We have measured the beam-normal single-spin asymmetry in elastic scattering of transversely polarized 3 GeV electrons from unpolarized protons at $Q^2 \approx 0.15, 0.25$ (GeV/c)$^2$. The results are inconsistent with calculations solely using the elastic nucleon intermediate state and generally agree with calculations with significant inelastic hadronic intermediate state contributions. A provides a direct probe of the imaginary component of the $2\gamma$ exchange amplitude, the complete description of which is important in the interpretation of data from precision electron-scattering experiments.

that appear in other processes, such as γZ and W⁺W⁻ box diagrams, which are important corrections in precision electroweak experiments [5]. Thus, empirical verification of the theoretical framework for this effect is beneficial.

The two-photon exchange process involves the exchange of two virtual photons with an intermediate hadronic state that includes the ground state and all excited states, and it can produce a single-spin asymmetry in electron scattering [6]. The beam-normal single-spin asymmetry, or transverse asymmetry Aₜ, is sensitive to the imaginary part of the two-photon exchange amplitude in the elastic scattering of transversely polarized electrons from unpolarized nucleons, and it arises from the interference of the one-photon and two-photon exchange amplitudes [6]. Time-reversal invariance forces Aₜ to vanish in the Born approximation, so it is of relative order α = 1/137². Furthermore, Aₜ must vanish in the chiral limit and so it is suppressed by the ratio of the electron’s rest mass to the beam energy, leading to an asymmetry on order of 10⁻⁵–10⁻⁶ for ≈ GeV electrons. Hence, measurement of Aₜ is challenging. For a beam polarized normal to the scattering plane, the transverse asymmetry is defined as Aₜ = (σ₄ – σ₅)/σ₅ + σ₄, where σ₄(σ₅) represents the cross section for the elastic scattering of electrons with spins parallel (antiparallel) to the normal polarization vector defined by ~n = (kₑ × kₑ′)/|kₑ × kₑ′|, where kₑ and kₑ′ are the three-momenta for the incident and scattered electron. The measured asymmetry Aₘₑₙₐₜ can be written as Aₜ ~ n, Aₘₑₙₐₜ is dependent on the azimuthal scattering angle φ, which is manifested as a sinusoidal dependence in Aₘₑₙₐₜ versus φ.

The transverse asymmetry due to two-photon exchange can be expressed using the formalism developed for the general amplitude for electron-nucleon elastic scattering [7]. This parametrization uses six complex functions, G₅(ν, Q²), G₆(ν, Q²), and Fᵢ(ν, Q²), i = 3, ..., 6, dependent on ν, the energy transfer to the proton, and Q², the four-momentum transfer. In the Born approximation, these functions reduce to the usual magnetic and electric form factors G₅(Q²), G₆(Q²), and to Fᵢ = 0, so the Fᵢ and phases of G₅, G₆, G₆ must come from processes with the exchange of two or more photons. Aₜ is proportional to the imaginary part of the combination of F₃, F₄, F₅, F₆ [8,9]. Thus, Aₜ is a function of Q² and the center-of-mass scattering angle θₑₘ, with the intermediate hadronic state information contained in the Fᵢ.

There have been several calculations of the transverse asymmetry for the present kinematics [8–12], but the primary theoretical difficulty in calculations of the two-photon exchange amplitude is the large uncertainty in the contribution of the inelastic hadronic intermediate states. As the calculations require both the proton elastic form factors (elastic contribution) and the excitation amplitudes to other intermediate states, e.g., πN (inelastic contribution), experimental verification is important to test the framework of the calculations. However, at present experimental information on Aₜ is scarce.

The first measurement of Aₜ was performed by the SAMPLE Collaboration, at laboratory scattering angles of 130° ≤ θₑ ≤ 170° at Q² = 0.1 (GeV/c)² with a 200 MeV beam [13]. The PVA4 Collaboration recently reported measurements at somewhat higher beam energies at 30° ≤ θₑ ≤ 40° and Q² = 0.106, 0.230 (GeV/c)² [14]. The results from both indicate that models including only the nucleon elastic state are insufficient. Other preliminary data also suggest that the elastic contribution alone is insufficient [15].

The present measurement is at a higher beam energy (3 GeV) and forward angle, where the πN intermediate states are predicted to be a significant contribution to Aₜ [8]. Furthermore, this beam energy falls in a transition range between models. At energies below the two-pion production threshold, the πN intermediate state contribution can be calculated using pion electroproduction amplitudes based on experimental input. Above that limit, the πN contribution is not well known, and there could be additional contributions to Aₜ [8]. At very high energies and forward scattering angles (the diffractive limit), Aₜ can be expressed simply in terms of the total photo-absorption cross section using the optical theorem [10,16]. For the present intermediate energy, corrections to the diffractive limit result have been calculated [10,11].

We report a measurement of the beam-normal spin asymmetry Aₜ from the elastic scattering of transversely polarized electrons from the proton at forward scattering angles using the apparatus for the G0 experiment [17] in Hall C at Jefferson Lab. The apparatus and the method of asymmetry extraction are described in Refs. [17–20]; only differences between the running conditions and analysis of the transverse asymmetry data and the parity-violation data are reported here.

A 40 μA electron beam of energy 3.031 GeV was generated with a strained GaAs polarized source [21]. The beam had a 32 ns pulse separation, to allow particle identification via time-of-flight (TOF). The beam helicity was held constant for ~30 s periods in sequences chosen pseudorandomly. Active feedback systems maintained helicity-correlated current and position changes below ~0.3 ppm and 10 nm, respectively. A Wien filter precessed the spin of the longitudinally polarized beam electrons in the accelerator plane. The average longitudinal beam polarization was measured with a Møller polarimeter [22] for a range of spin precessions, and these data were fit to obtain the Wien setting for maximal transverse polarization in Hall C and to determine the magnitude of the polarization, (74.3 ± 1.3)% . The purely transverse nature of the beam was verified by a measurement of zero longitudinal polarization with the Møller polarimeter at the optimal Wien setting.
The polarized electrons were scattered from a 20 cm long liquid hydrogen target [19]. Recoiling elastic protons were focused by a superconducting magnet onto eight arrays of segmented scintillation detectors arranged symmetrically in \( \phi \) around the beam axis [18]. Each array consisted of 16 scintillator pairs used in coincidence to simultaneously measure the range of momentum transfers \( 0.12 \leq Q^2 \leq 1.0 \) (GeV/c\(^2\)). The detectors were numbered in order of increasing values of \( Q^2 \). Detector events were sorted by TOF using custom time-encoding electronics [20].

Thirty hours of data were taken in the transverse beam configuration. The transverse asymmetry is not expected to vary rapidly with \( Q^2 \) in this kinematic region [12], so in order to improve statistical precision, the TOF spectra from the first 12 detectors in each array were summed into two spectra: 1–8 and 9–12. These correspond to ranges of \( 0.12 < Q^2 < 0.20 \) and \( 0.20 < Q^2 < 0.32 \) (GeV/c\(^2\)), with central values of \( Q^2 = 0.15 \) (GeV/c\(^2\)) and \( \theta_{c.m.} = 20.2^\circ \), and \( Q^2 = 0.25 \) (GeV/c\(^2\)) and \( \theta_{c.m.} = 25.9^\circ \), respectively. Data taken at higher \( Q^2 \) suffered from poor statistics and larger backgrounds, so results are not reported here.

The rates for the individual detectors were corrected for electronics deadtimes of 10%–15%, giving an uncertainty of 0.05 ppm in the asymmetries. False asymmetries due to residual helicity-correlated beam current, position, angle, and energy variations were calculated by linear regression to be <0.12 ppm. No correction was applied, and a systematic uncertainty of 0.12 ppm was adopted. A \( \phi \)-independent correction of, on average, \(+2.29 \pm 0.59 \) ppm was made to account for the large charge asymmetry (\( \sim 570 \) ppm) of a small fraction (\( \sim 10^{-3} \)) of the beam current with a 2 ns structure, “leakage beam” from beam intended for the other operating halls [18]. Uncertainties of 0.002 ppm and 0.021 ppm for \( Q^2 = 0.15 \), 0.25 (GeV/c\(^2\)), respectively, arose due to the upper limit on the residual longitudinal polarization of the beam and the known parity-violating asymmetry [17]. No radiative corrections were applied [23].

Figure 1 shows a typical TOF spectrum; background extends on both sides of the elastic proton peak, consisting of quasielastic protons from the aluminum target windows and inelastic protons from both the aluminum and the hydrogen of the target. The measured asymmetry therefore consists of two components

\[
A_{\text{meas}} = f A_{\text{elas}} + (1-f) A_{\text{bkg}},
\]

where \( A_{\text{elas}} \) is the elastic asymmetry, \( A_{\text{bkg}} \) is the background asymmetry contribution, and \( f \) is the signal-to-measured yield fraction. The TOF spectra were rebinned into several regions; fits over these TOF bin regions to both the yield and asymmetry in the region of the elastic peak were used in the background correction. The yield was modeled with a Gaussian elastic peak and a fourth-order polynomial background. The asymmetry was modeled using a linear background and a constant for the elastic component. In a few cases, the asymmetry of the background was comparable in size to the measured asymmetry. As a check, the background asymmetries were also extracted using an alternate two-step fitting procedure in which the asymmetries from the background regions on either side of the elastic peak were used to interpolate the asymmetry from background processes beneath the elastic peak. This background asymmetry was then used to correct the elastic asymmetry, giving consistent results with the previous method. For a given azimuthal angle, the systematic uncertainty on the background correction was estimated from the dispersion of the extracted background asymmetries between the two methods.

The elastic transverse asymmetries, \( A_\perp \) (the elastic asymmetry \( A_{\text{elas}} \) corrected for all effects), for the eight detector arrays in each \( Q^2 \) bin are presented in Table I. The systematic errors are given in Table II; the error on the background correction clearly dominates and varies in \( \phi \). A conservative model-dependent systematic error due to finite \( Q^2 \) bin size is indicated in Table II.

**TABLE I.** Elastic transverse asymmetries and uncertainties versus azimuthal scattering angle \( \phi \). Uncertainties are statistical and individual systematic uncertainties, respectively (in Table II); global systematic uncertainties are not included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( \phi ) (deg)</th>
<th>( Q^2 ) (GeV/c(^2))</th>
<th>( \Delta A_\perp ) (ppm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>( -0.38 \pm 1.94 \pm 0.62 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>( -1.15 \pm 1.84 \pm 0.49 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>( -0.57 \pm 2.00 \pm 0.67 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
<td>( -0.39 \pm 2.04 \pm 0.76 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>( -0.30 \pm 1.88 \pm 0.67 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td>( 2.74 \pm 1.88 \pm 0.39 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270</td>
<td></td>
<td>( 2.25 \pm 2.00 \pm 0.71 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>315</td>
<td></td>
<td>( 4.47 \pm 1.98 \pm 0.42 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \Delta A_\perp \) is the statistical uncertainty on the elastic yield corrected for the other operating halls [18]. Uncertainties due to energy variations were calculated by linear regression to be \( \leq 1.7 \% \). Uncertainties due to the dispersion of the extracted background asymmetries between the two methods are\( \leq 2 \% \). Uncertainties due to finite \( Q^2 \) bin size are\( \leq 0.6 \% \). Uncertainties due to finite \( Q^2 \) bin size are\( \leq 0.6 \% \).
The detector arrays are evenly spaced in azimuthal angle $\phi$ around the beam line, so the asymmetries should follow a sinusoidal dependence in $\phi$, viz.

$$A_\perp = |A_n| \sin(\phi + \phi_0).$$

(2)

where the amplitude $|A_n|$ is the magnitude of the transverse asymmetry, and the phase $\phi_0$ depends on the direction of the transverse beam polarization. The electron polarization for the positive (+) helicity is in the beam left direction. The azimuthal angle $\phi$ is defined to be 0° on beam left and to increase clockwise as viewed along the direction of beam momentum. The data’s sinusoidal dependence is displayed in Fig. 2, along with the best fit to Eq. (2). The fits were constrained to $\phi_0$ as calculated from the electron spin precession in the 3 T solenoid used in the Möller polarimeter (5.3°) and do not allow a $\phi$-independent offset; however, relaxing these constraints has negligible impact on the extracted $A_n$. The small effect of finite bin size in $\phi$ was included.

Including all corrections, we obtain $A_n = -4.06 \pm 0.99_{\text{stat}} \pm 0.63_{\text{syst}}$ ppm for $Q^2 = 0.15 \text{ (GeV}/c)^2$ and $-4.82 \pm 1.87_{\text{stat}} \pm 0.98_{\text{syst}}$ ppm for $Q^2 = 0.25 \text{ (GeV}/c)^2$ from the sinusoidal fits. Figure 3 compares these results to available calculations [8,10,11] appropriate to these kinematics. The dash-double-dotted line [8] is a calculation of the two-photon exchange contribution solely from the nucleon intermediate state (elastic contribution); the dash-dotted line [8] represents the intermediate hadronic state for which the elastic contribution has been combined with inelastic contributions from excitation amplitudes to $\pi N$-intermediate states. The solid line [10] and the dashed line [11] represent calculations using the optical theorem and parametrizations for the measured total photo-production cross sections on the proton. Clearly, the data show that the contribution of the inelastic hadronic intermediate states to the two-photon exchange amplitude is significant. This conclusion is consistent with those reported by SAMPLE [13] and PVA4 [14]; however, as the kinematics are different, the data points cannot be compared directly. The G0 experiment and other experiments [15] have recently obtained transverse beam spin asymmetry data at various angles on hydrogen, deuterium, and helium targets at additional $Q^2$ values, which will provide a further exploration of the imaginary part of the two-photon exchange amplitude.

The data reported here, along with other measurements, provide a valuable test of the theoretical framework of the two-photon contribution to the cross section through a comparison of the measured imaginary part of the two-photon exchange contribution to calculations of the real

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Uncertainty</th>
<th>$Q^2 = 0.15 \text{ GeV}^2$</th>
<th>$Q^2 = 0.25 \text{ GeV}^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dead time</td>
<td>0.05 ppm</td>
<td>0.05 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False asymmetries</td>
<td>0.12 ppm</td>
<td>0.12 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background correction</td>
<td>0.37–0.74 ppm</td>
<td>0.80–3.86 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leakage beam</td>
<td>0.55 ppm</td>
<td>0.63 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beam polarization</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal polarization</td>
<td>0.002 ppm</td>
<td>0.021 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finite $Q^2$ binning</td>
<td>0.03 ppm</td>
<td>0.03 ppm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIG. 2 (color online). Measured asymmetry as a function of the azimuthal scattering angle $\phi$ for $Q^2 = 0.15$ (upper plot) and $0.25 \text{ (GeV}/c)^2$ (lower plot). The curves are the best fit to Eq. (2). Error bars are the statistical and individual systematic errors combined in quadrature.

FIG. 3 (color online). Results for $A_n$ as a function of center-of-mass scattering angle, along with calculations from Refs. [8,10,11] (see text for explanation).
part, as the two are related through dispersion relations [12]. These data underline the major role played by hadronic intermediate states in this process. Two-photon exchange and other box diagrams are important in the interpretation of high-precision parity-violating electron-scattering experiments and in the radiative corrections for other lepton scattering experiments, making an understanding of these contributions important.

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*Deceased.

[18] D. S. Armstrong et al. (G0 Collaboration) (to be published).
[23] The correction is being investigated by A. V. Afanasev and N. P. Merenkov (private communication).