2(A)\sigma_2 + a_3(A)\sigma_3 + \dots$$

$\nearrow 0$ $\nearrow 0$

Major experimental challenge: rate, resolution...

- No positive signal so far.

$A^3\text{He}$ compares a mixed-isospin numerator to the ppn-only denominator

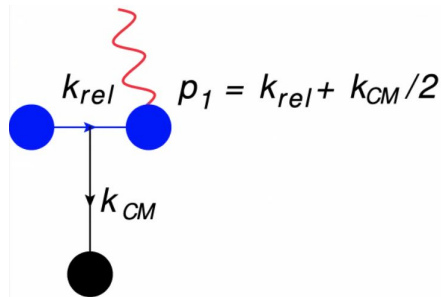


No scaling observed at that Q^2

Large stats error due to small cross sections at high Q^2

Reported the $x > 2$ plateau, but re-analysis suggested an artifact of bin-migration effects due to limited CLAS6 resolution.

Re-assessing the Scaling Threshold



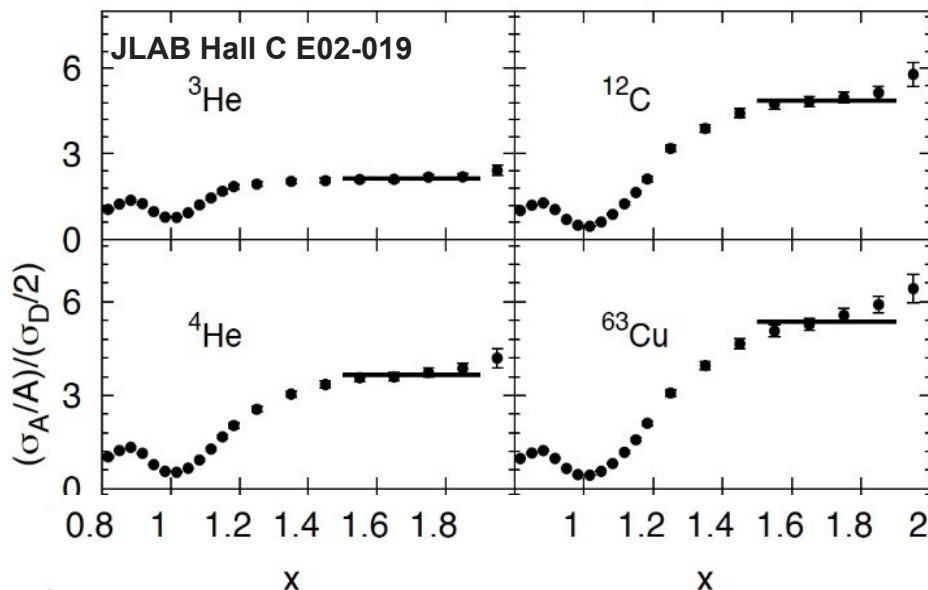
Scaling is established when
 $\min(p_1) := k_{min} > k_F + k_{CM}/2$

heavier nuclei

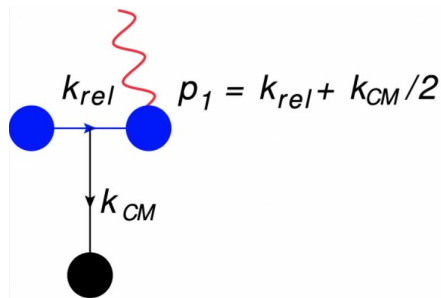
→ larger k_F and k_{CM}

→ larger **threshold p_1** for scaling onset

The 2N-SRC scaling onset is clearly **A-dependent**



Re-assessing the Scaling Threshold



SRC scaling variable for e' kinematics:

Light-cone variable α : the light-front momentum distribution.

If approximated in 2N;

$$\alpha_{2N} = 2 - \frac{q_- + 2m}{2m} \frac{\sqrt{W^2 - 4m^2} + W}{W}$$

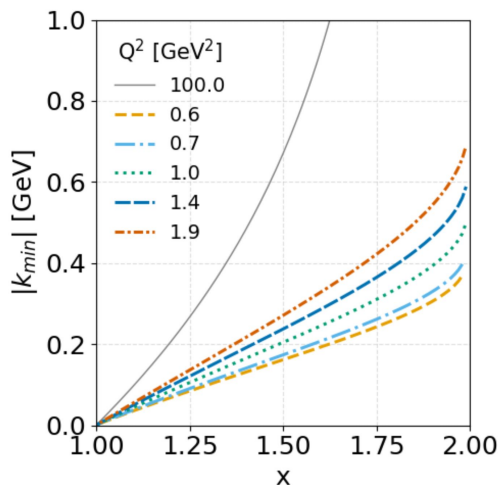
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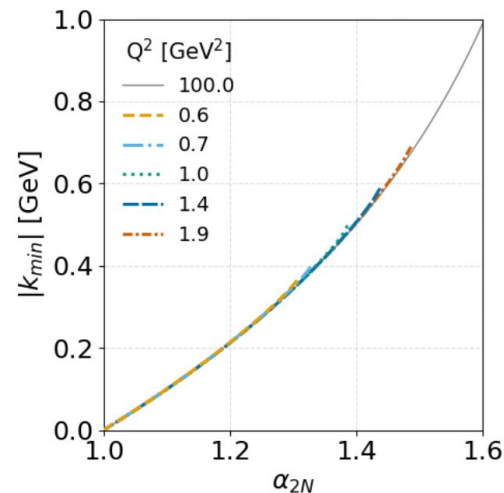
→ larger k_F and k_{CM}

→ larger **threshold α (or Q^2)** for
 scaling onset

- Large x and $Q^2 \Rightarrow$ large k_{min}



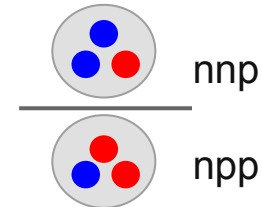
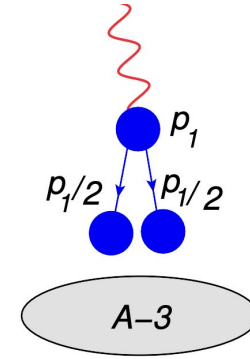
- Large $\alpha \Rightarrow$ large k_{min}



3N-SRC Scaling Search in 12 GeV Era

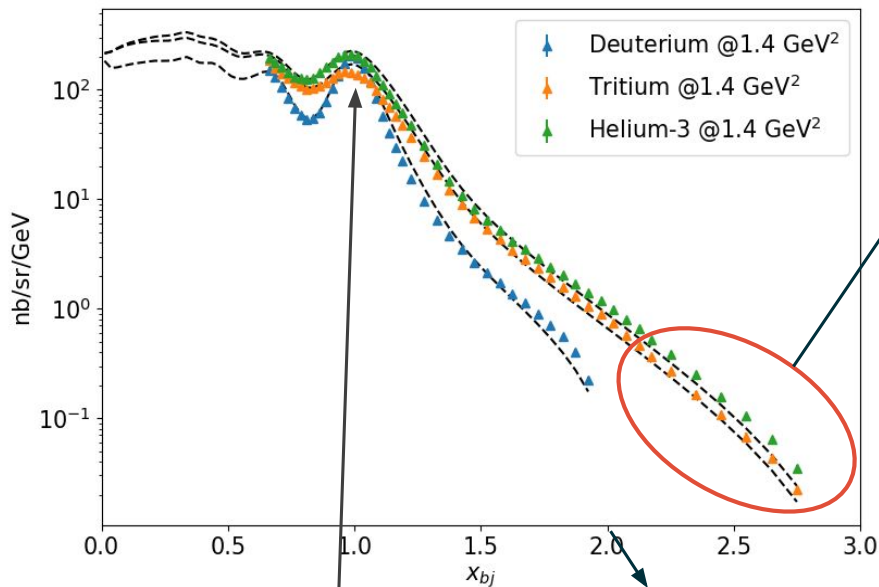
Two complementary efforts to isolate 3N-SRC above the kinematic threshold:

- **A>3** : tests nuclear systematics, universality of 3N-SRC, and A-dependence at higher α at $x>2$ (higher Q^2)
- **A=3**: a **clean** benchmark to
 - Search or confirm 3N-SRC scaling at mid α and Q^2
 - **Scaling-violating** effects such as nuclear effects, final-state interactions, and other competing processes largely **cancelled** in mirror nuclei comparisons.
 - Small Fermi motion $\rightarrow$ mean field contribution drops fast
 - Provide a baseline for 3N quantitative interpretation
 - Clean **nnp** or **npp** configuration. Can construct the isoscalar average for A/3
 - No COM, momentum balance remains in the A=3 system
 - Sensitive to the leading nucleon isospin in 3N



Our Approach: 3N SRC with A=3 Mirror Nuclei

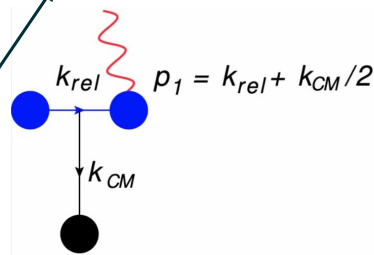
(e,e') cross section from E12-11-112@Hall A, 2018



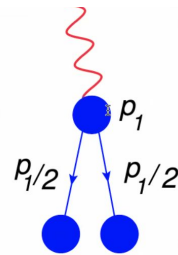
$x=2$: Limit of static 2N-SRC pair e.g. deuteron

$$\sigma_A = \sigma_{QE} + a_2(A)\sigma_2 + a_3(A)\sigma_3 + \dots$$

$x > 2$: 2N-SRC with COM or 3N-SRC?



$A=3$



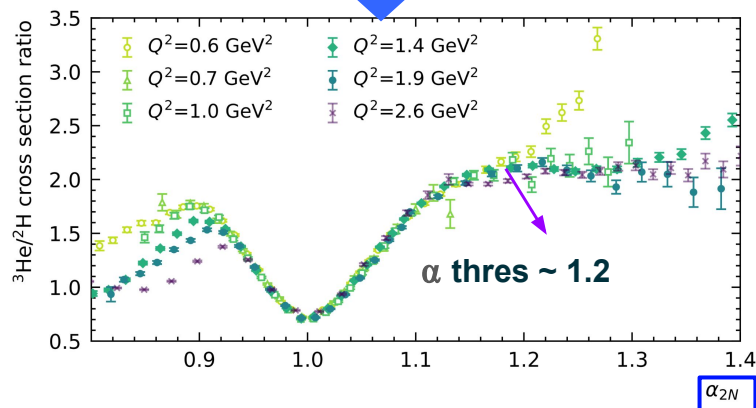
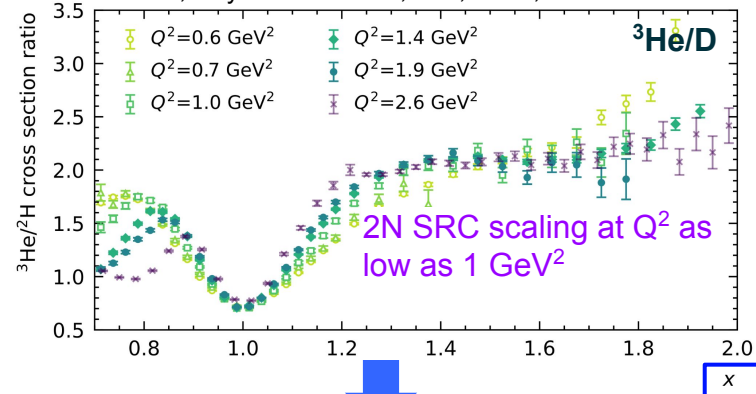
Easier to find 3N above mean-field in $A=3$:

- Smaller k_F :
 - < 100 MeV/c in $A=3$
 - ~ 250 MeV/c in $A \geq 12$
- smaller COM for 2N SRC
- No COM for 3N SRC

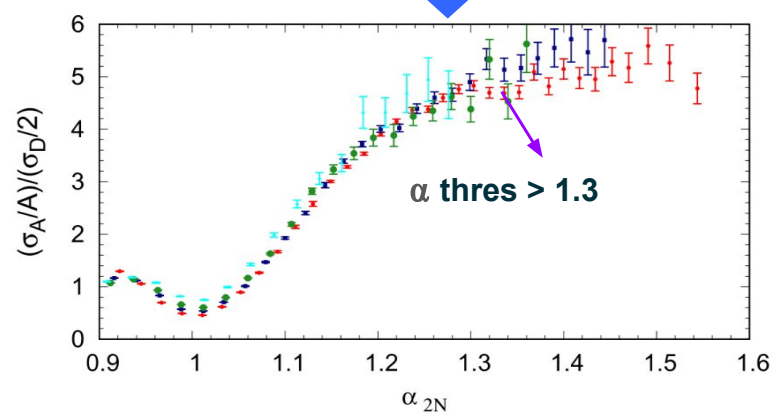
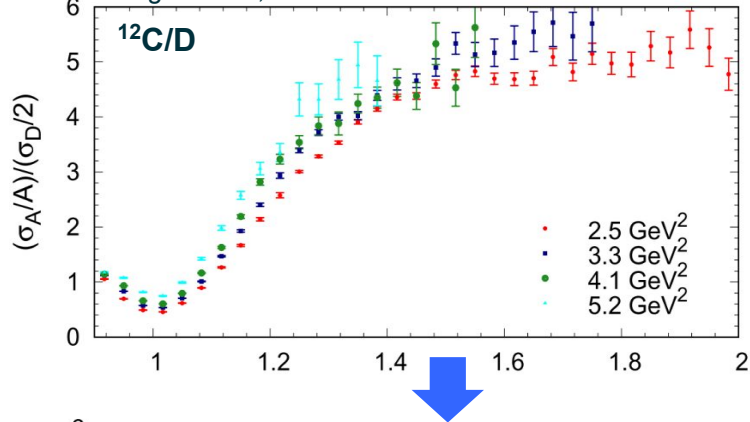
$\Rightarrow$ isolate 3N-SRC $\rightarrow$ scaling at lower threshold α and Q^2

Hint: 2N Scaling Onset vs. A

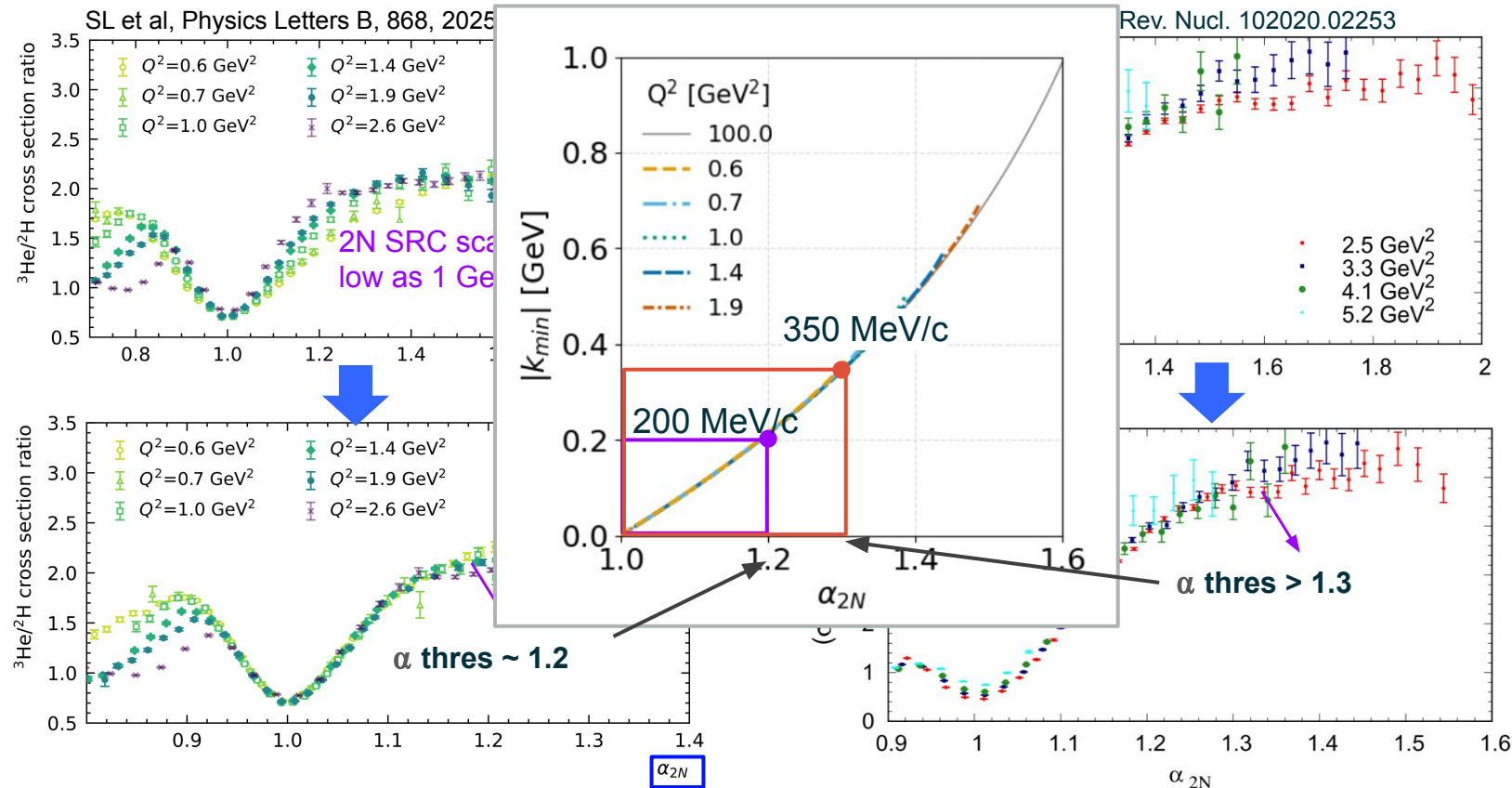
SL et al, Physics Letters B, 868, 2025, 139734



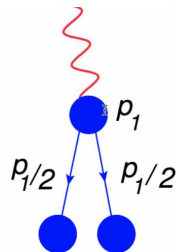
Arrington et al, Annu. Rev. Nucl. 102020.02253



Hint: 2N Scaling Onset vs. A



Hint: 3N Scaling in A=3?



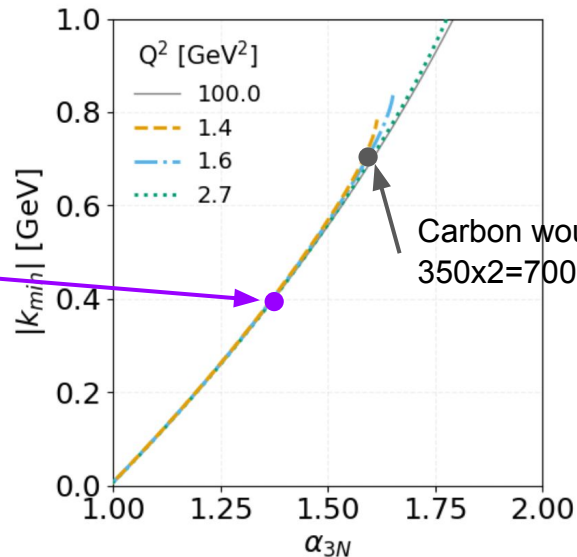
For A=3:

lowest energy configuration in (e,e') to ensure all 3N are above mean-field:

$p_1=400$, $p_2 = p_3 = 200$ MeV/c

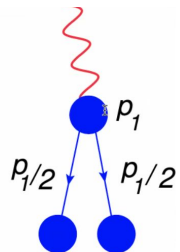
For the leading nucleon:

$\alpha=1.4 \Rightarrow k_{\min}=400$ MeV/c



Carbon would require
350x2=700 MeV/c $\Rightarrow \alpha=1.6$

Hint: 3N Scaling in A=3?



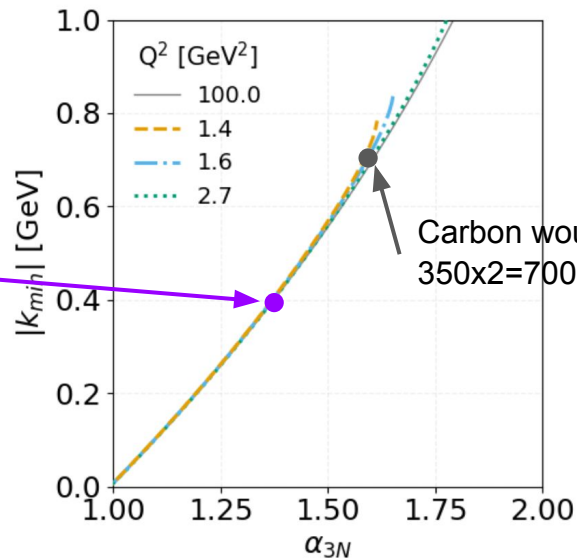
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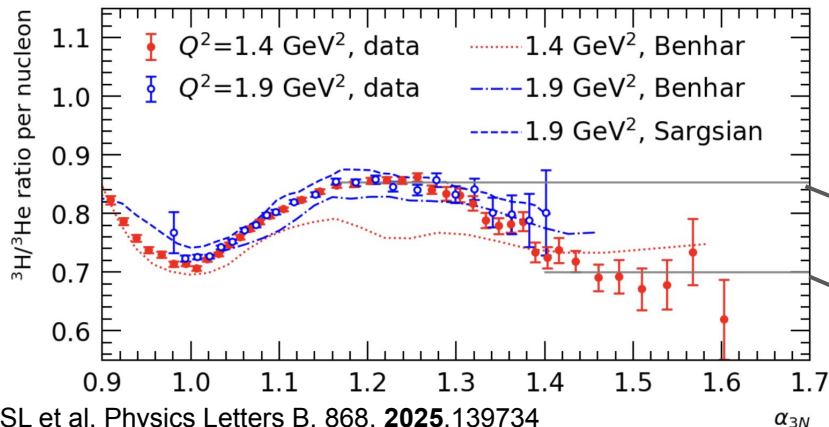
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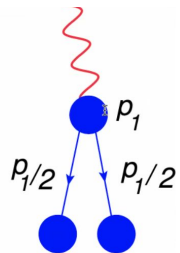
Observation from 2018 A=3 data



2N SRC scaling onset at $\alpha=1.2$

Possible 3N scaling onset at $\alpha=1.4$?

Hint: 3N Scaling in A=3?



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Already have:

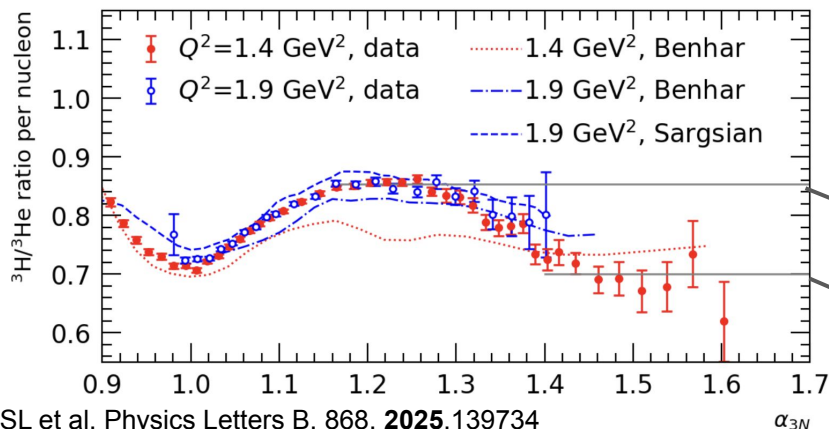
- A=3 data up to α of 1.6
- 2N SRC scaling at lower Q^2 , and calculations that describe the shape
- Possible **onset** of 3N SRC scaling with limited precision

Still missing:

- Statistical significance to claim a plateau
- Multiple Q^2 settings to confirm scaling

Goals of the new proposal

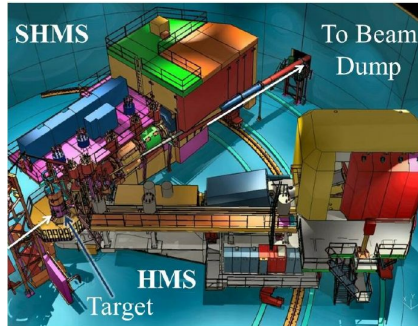
Observation from 2018 A=3 data



2N SRC scaling onset at $\alpha=1.2$

Possible 3N scaling onset at $\alpha=1.4$?

New Proposal: Kinematics



SHMS in standard configuration to detect scattered electrons

- Good momentum resolution (v.s. Hall B CLAS12)
- Higher central momentum, smaller angle (v.s. Hall A) → higher rates → can afford higher Q^2
- Large momentum acceptance → one single setting to cover x from 1 to 3

	E12-11-112	This Proposal	
Kinematics	L17	kin1	kin2
Beam Energy	4.3 GeV	11 GeV	8.8 GeV
Spectrometer	HRS@Hall A	SHMS@Hall C	SHMS@Hall C
Angle	17.0	8.5	8.5
Central momentum	3.54 - 3.94 GeV	9.8 GeV	8.2 GeV
Q^2	1.4	2.7	1.6

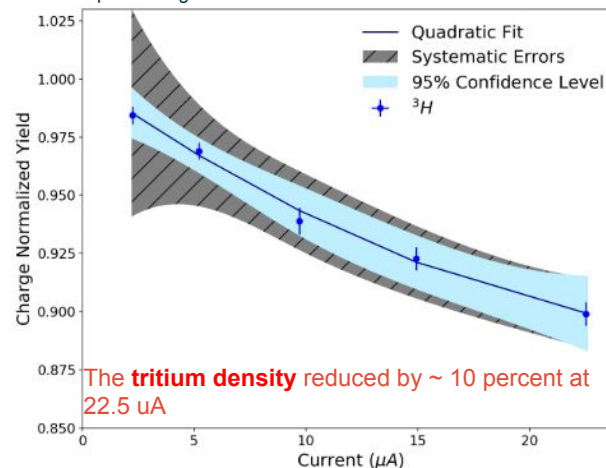
New Proposal: Target System

Same target system design from the 2018 tritium program:

- 25cm long sealed Alloy cell
 - Large block of aluminum for heat sink
 - hold **1000 Ci** tritium gas at 10 atm
 - Will use identical cells for deuterium, helium-3, as well as an empty cell for calibration
- Well-understood target properties:
 - Beam-induced density fluctuation at 10% level
 - Tritium decay correction
- Similar **safety** protocols:
 - beam current limit (22.5uA)
 - Raster size 2x2mm
 - Beam-on temperature <150 K(Some engineered safety mitigations will have to be different for Hall C)



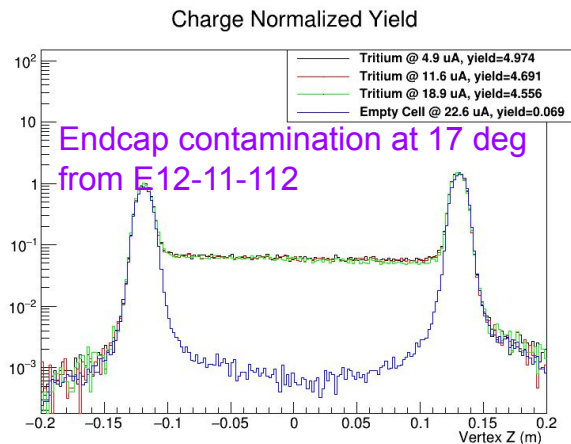
S. Santiesteban et al.,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.NIMA.2019.06.025>



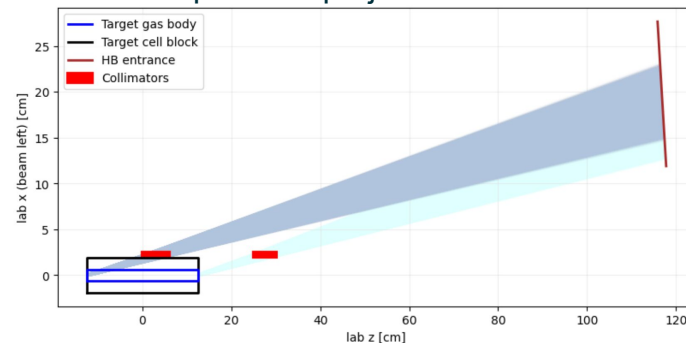
New Proposal: Target System

Additional target collimators (tungsten blocks):

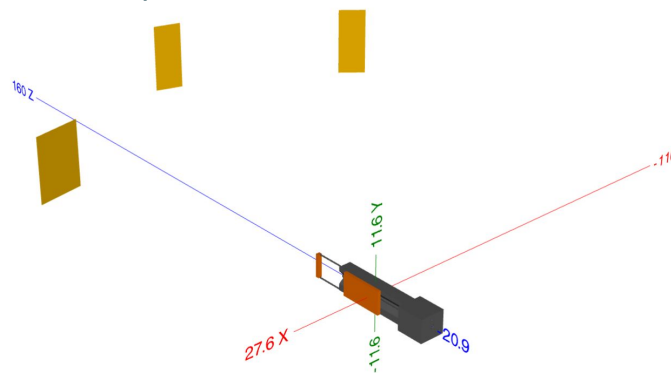
- Without collimator:
 - Apply vertex z cut e.g. $\pm 8\text{cm}$ to remove endcap window peaks $\rightarrow$ rely on reconstruction resolution
 - Subtract residuals with empty cell
- With collimator:
 - Most of endcap events won't reach detector plane. Also reduce the rates
 - Empty cell runs for double check
 - Feasibility tested with SIMC (acceptance) and GEANT4 (background)



Endcap events projections from SIMC



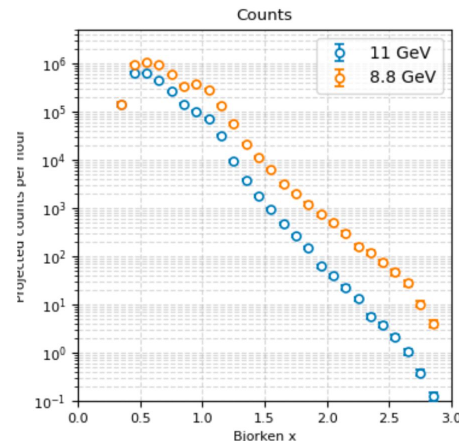
Target cell, collimators, and spectrometer entrance in GEANT4



New Proposal: Run Plan

	Beam Energy (GeV)	Beam Current (μA)	Beam Requirements	Target Material	Material Thickness (mg/cm^2)	Beamtime (days)
Calibration	6.6	22.5	Unpolarized	^1H	71	0.1
	6.6	22.5	Unpolarized	^2H	142	0.2
	6.6	22.5	Unpolarized	^3H	85	0.8
	6.6	22.5	Unpolarized	^3He	64	0.7
	6.6	22.5	Unpolarized	^{27}Al	350	0.2
Production	8.8	22.5	Unpolarized	^1H	71	1.0
	8.8	22.5	Unpolarized	^2H	142	1.5
	8.8	22.5	Unpolarized	^3H	85	5.5
	8.8	22.5	Unpolarized	^3He	64	5.0
	8.8	22.5	Unpolarized	^{27}Al	350	1.0
Production	11.0	22.5	Unpolarized	^1H	71	2.5
	11.0	22.5	Unpolarized	^2H	142	3.0
	11.0	22.5	Unpolarized	^3H	85	16
	11.0	22.5	Unpolarized	^3He	64	15
	11.0	22.5	Unpolarized	^{27}Al	350	4.5
Total Beam Time						57 days
Configuration Change						3 days
Total Time						60 days

(+4 days if assuming $53\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2$ for ^3He instead of $64\text{mg}/\text{cm}^2$)



- 60 PAC days including calibrations to reach **<3% statistical uncertainties** up to $\alpha=1.7$
- **1.2% systematic uncertainties** in ratios at $x>2$ + **1.2% normalization** mainly from target density
- Run in parallel with PR12-26-011 (HMS)

New Proposal: Projected Results

Precise ratios and cross sections to compare to *ab initio* calculations

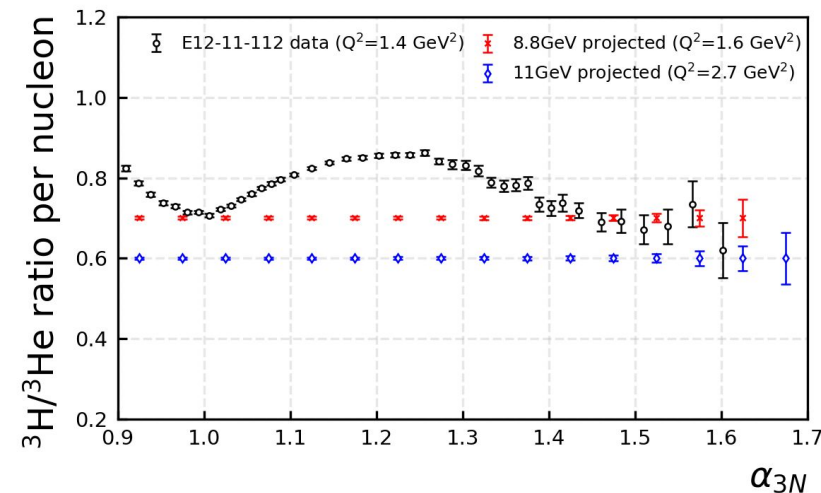
- Test high-momentum components in precise *ab initio* few-body calculations
- Intrinsic sensitivity to isoscalar structure of highest-momentum nucleons (next slide)

Quantitative 3N-SRC scaling test in $A=3$:

- Extend precision and α range for $\alpha > 1.4$
- Compare two Q^2 values higher than Hall A data
- Precision sufficient to set 5% limit on variation above $\alpha > 1.4$

If 3N-SRC dominance confirmed, extract SRC information

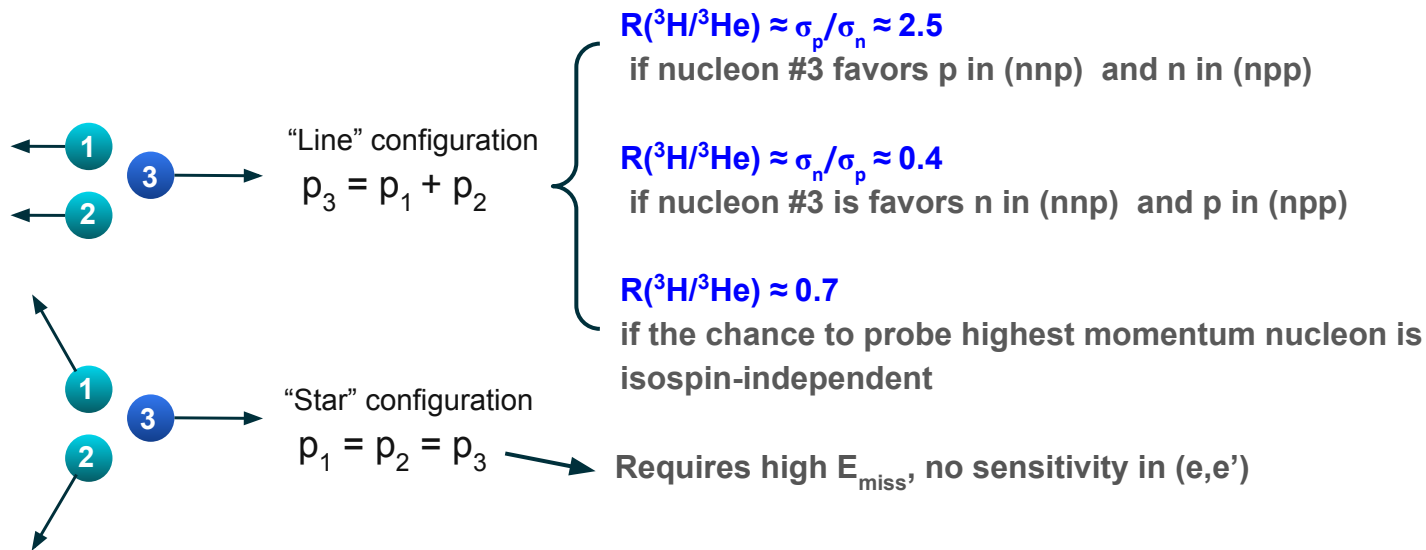
- Ratio provides constraint on isospin structure of leading nucleons
- Baseline for $A/3\text{He}$ measurement...
- Provide guidance on structure and cross sections needed for exclusive measurements



- ❖ Bin size is chosen to be at least 3 times the detector resolution

New Proposal: Projected Results

A clean A=3 benchmark: known nnp and npn configurations with 0 center-of-mass motion to constrain the isospin of the leading (highest momentum) nucleon at large $k_{\min}$



Summary

- **A definitive A=3 scaling test:**

- A=3 inclusive cross section measurement to test the possible 3N-SRC scaling observed in the 2018 data
- α up to 1.7
- Q^2 at 1.6 and 2.7 GeV² with enough precision to support a plateau claim

- **A clean A=3 benchmark:**

- Pin down the minimal kinematic requirement for scaling
- Decouple center-of-mass motion, isoscalar corrections, scale-violating processes from 3N-SRC measurement
- Benchmark 3N-SRC structure against theories

- **The Hall C tritium run group:**

- Use Hall A 2018 tritium target design with SHMS-side collimators
- This unique combination of beam, A=3 target, and high momentum spectrometer is only possible at JLab

Thank you!

Justification

Timely: $x > 2$ ratio from 2025, A/3 proposal this year, theory engagement, white paper this year, does not dependent on A/3 results

A controlled technical path: Hall A cell design, SHMS standard configuration, added endcap collimation, empty/dummy/optics calibrations.

High Impact: A=3 provides the baseline for 3N-SRC studies

Connections:

repulsive core v.s. 3N

3N $\rightarrow$ 3 body force

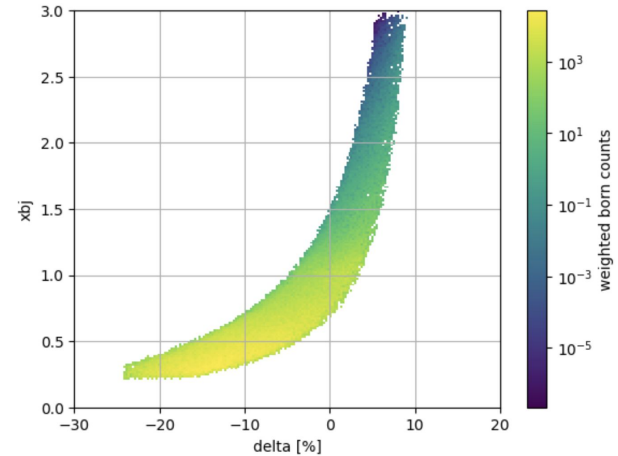
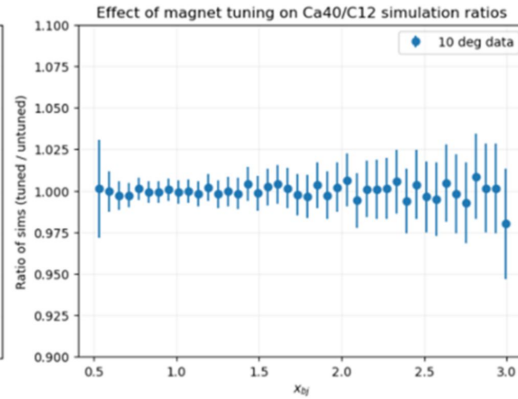
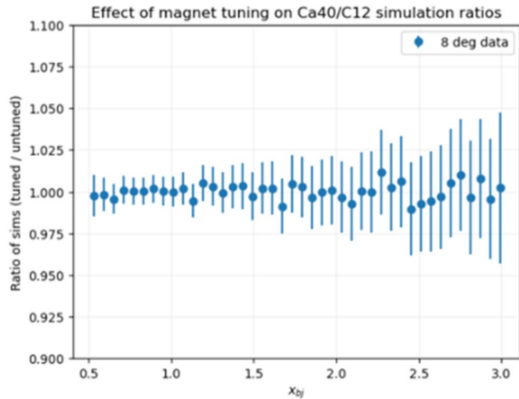
2BB xs is $\ll$ 3N SRC

3N force need exclusive measurement with large Emiss but only after the 3N factorization/scaling is established

Optics Calibration

- Take sieve data with optics target at exact kinematics
- Take delta scan at lower momentum/energy, and extrapolate based on our knowledge of field map
 - Saturation has limited impact on ratio
 - Constrain delta range to <10% to limit delta distortion

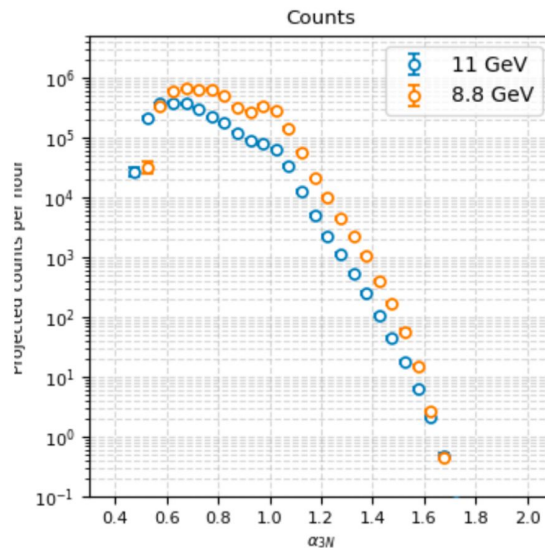
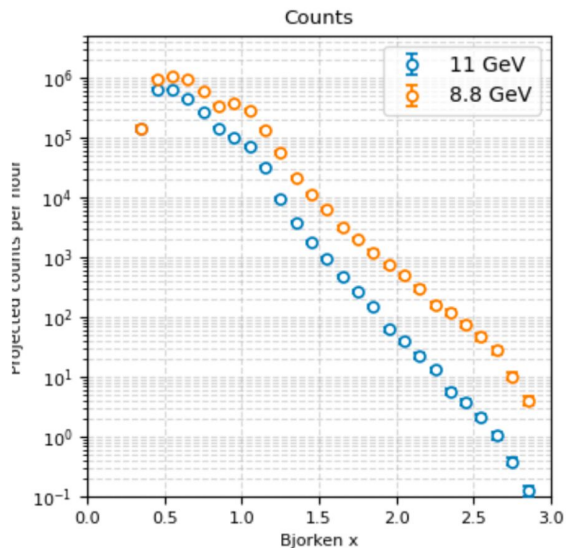
Optics study from XEM2 (courtesy of Jordan O'Kronley)



New Proposal: Rate

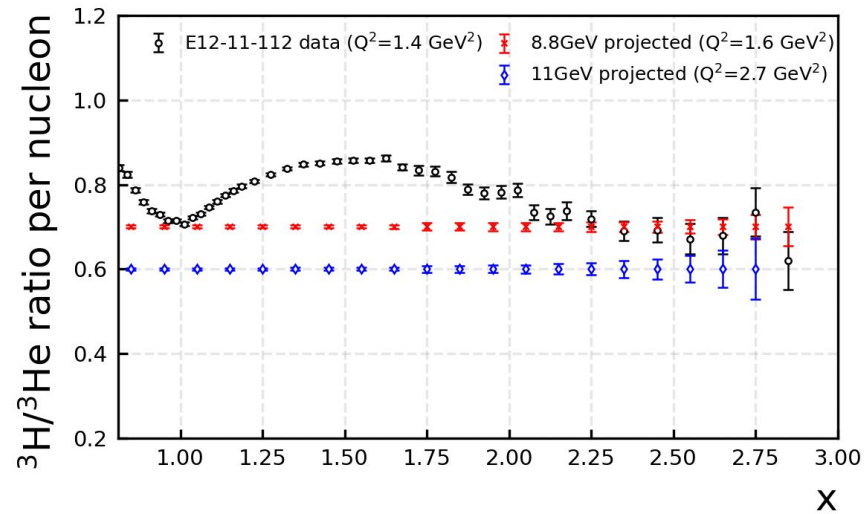
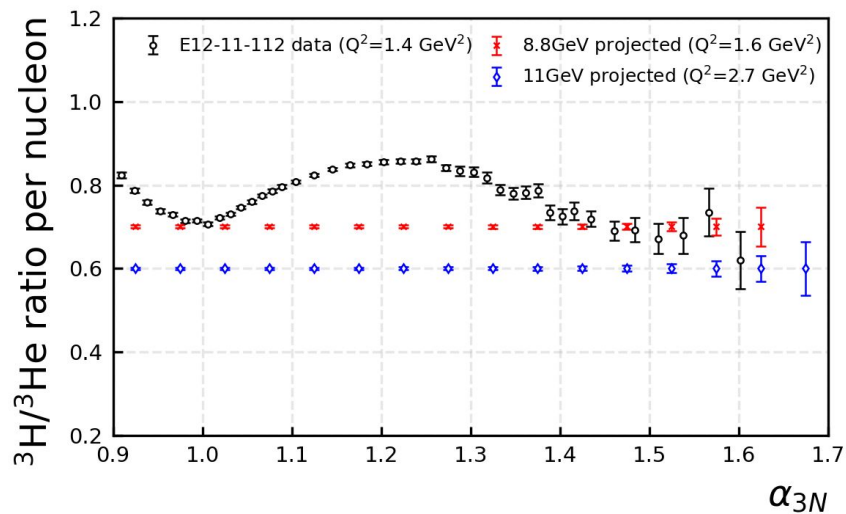
Hall C Single-arm simulation package

Cross section model: F1F209 + QE fitted to 2018 A=3 data



Ebeam (GeV)	P_0 (GeV/c)	Angle (degrees)	Total DAQ Rate (Hz)	$1.55 < \alpha_{3N} < 1.6$		
				counts/hour	$Q^2(\text{GeV}^2)$	x
8.8	8.2	8.5	3108	15	1.6	2.55
11.0	9.8	8.5	1561	6.25	2.7	2.24

New Proposal: Sensitivity



Fit the plateau:

1. Linear fit $y=A + Bx$. for projected data, force the data central value of 0.7
2. If the fitted B is consistent with a flat line, then we further check the end-to-end variation:

$$\mathbf{\delta = [y(x=1.4) - y(x=1.6)]/y_0}$$

where 1.4 and 1.6 are the alpha values at end points. $y_0=0.7$ for projected data

For 1.6 and 2.7 GeV² projected result, consider a fit between 1.4 and 1.6 of alpha, the stats plus the 1.2% point-to-point systematics can support the claim of:

B is consistent with 0 +/-0.2, and the end-to-end fluctuation i.e. the uncertainty on delta is less than 4% $\Rightarrow$ is the fluctuation within the alpha range of 1.4 to 1.7 will be less than 8% with 95% C.I.

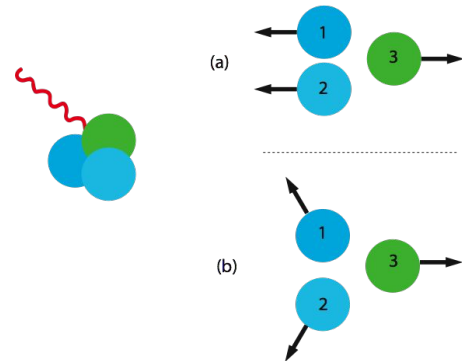
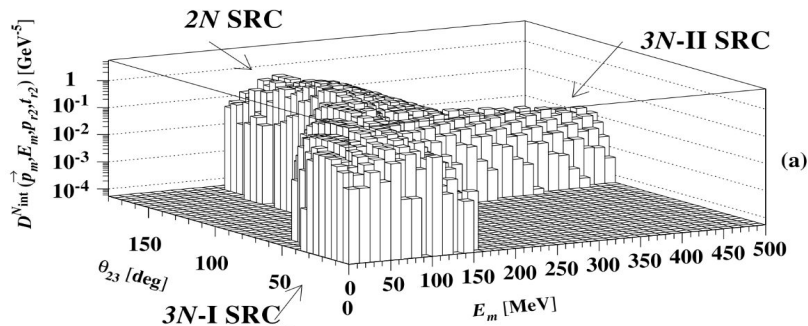
This is a lot stronger than what we can claim with the 2018 data which has either:

- B is consistent with 0 but uncertainties are large. 95% C.I. width > 18% for delta. (if fit at alpha>1.45)
- B is clearly not 0 from the linear (if fit at alpha>1.4)

	Error on the slope (alpha>1.4)
5 pass projected:	0+/-0.111
4 pass projected:	0+/-0.188
Combined	0+/-0.096
Hall A:	-0.40+/-0.19

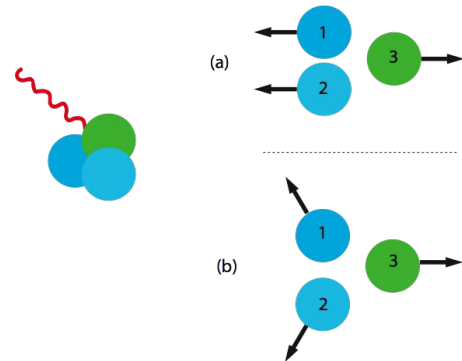
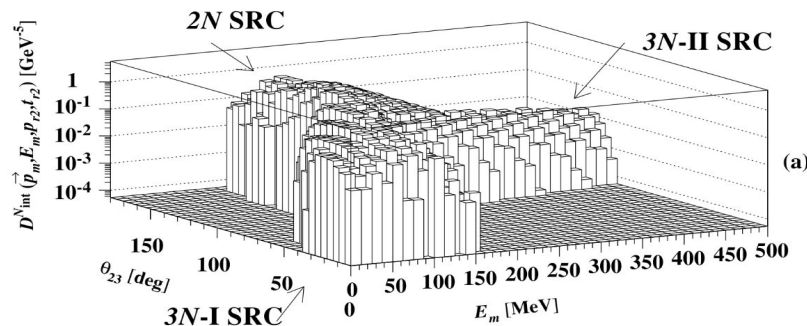
My Perspective of 3N SRC Search

- Does it exist?
 - $x > 2$ scaling with $A=3$ and $A > 12$
 - Coincident detection at identified scaling region
- Universality?
 - $A/3$ ratios
- What configuration?
 - $A=3$ electrodisintegration
 - $A=3$ (e,e') ratio

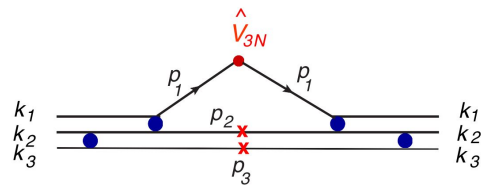
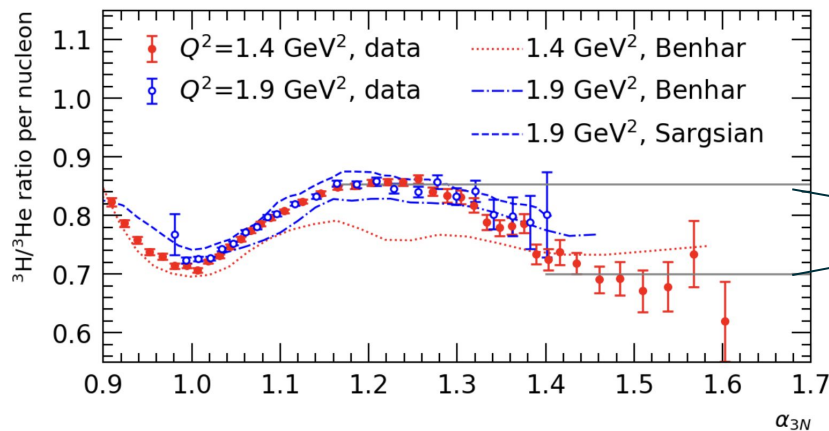


My Perspective of 3N SRC Search

- Why tritium (e, e')?
 - Still high-x but less expensive:
 - Lower Q^2 comparing to heavier nuclei
 - Provide baseline for other measurements and calculations (know your denominator)
 - Mirror nuclei
 - Control scale-violation processes
 - Zero center of mass motion, two clean nnp or npp configuration → remove ambiguities in interpretation



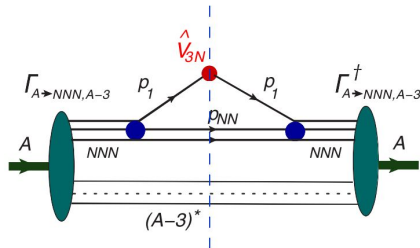
What We Talk About When We Talk About 3N SRC



Convolution of 2N SRCs?

$$\begin{aligned}
 R(^3\text{H}/^3\text{He})_{3N} &\approx [R(^3\text{H}/^3\text{He})_{2N}]^2 \\
 &= 0.854^2 \\
 &\approx 0.7
 \end{aligned}$$

- Seems to be consistent with data
- Favors the line configuration
- Still tensor force?



Irreducible 3N SRC:

- ❖ Involves inelastic transition
- ❖ High Emiss
- ❖ 3-body force?

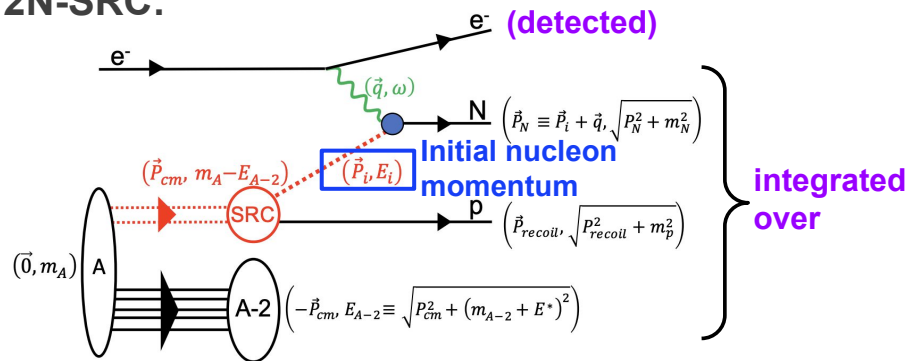
If scales but not at ratio=0.7:

- Contribution from nn and pp:
 - $p+p \rightarrow p+n \Rightarrow 3N \text{ SRC}$
 - $n+n \rightarrow n+p \Rightarrow 3N \text{ SRC}$
- $N+N \Rightarrow 2N \text{ repulsive core} \rightarrow$ require large COM

Scaling violation in 2N

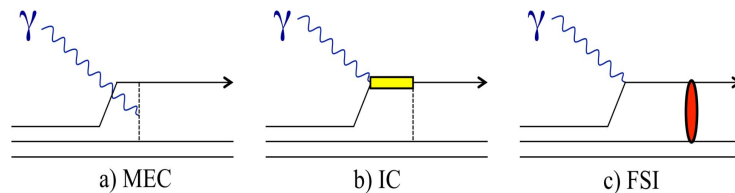
- Electron knocks out nucleon quasi-elastically
- “Inclusive”: detect e' only, integrate over final state

2N-SRC:



Competing processes:

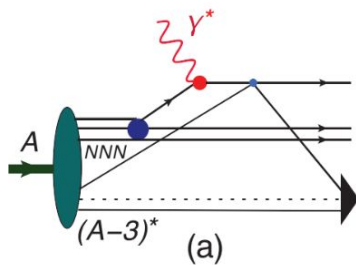
- Meson-exchange current (MEC):
 - $1/Q^2$ suppression
- Isobar Current (IC):
 - $1/Q^2$ and $x > 1$ suppression
- Final State Interactions (FSI):
 - contained within the SRC pair at large Q^2



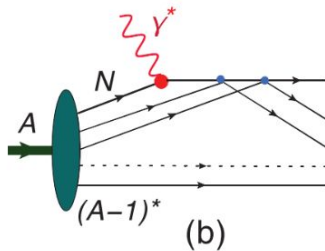
Scaling violation in 3N

TOWARD OBSERVATION OF THREE-NUCLEON ...

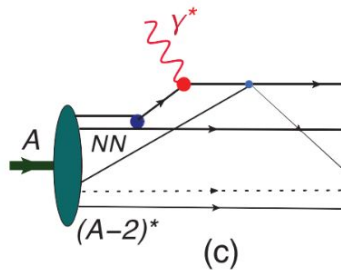
PHYSICAL REVIEW C **107**, 014319 (2023)



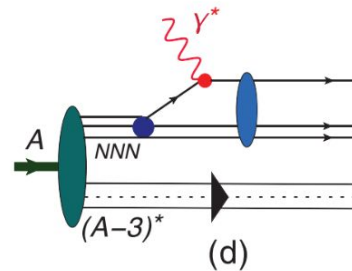
Long-range FSI does not exist in $A=3$



Double-rescattering is suppressed at forward angle



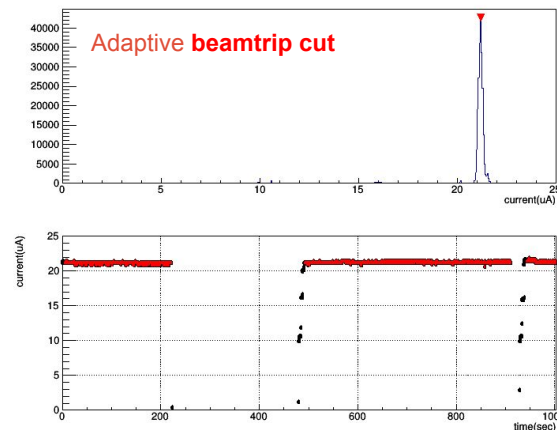
2N-SRC+FSI is minimized in $A=3$, can smear the transition region



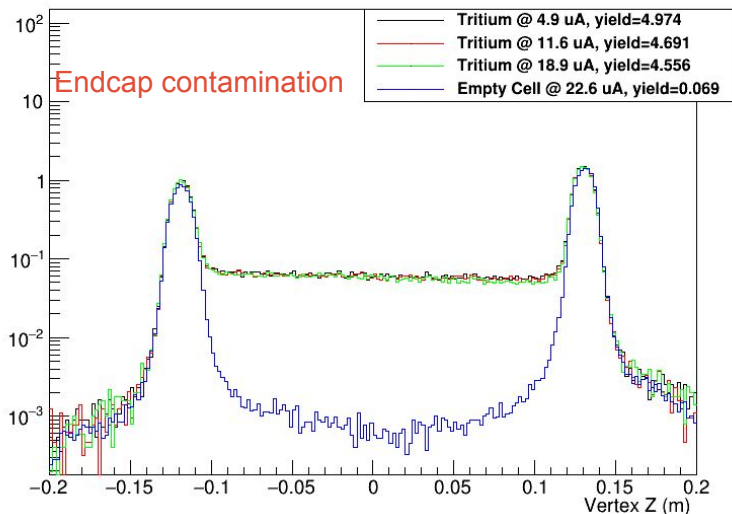
FSI within 3N won't modify α

2018 Tritium Gas Target Analysis

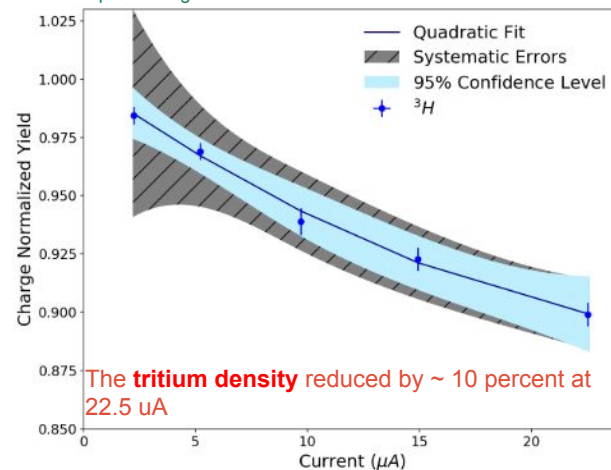
- Maximum current = 22.5 μA on gas cells to minimize the risk of gas leak.
- Endcap (75mg/cm² Aluminum) being mis-reconstructed into thin gas body (77mg/cm² Tritium)
- “Boiling”: gas density change along beam path
- Tritium decay correction
- Hydrogen contamination.



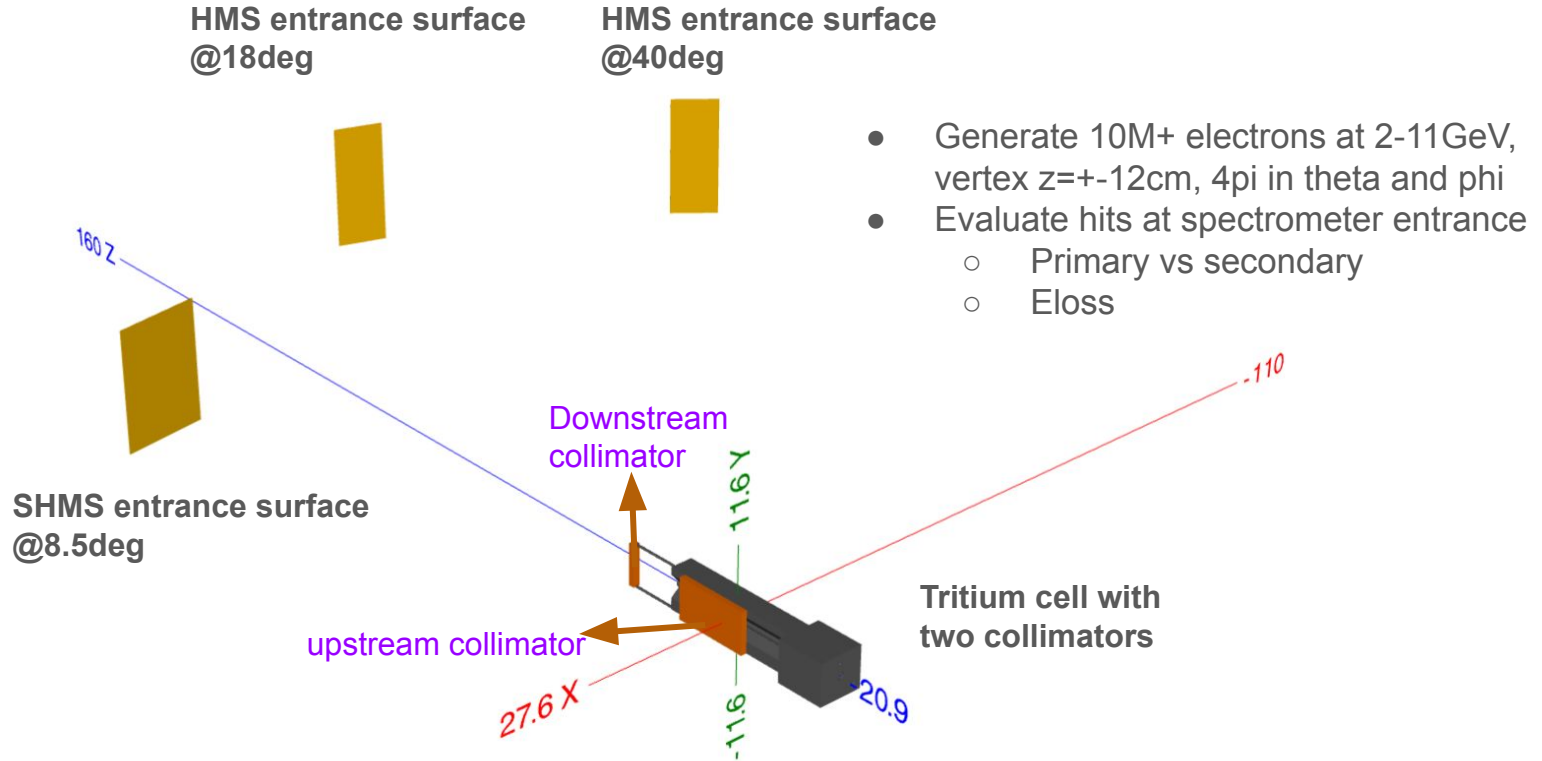
Charge Normalized Yield



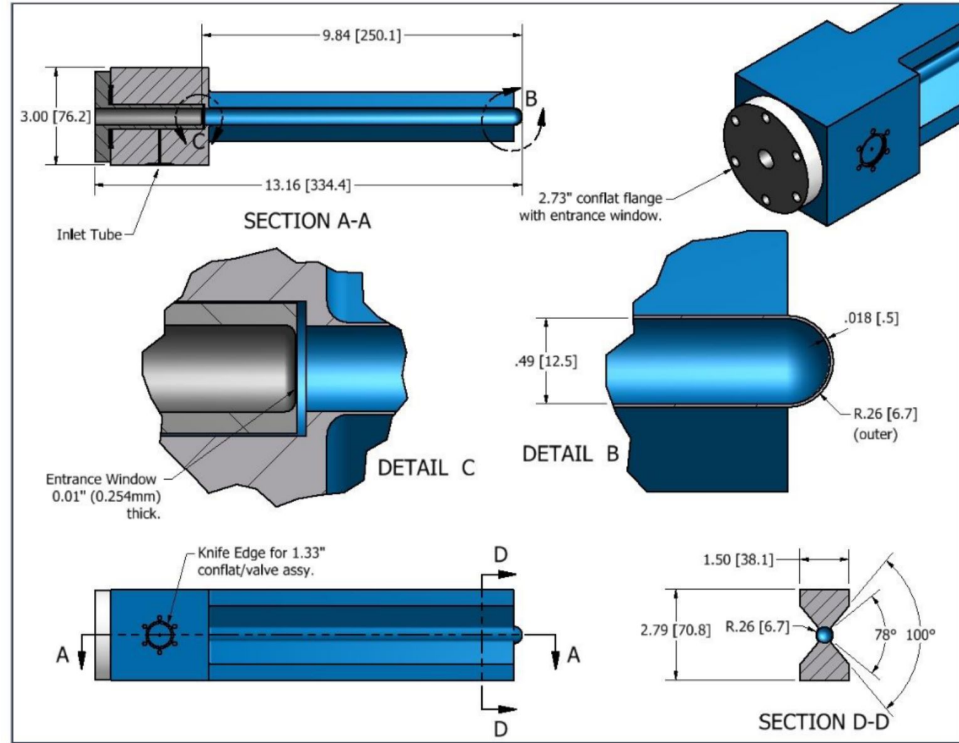
S. Santiesteban et al.,
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.NIMA.2019.06.025>



GEANT4 Simulation for Collimator Impact

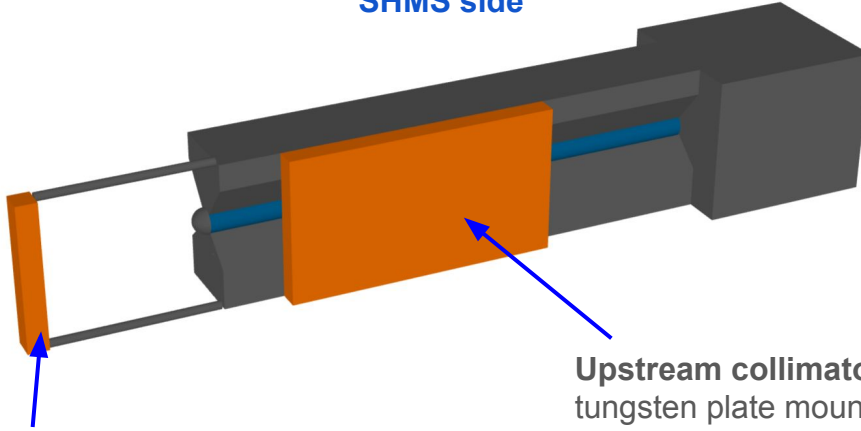


Tritium Cell Dimension



Collimators

SHMS side

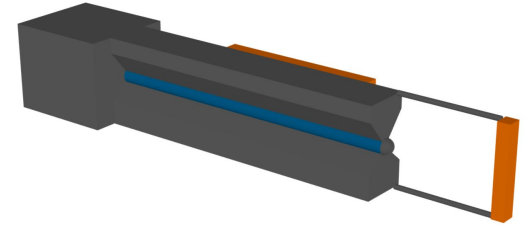


Downstream collimator

- a 1cm thick tungsten plate at $z=20\text{cm}$ to block electrons scattered off the downstream window while allow enough clearance to avoid interference with beamline.
- Mounted to the cell body by two 2mm thick aluminum bolts.

Upstream collimator 1cm thick tungsten plate mounted to the target heat sink body to block scattered electrons from the entrance window

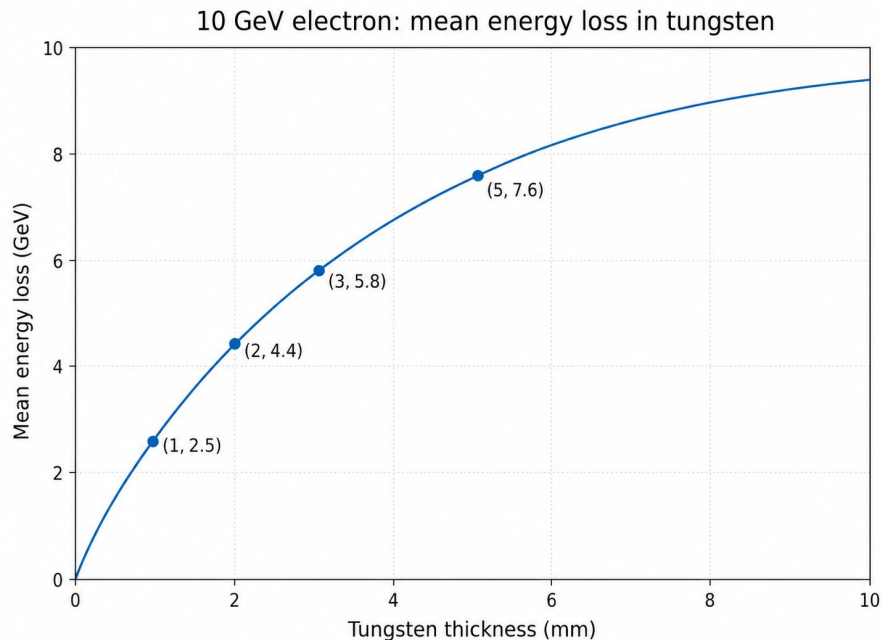
HMS side: no collimation



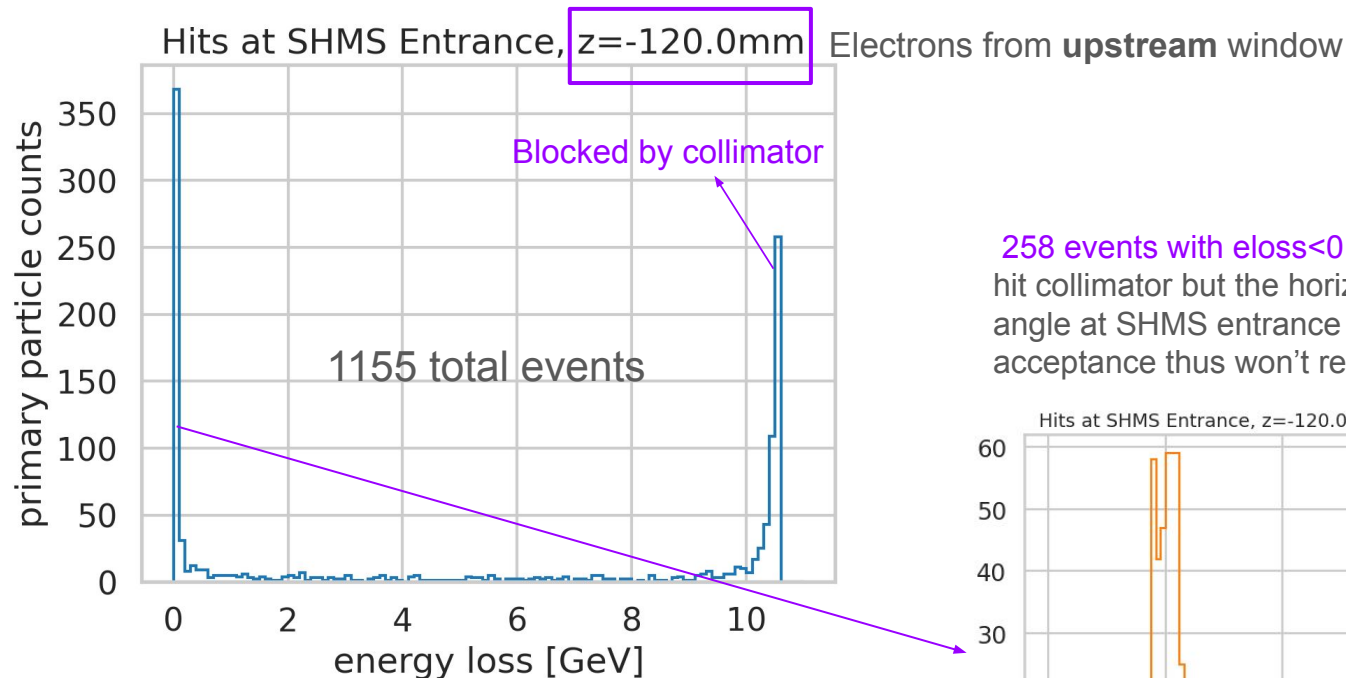
Energy Loss of Primary Electrons

Aluminum wall: $\sim 0.4\text{mm}$ thickness $\rightarrow < 5\%$ radiation length $\rightarrow$ included in cross section model with the equivalent radiator method (Mo & Tsai, SLAC-PUB-848)

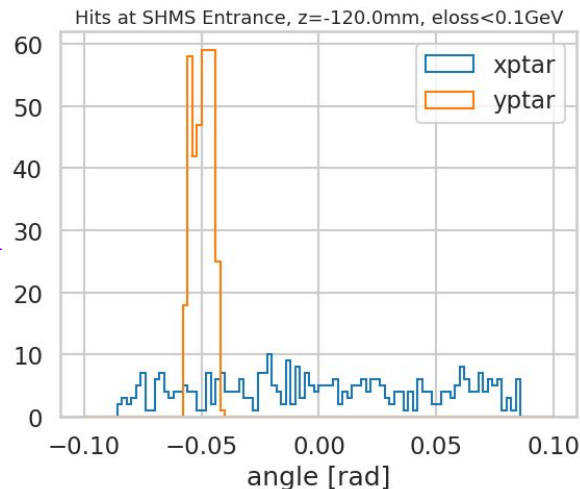
Tungsten collimator: $X_0=3.5\text{mm}$. 1cm is enough to shield 10 GeV electrons.



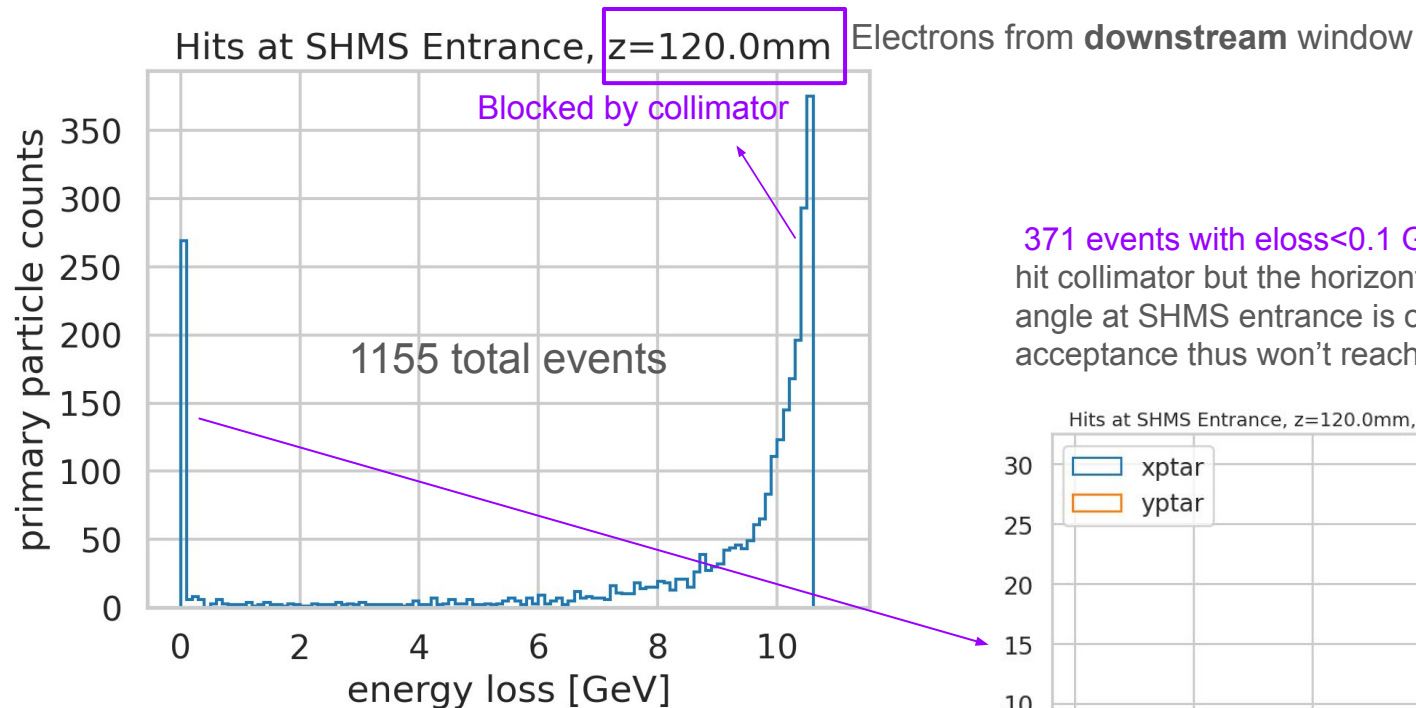
Energy Loss of Primary Electrons



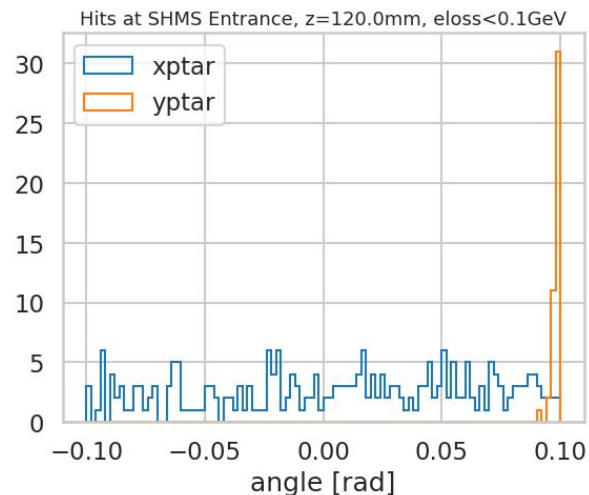
258 events with $e_{\text{loss}} < 0.1 \text{ GeV}$: they didn't hit collimator but the horizontal incident angle at SHMS entrance is out of SHMS acceptance thus won't reach detector plane.



Energy Loss of Primary Electrons

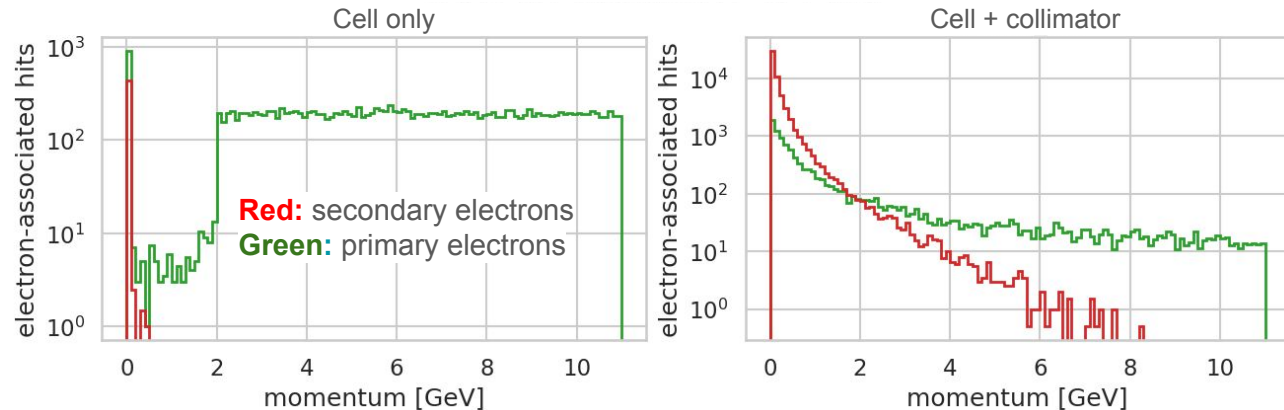


371 events with $e_{\text{loss}} < 0.1 \text{ GeV}$: they didn't hit collimator but the horizontal incident angle at SHMS entrance is out of SHMS acceptance thus won't reach detector plane.



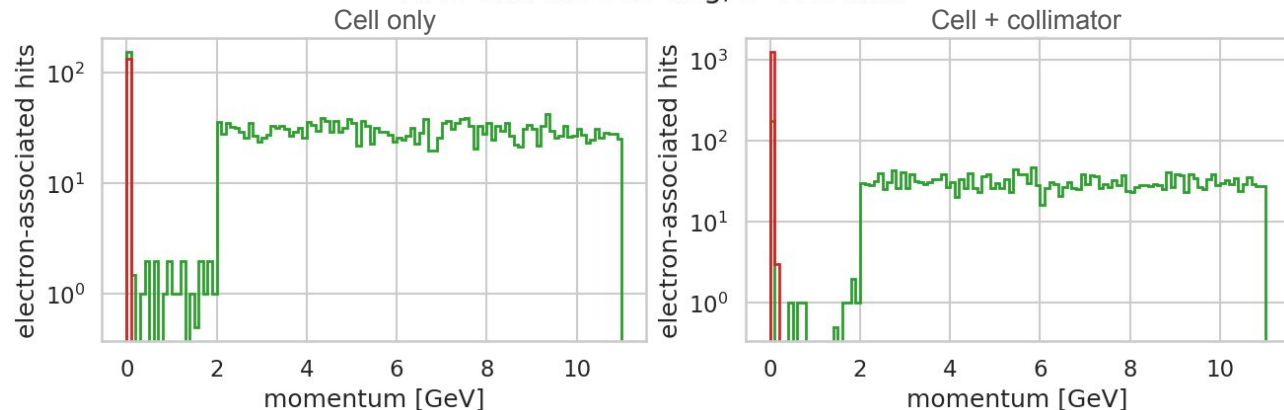
Secondary Electron Contaminations

Electrons from downstream window to SHMS entrance



SHMS: collimator generated many low-momentum secondaries. It also completely blocked primary electrons or shifted them to much lower energies

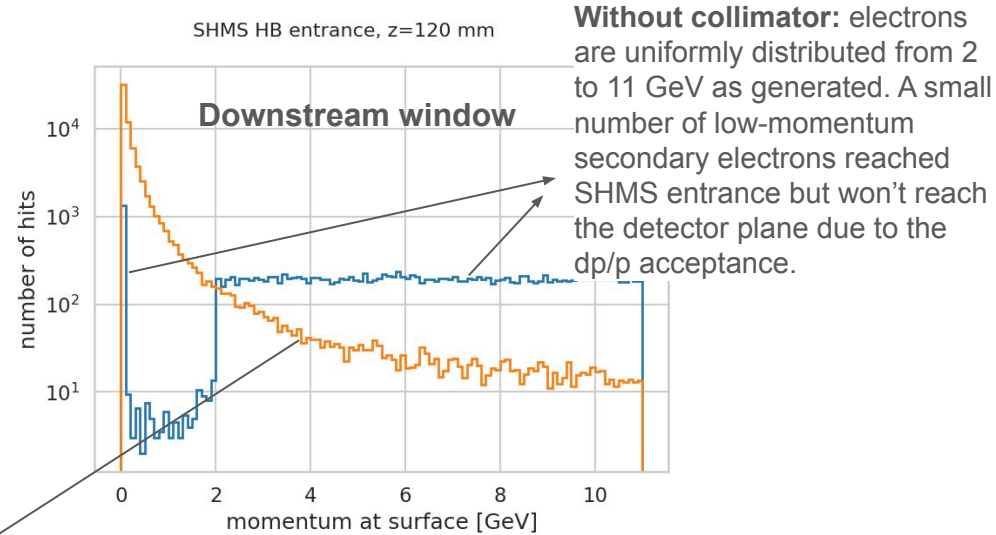
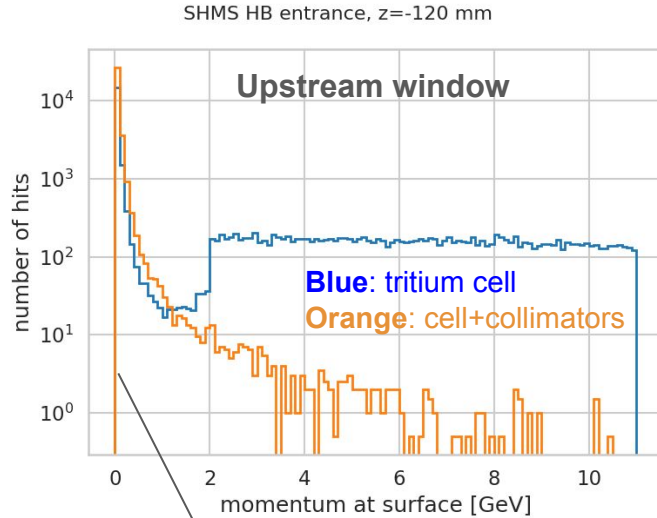
HMS entrance 18 deg, z=120 mm



HMS: collimator generated many low-momentum secondaries. None of those are within our momentum settings therefore won't contaminate the HMS measurements.

HMS at 40 deg, and similar plots at z=-120mm show the same behavior: **no contaminations from secondaries within acceptance**

SHMS Hits with/without Collimators



With collimator: Collimator reduced the amount of high-momentum electrons reaching SHMS entrance by a factor of 10+ within the momentum range of the SRC configurations. The remained electron contaminations are further suppressed by the shape of QE cross section at $x>1$ which decreases very quickly with momentum,

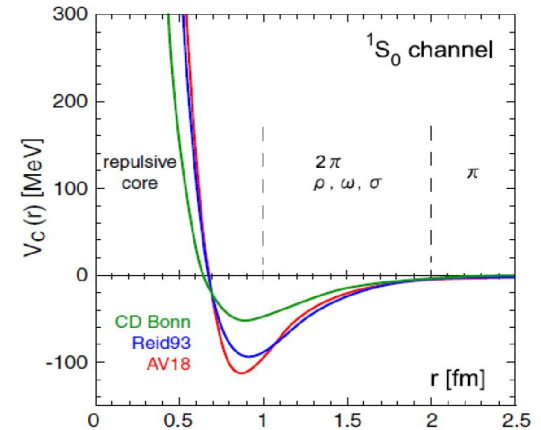
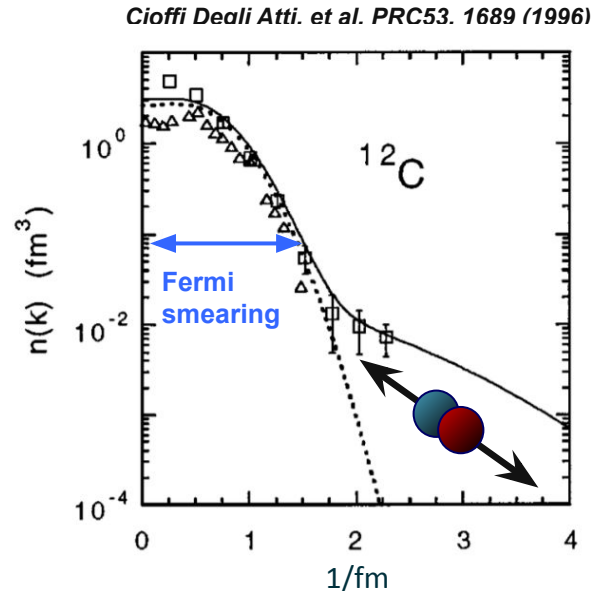
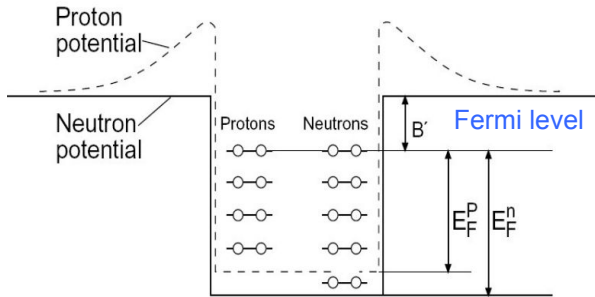
How nucleons move in nuclei and interact with each other?

Schrödinger equation:

$$\left[\sum_i -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m_N} \nabla_i^2 + \sum_{i<j} v_2(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) + \sum_{i<j<k} v_3(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j, \mathbf{x}_k) + \dots \right] \Psi_A = E_A \Psi_A$$

- Independent particle shell model (“Mean field”):

$$\left[-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m_N} \nabla_i^2 + U(\mathbf{x}) \right] \phi_\alpha(\mathbf{x}_i) = \epsilon_\alpha \phi_\alpha(\mathbf{x}_i).$$

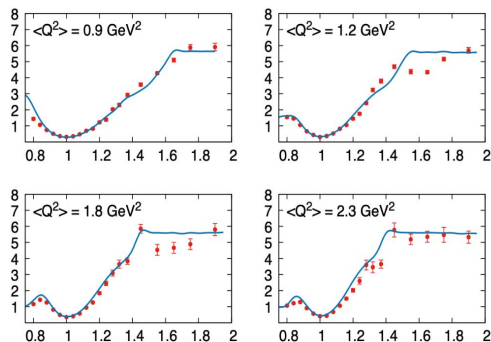


“The main effects of **NN correlations** is to generate **high momentum** and high removal energy components”

Decades of 2-nucleon Short-Range Correlation studies

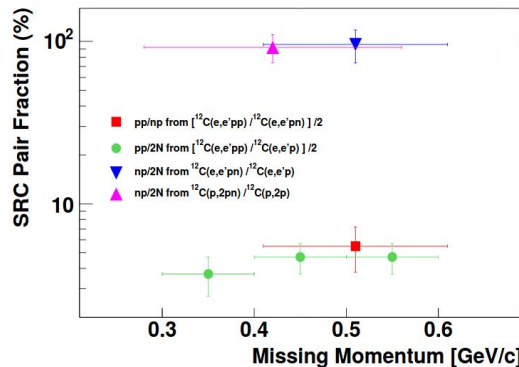
Fe/D (e,e') @SLAC

L. Frankfurt et al, Phys. Rev. C 48:2451 (1993)



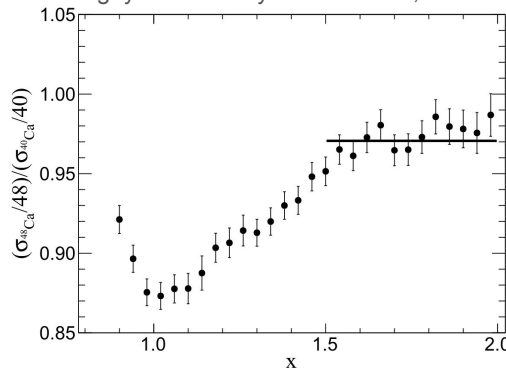
$^{12}\text{C}(e,e'pN)$ @JLab

Subedi et al, Science 320, 1476 (2008)



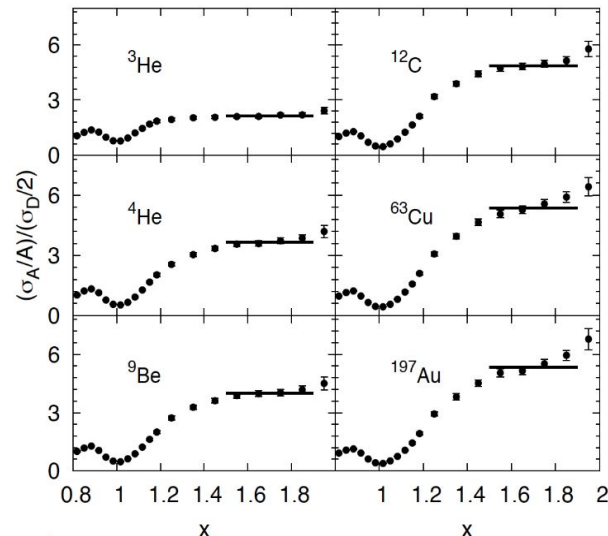
$^{48}\text{Ca}/^{40}\text{Ca}$ (e,e') @JLab

D. Nguyen et al. Phys. Rev. C 102, 064004



A/D (e,e') @JLab

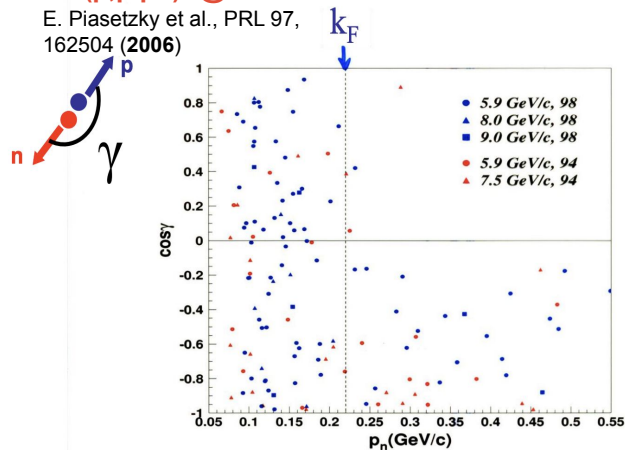
N. Fomin, et al., PRL 108 (2012) 092052



- NN pairs with large back-to-back momentum and total $\rightarrow 0$
- Up to 20% of nucleons
- Isospin T=0 deuteron-like np pair dominate due to tensor force.

$^{12}\text{C}(p,p'pn)X$ @BNL

E. Piasetzky et al., PRL 97, 162504 (2006)

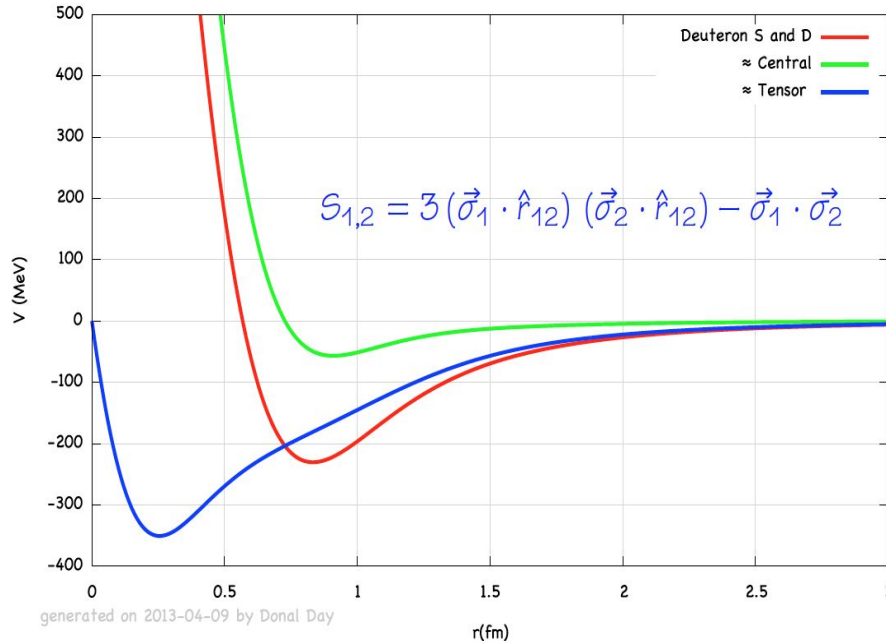


Nucleon-Nucleon Potentials

Free nucleon-nucleon potential = **Repulsive core** + **attractive tensor force**

S (spin) = 0, T (isospin) = 1: np, pp, nn pairs. The **tensor operator** $S_{1,2} = 0$,
no attractive tensor force

S (spin) = 1, T (isospin) = 0: Deuteron-like np pair.



E12-11-112: Study 2N SRC isospin with A=3

