

New Phenomena at the EIC:

Exploring the limits of the strong interaction force

Fred Olness
SMU

*Thanks for substantial input
from my friends & colleagues*

nCTEQ
nuclear parton distribution functions



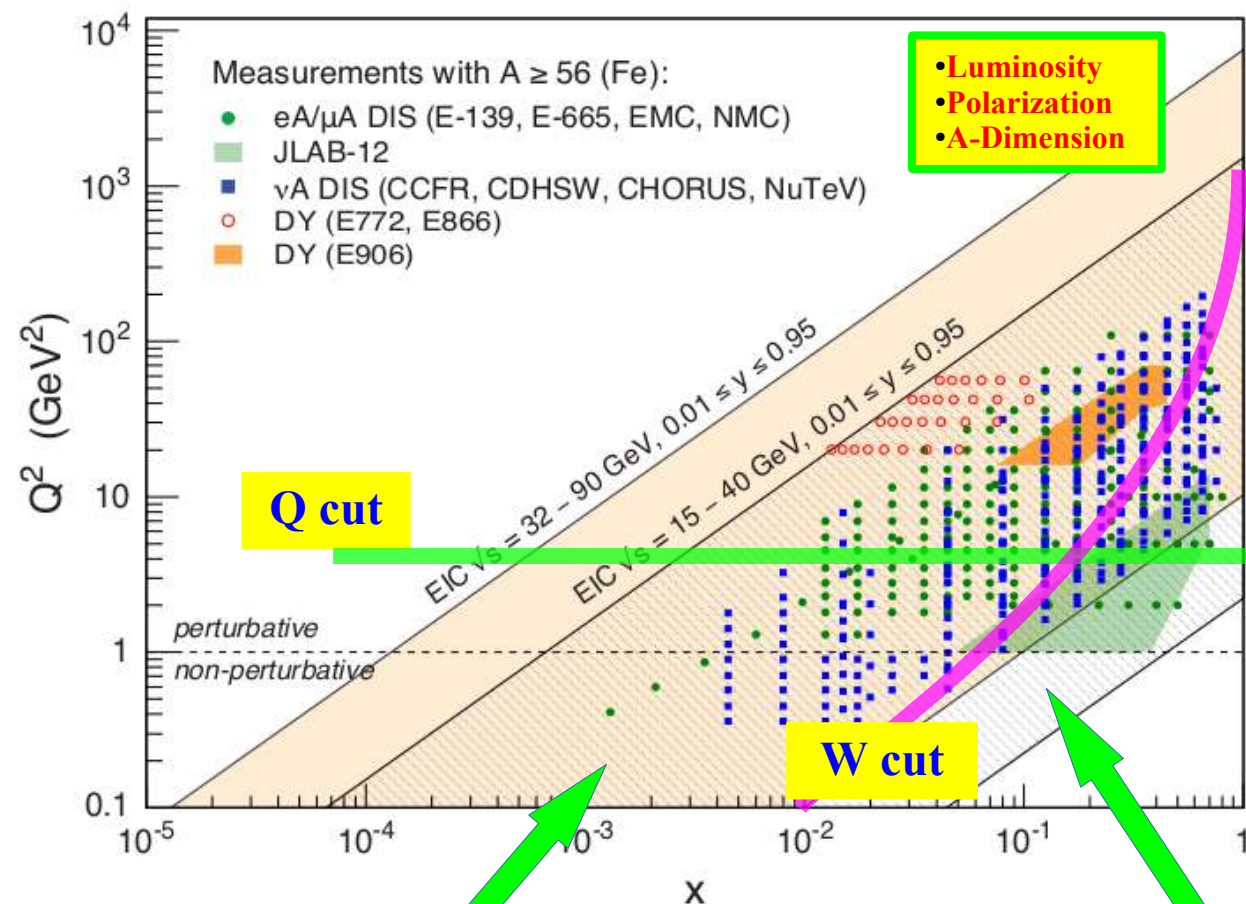
New opportunities
for BSM searches at the EIC
22 July 2025

The most exciting phrase to hear in science,
the one that heralds new discoveries, is not “Eureka!” (*I found it!*)
but “That’s funny ...”
— Isaac Asimov

Serendipitous scientific discoveries that are noteworthy

- **Penicillin:** Alexander Fleming's noticed a mold inhibiting bacterial growth in a neglected petri dish.
- **X-rays:** Wilhelm Roentgen observed a mysterious glow passing through objects and casting shadows.
- **Microwave Oven:** Percy Spencer, a Raytheon engineer, noticed a candy bar in his pocket melted while working with a magnetron.
- **Vulcanized Rubber:** Charles Goodyear accidentally spilled a rubber and sulfur mixture on a hot stove.
- **Post-it Notes:** Spencer Silver's attempt to create a super-strong adhesive at 3M.
- **Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation:** Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson were perplexed by persistent radio noise in their antenna.

Scientific progress isn't always a direct path ... often, it's about recognizing unexpected patterns found at the fringes of our expectations ...



High- x :

Nuclear PDFs: $x > 1$ allowed;
impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Iso}}$ in Fermi region
Target Mass Corrections
pick up M^2/Q^2 higher twist
Deuteron Corrections
impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Deuteron}}$ ratio

Low- x :

Shadowing
Recombination
Resummation
BFKL
Saturation

Low- Q^2 :

Non-Perturbative interface
collective effects
Target Mass Corrections
pick up M^2/Q^2 higher twist
 F_L at low Q^2 access to $g(x)$
Run at multiple energies



Future Opportunities with Lepton-Hadron Collisions*

Contact persons: Allen Caldwell¹, Silvia Dalla Torre², Rolf Ent³,
Aharon Levy⁴, Paul Newman⁵, Fred Olness⁶ and Juan Rojo^{7,8}

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.18208>

contributed to

2025 European Particle Physics Strategy Update.



Overview of selected DIS facilities.

Facility	Years	E_{cm} (GeV)	Luminosity ($10^{33}/cm^2/s$)	Ions *(depends on)	Polarisation	Status
JLab 11 JLab 22	Running Late 2030's	4.5 — 6.5	10^2 — 10^6	$p \rightarrow Pb$	e, p, Light nuclei	Running Concept
FASER FPF/AdvSND	Running 2030's	30 — 90	0.3 — 10	W, Ar	no	Running Advanced
EIC	> 2034	30 — 140	1 — 10	$p \rightarrow U$	e,p,d, ³ He	Approved
EicC	> Late 2030's	15—20	2 — 3	$p \rightarrow U$	e,p,d, ³ He	Concept
LHeC	> Late 2030's	1200	24	*LHC	e possible	Advanced
Plasma-based schemes	2040's	530 — 9000	10^{-5} — 10^{-1}	*SPS/LHC	e possible	Concept
FCC-eh	> 2050	3500	15	*FCC-hh	e possible	Concept

nCTEQ

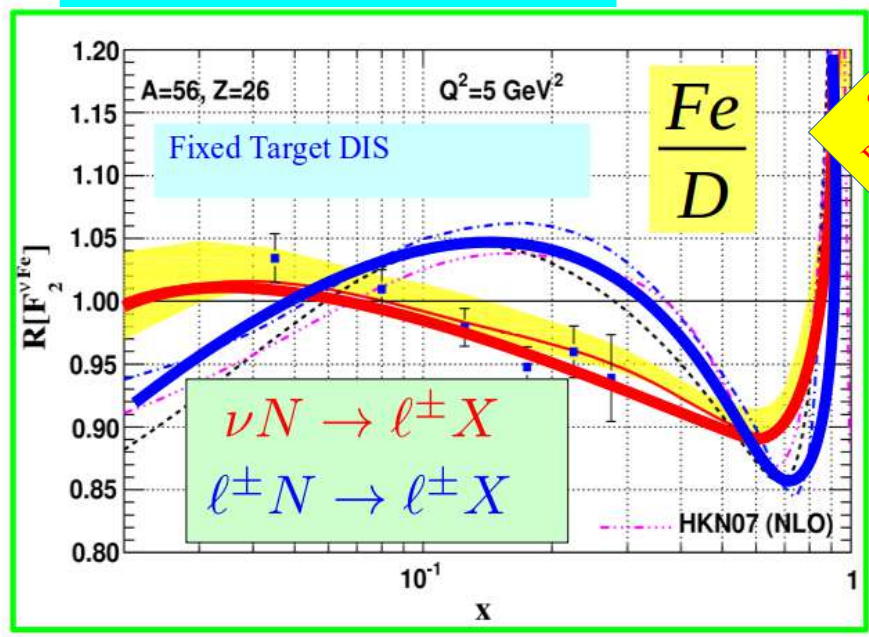
nuclear parton distribution functions

nCTEQ project is an extension of the CTEQ collaborative effort to determine nuclear parton distribution functions (nPDFs).



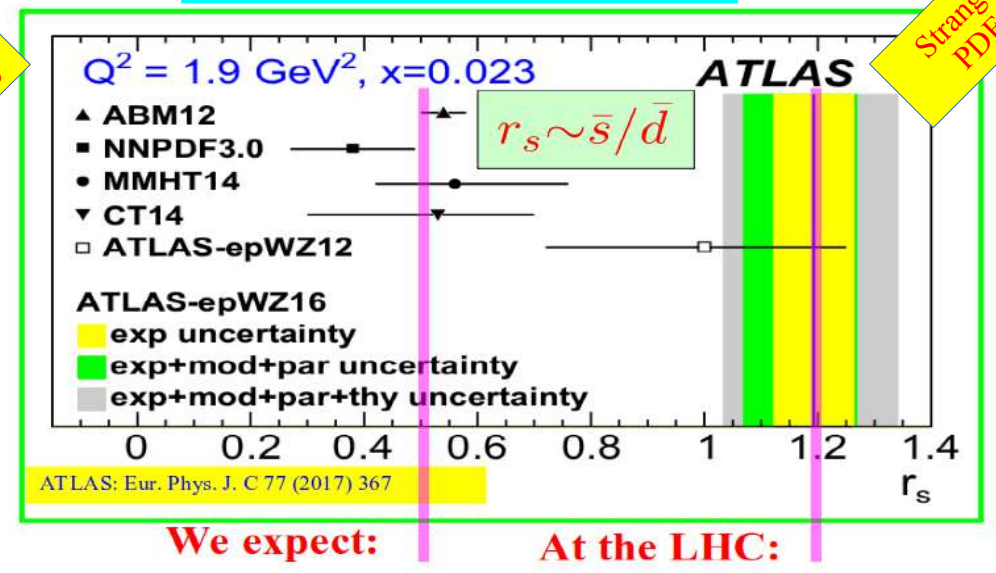
Grenoble, April 2024

nCTEQ15 ν



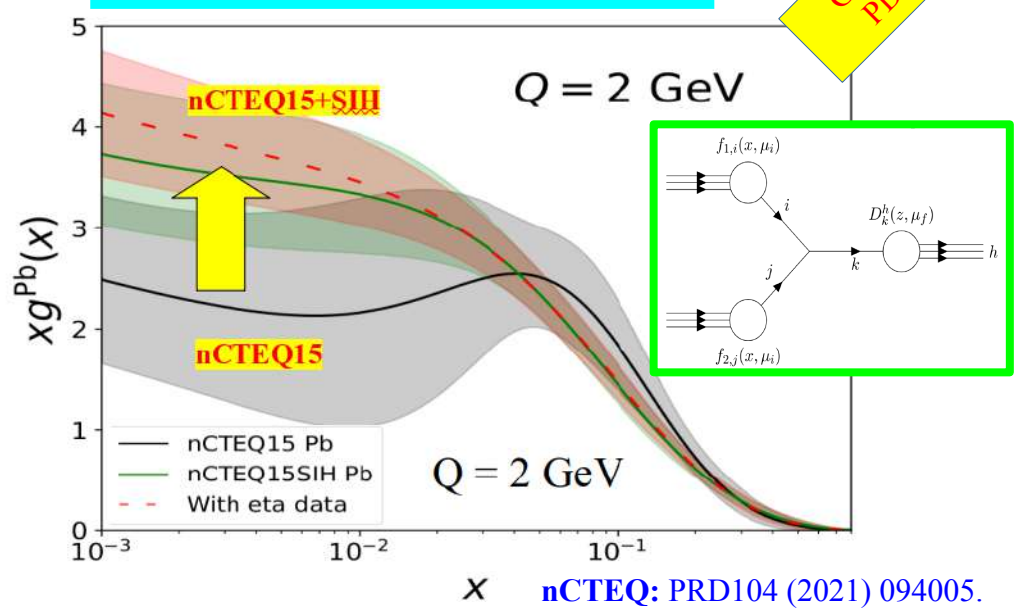
nCTEQ: arXiv: 2204.13157

nCTEQ15WZ



nCTEQ: Phys.Rev.D 104 (2021) 094005

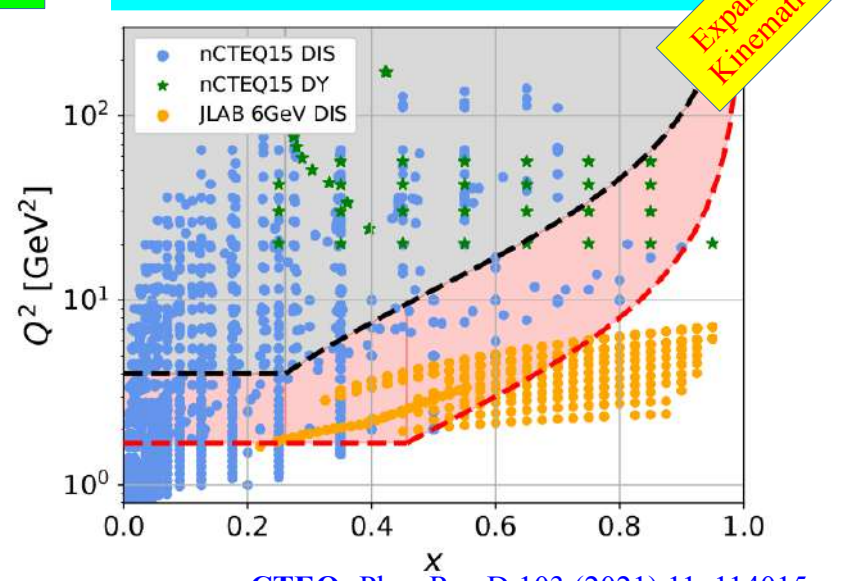
nCTEQ15WZ+SIH



nCTEQ: PRD104 (2021) 094005.

Key for
EIC

nCTEQ15HIX



nCTEQ: Phys.Rev.D 103 (2021) 11, 114015

precision $f_A(x, Q)$ can serve as Boundary Condition for $f_A(x, Q, k_T, b_T, \sigma)$

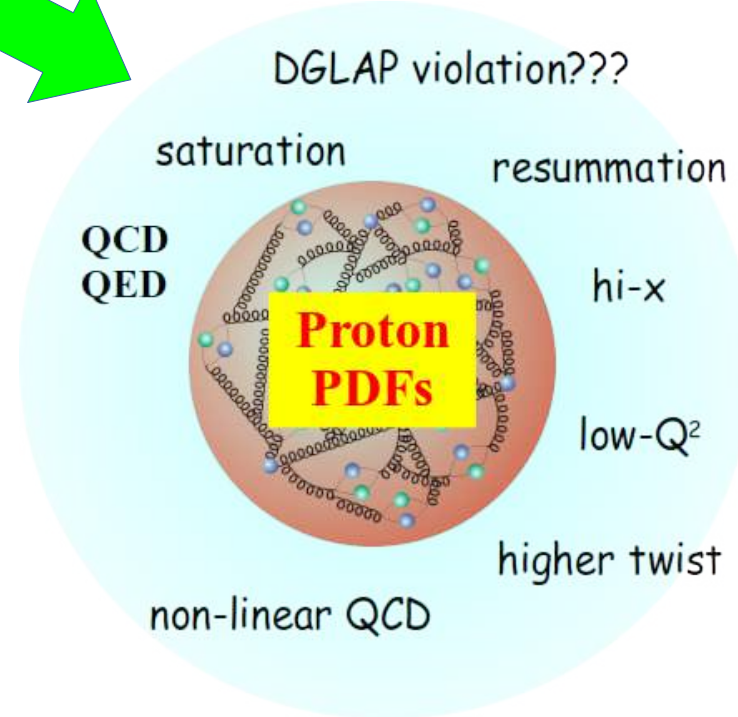
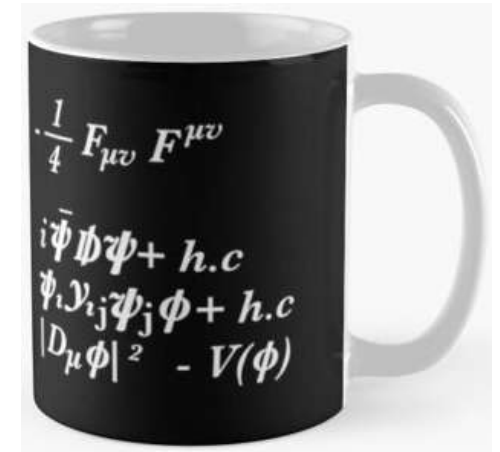
Quantum ChromoDynamics

QCD

Lagrangian

$$\mathcal{L}_{QCD} = \bar{\psi}_q (i\gamma_\mu D^\mu - m_q) \psi_q - \frac{1}{4} G_{\mu\nu}^a G_a^{\mu\nu}$$

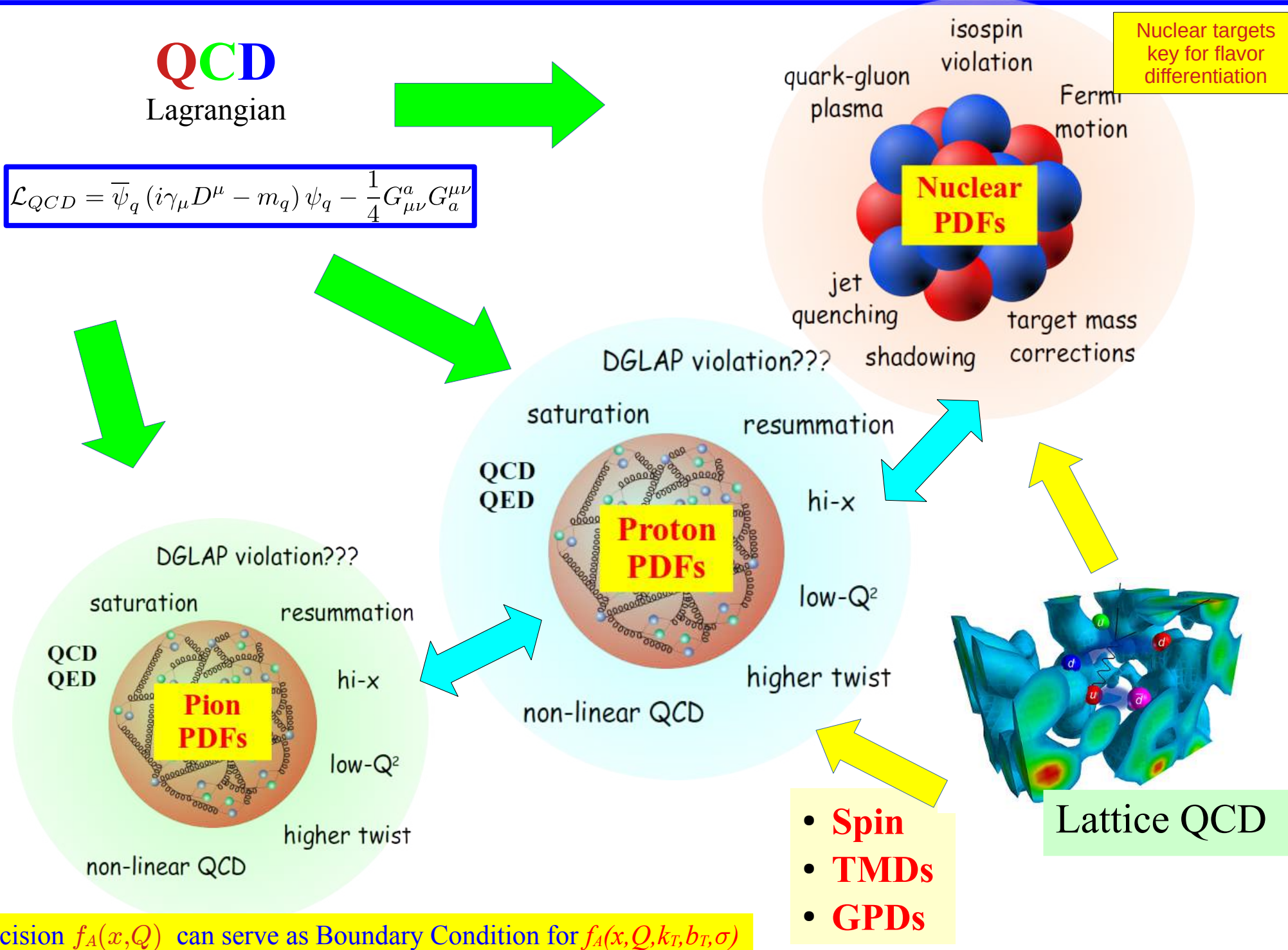
Conjecture: A theory can't be fundamental unless it fits on a coffee mug.



... we can go further

QCD
Lagrangian

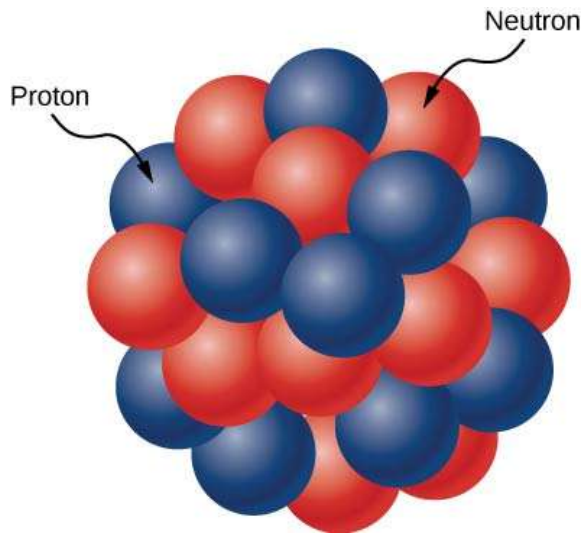
$$\mathcal{L}_{QCD} = \bar{\psi}_q (i\gamma_\mu D^\mu - m_q) \psi_q - \frac{1}{4} G_{\mu\nu}^a G_a^{\mu\nu}$$



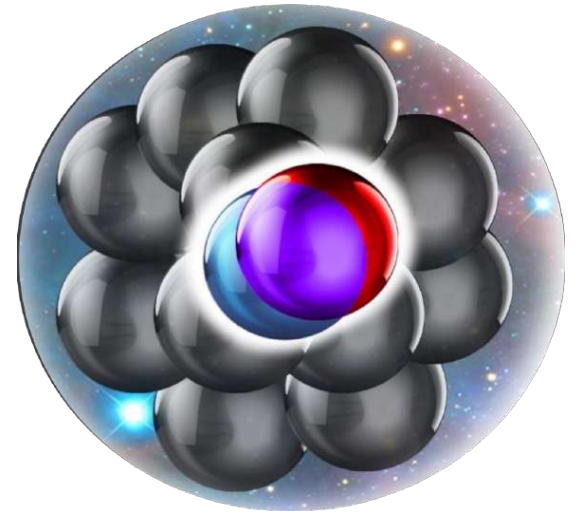
precision $f_A(x, Q)$ can serve as Boundary Condition for $f_A(x, Q, k_T, b_T, \sigma)$

Nuclear PDFs

Parton Distribution Functions



...



is it just a bag of
protons & neutrons ???

... is it just a bag of protons & neutrons ???

~90% correct

10

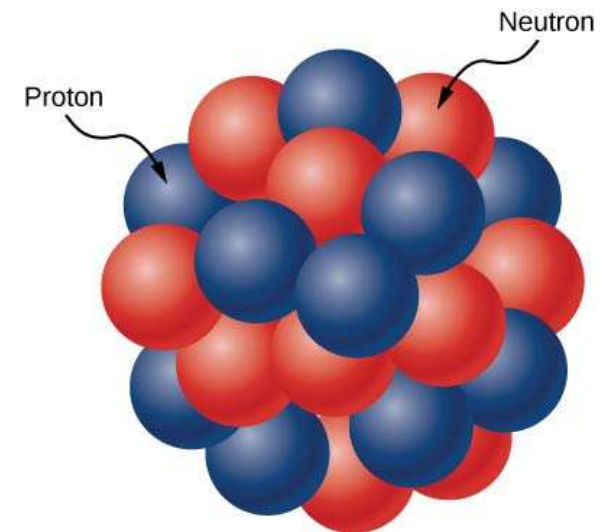
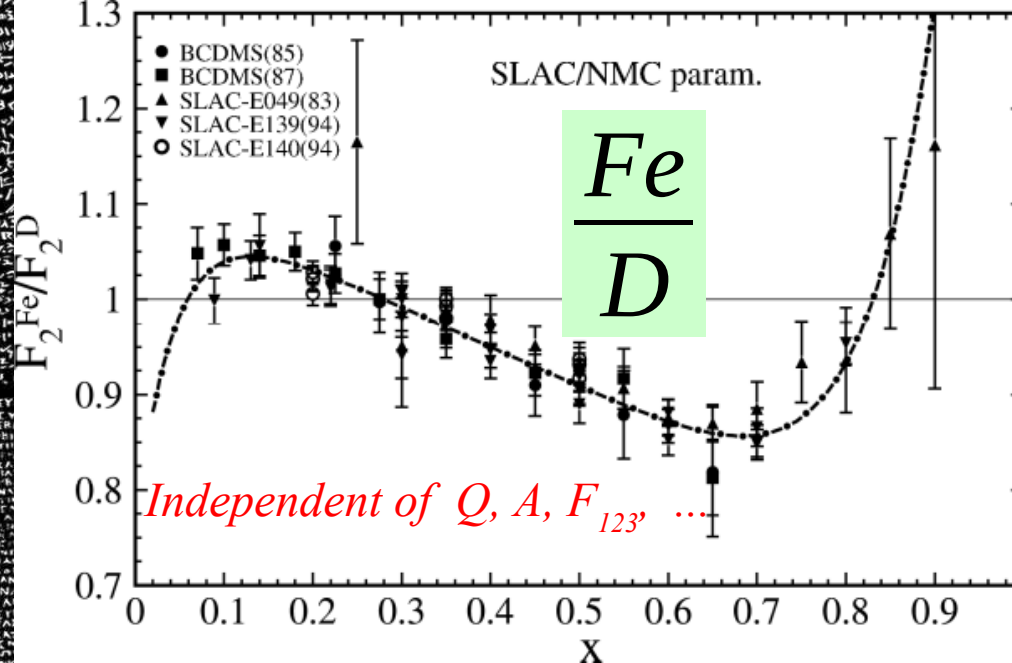
you'd be
~90% correct

The ratio of iron (Fe)
to Deuterium (D)

$$\frac{Fe}{D}$$

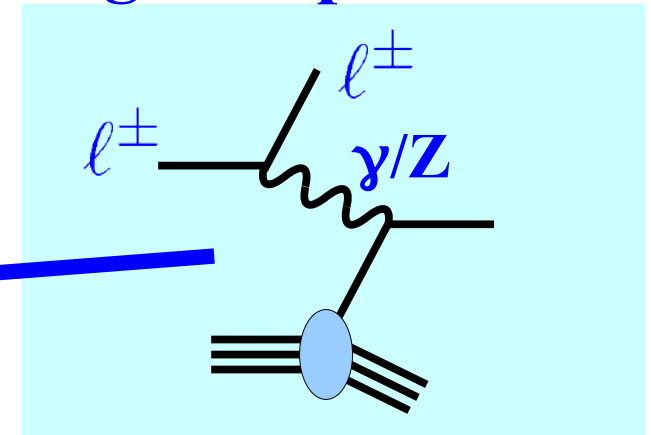
Iron

(proton + neutron)



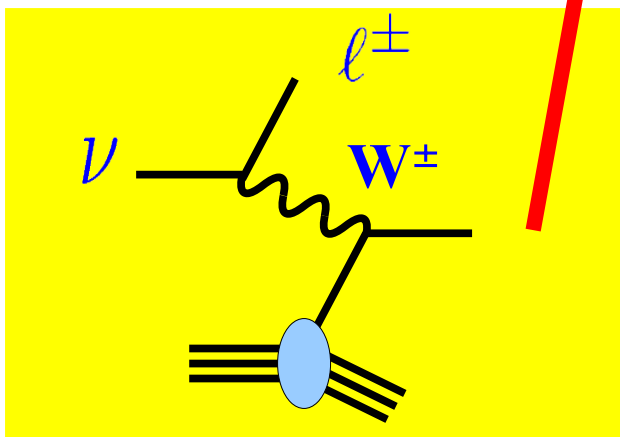
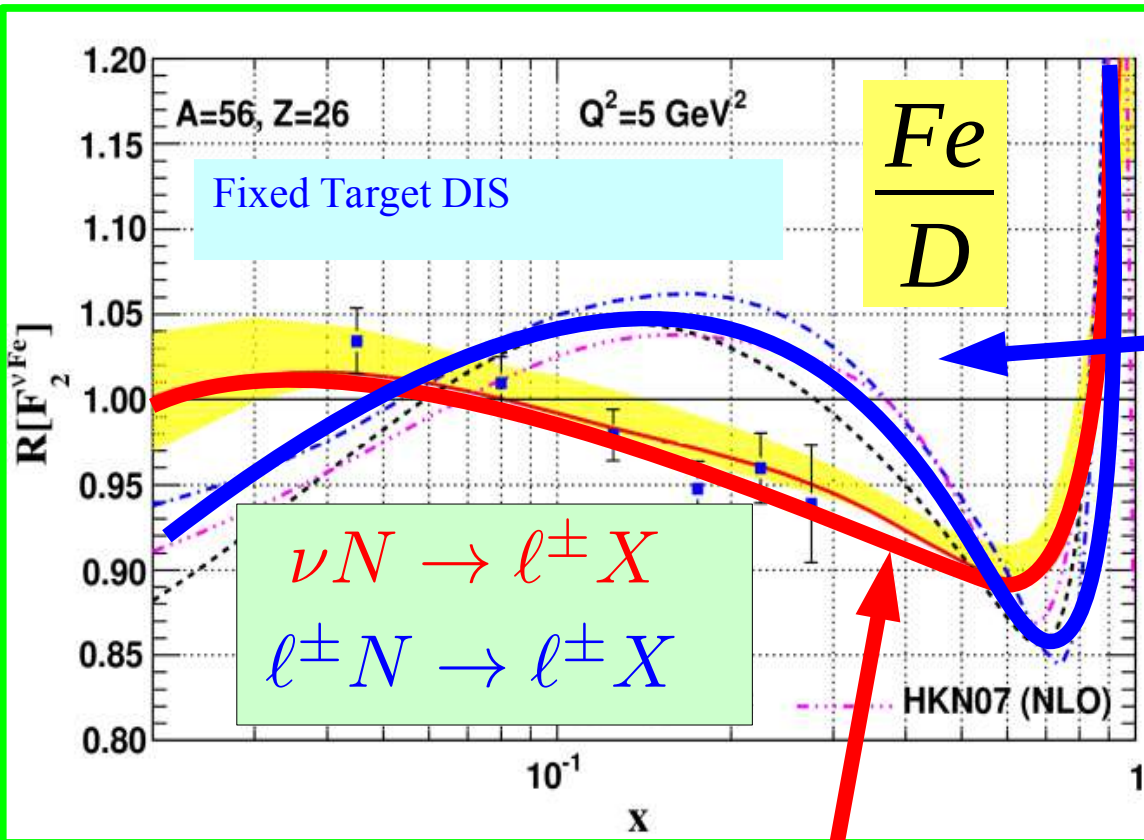
But ...

Charged Lepton DIS



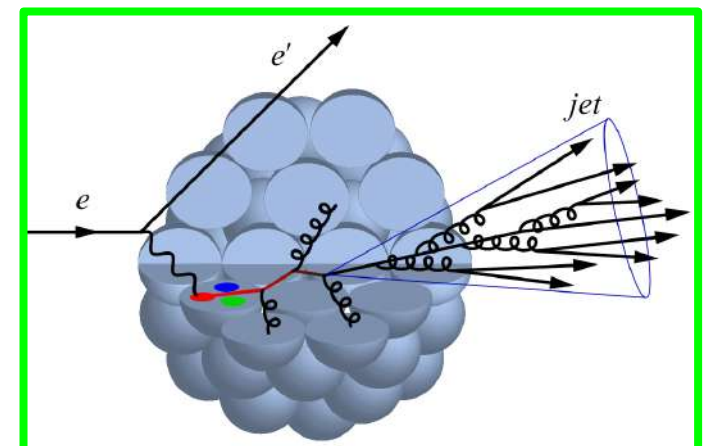
*some caveats
... correlated errors*

Ingo Schienbein, ... (2007)
Karol Kovarik, ... (2010)



Neutrino DIS

Depends on nuclear corrections



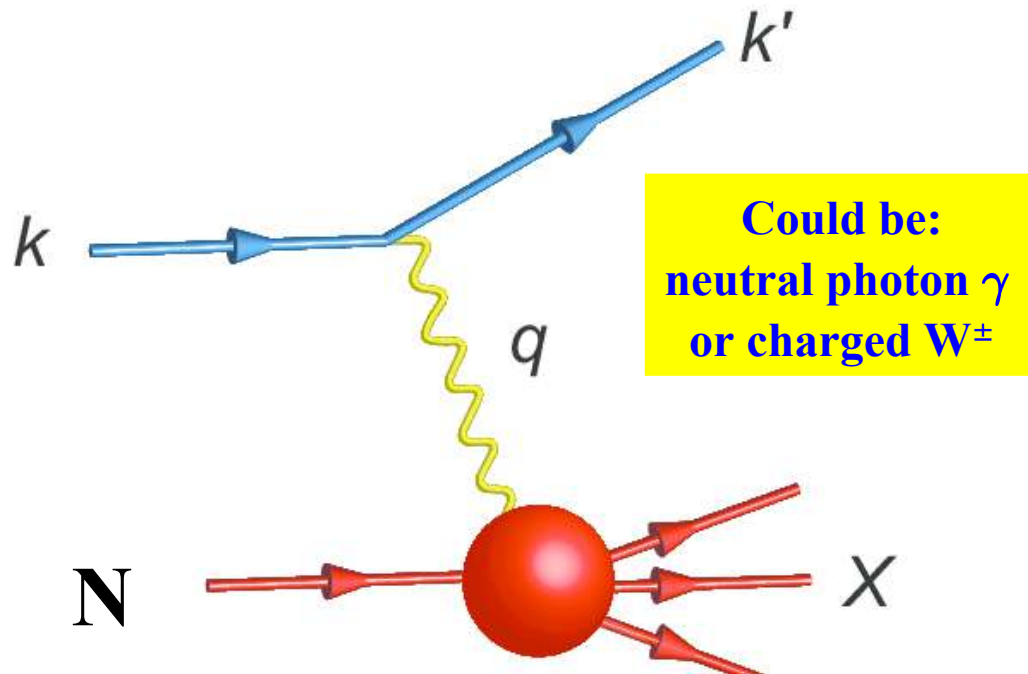
Propagation of γ/W thru nuclei

Neutrino Deep Inelastic Scattering (DIS)

(nCTEQ) Faiq Muzakka, Karol Kovarik, ...

Phys.Rev.D 106 (2022) 7, 074004 • e-Print: 2204.13157 [hep-ph]

Nuclear Targets Important



Neutrino DIS

$$F_2^\nu \sim [d + s + \bar{u} + \bar{c}]$$

$$F_2^{\bar{\nu}} \sim [\bar{d} + \bar{s} + u + c]$$

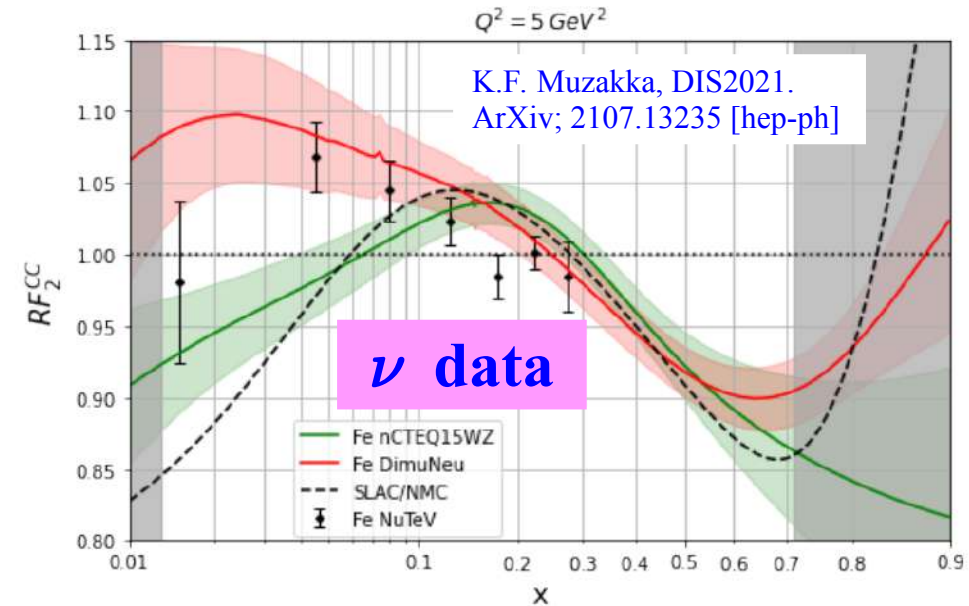
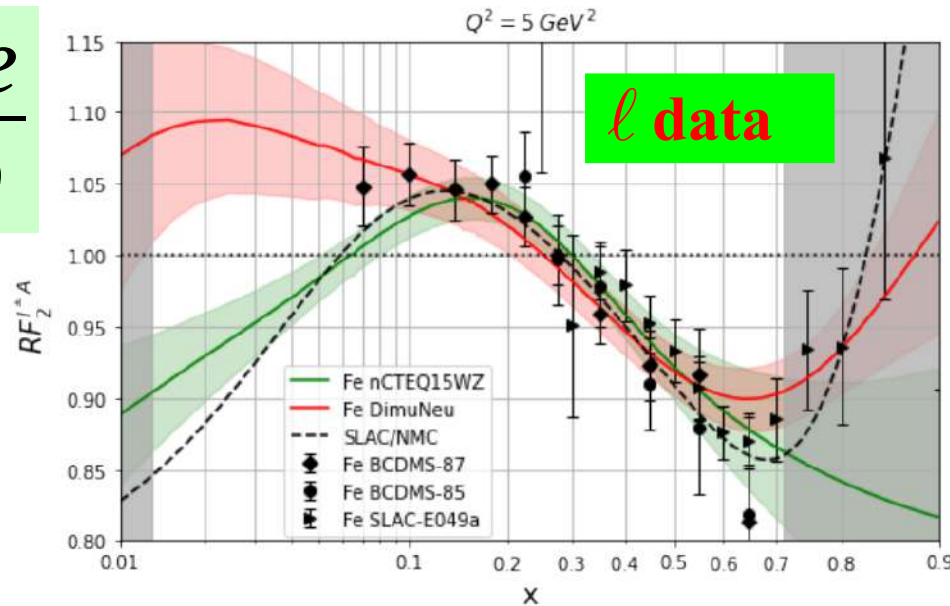
$$F_3^\nu \sim 2[d + s - \bar{u} - \bar{c}]$$

$$F_3^{\bar{\nu}} \sim 2[u + c - \bar{d} - \bar{s}]$$

Differentiate flavors of free-proton PDFs:

Faiq Muzakka, Karol Kovarik, ...

$$\frac{Fe}{D}$$



Iron

(proton + neutron)

What is the correct nuclear correction ???

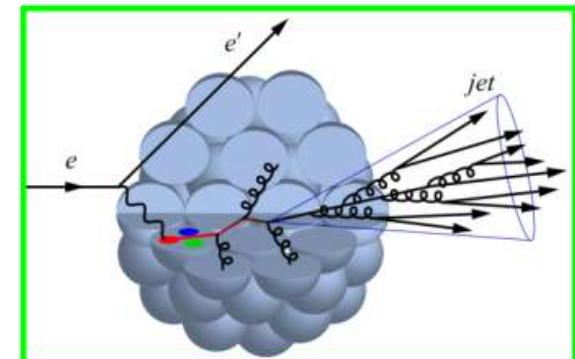
Are these data sets compatible???

Compatibility of neutrino DIS data and its impact on nuclear parton distribution functions

K.F. Muzakka^{1,*}, P. Duwentaster^{1,†}, T.J. Hobbs^{2,3,4}, T. Ježo^{5,‡}, M. Klasen^{1,§}, K. Kovarik^{1,¶},
A. Kusina^{1,6,**}, J.G. Morfin^{7,††}, F. I. Olness^{1,2,‡‡}, R. Ruiz^{1,6}, I. Schienbein^{1,8,§§}

¹Institut für Theoretische Physik, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster,

Phys.Rev.D 106 (2022) 7, 074004 • e-Print: 2204.13157 [hep-ph]



Propagation of γ/W thru nuclei

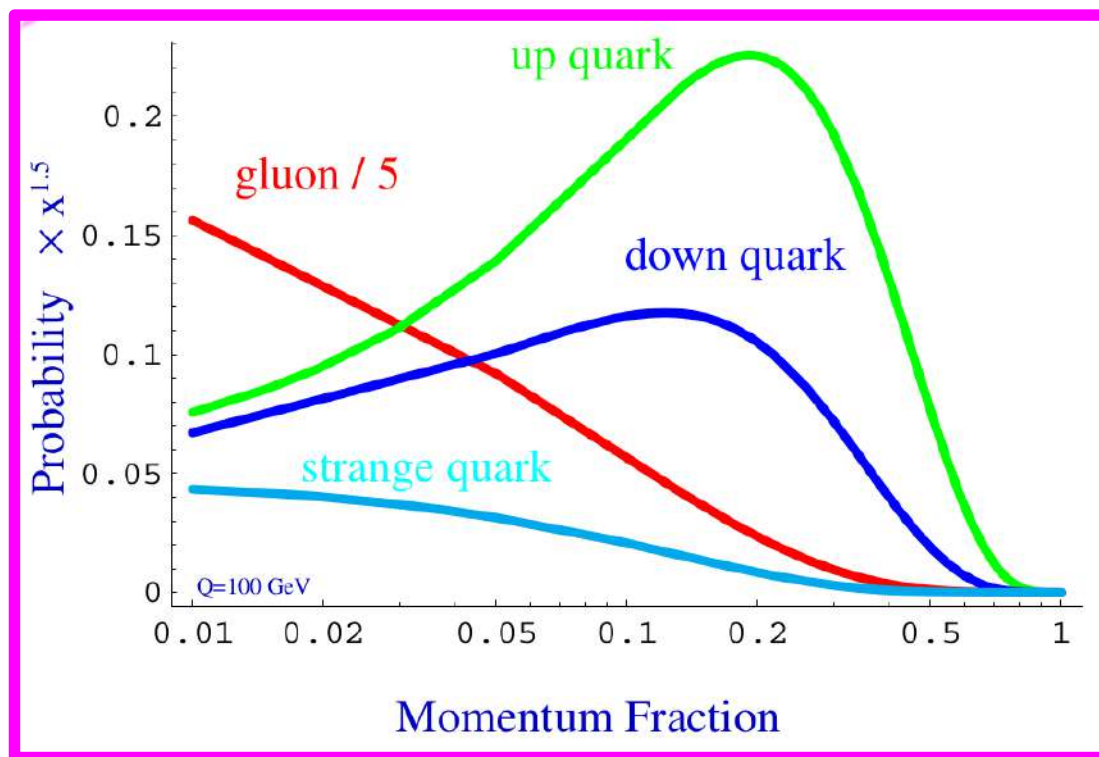
Strange PDF

Parton Distribution Functions



... this has a significant impact on the strange quark PDF

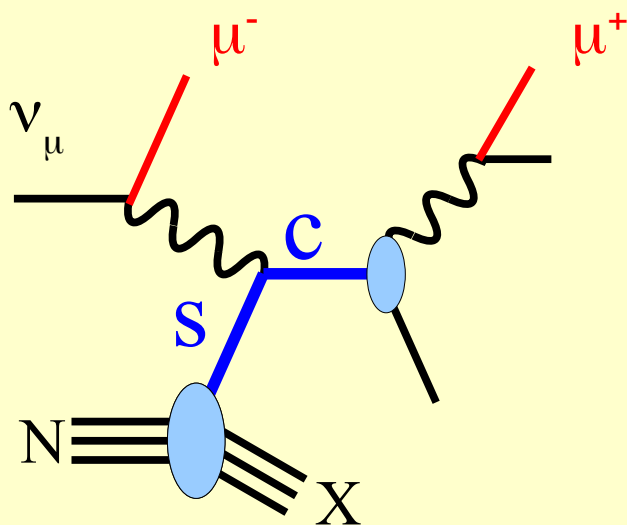
Need to “dig out”
 $s(x)$ underneath $d(x)$



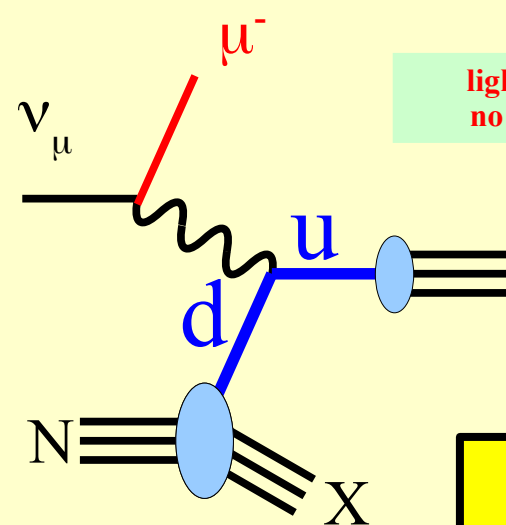
Result:

$$\bar{s}(x) \sim \frac{1}{2} \bar{d}(x)$$

Strange Quark



Down Quark

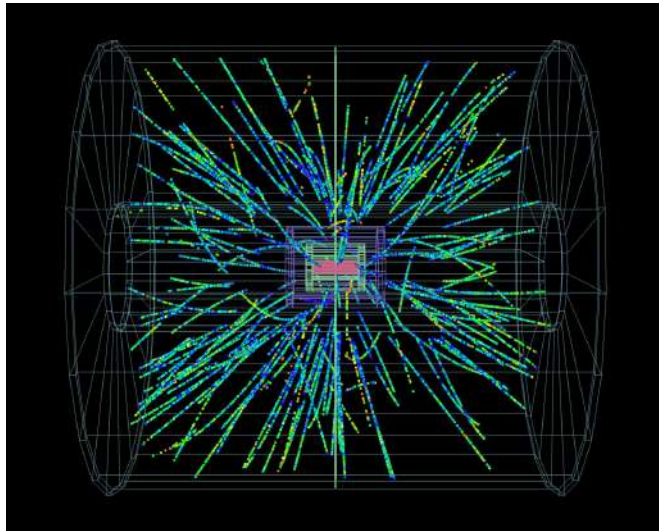


light u mass
no isolated μ

**Depends on
nuclear PDFs**

W and Z Boson Production at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC)

(nCTEQ) Tomas Jezo, Aleksander Kusina, Fred Olness, ...

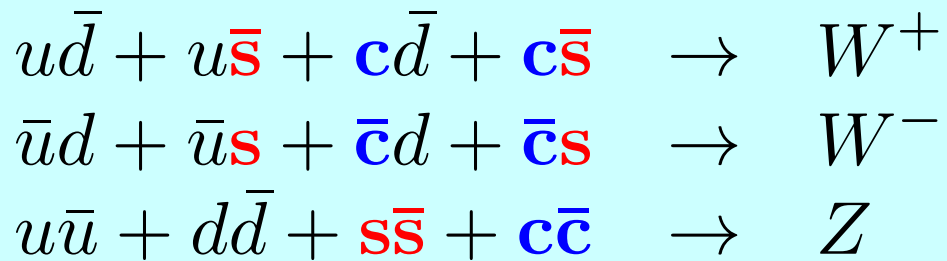


Independent of
Nuclear Corrections

$$\begin{aligned} p \ p &\rightarrow W, Z \\ p \ Pb &\rightarrow W, Z \end{aligned}$$

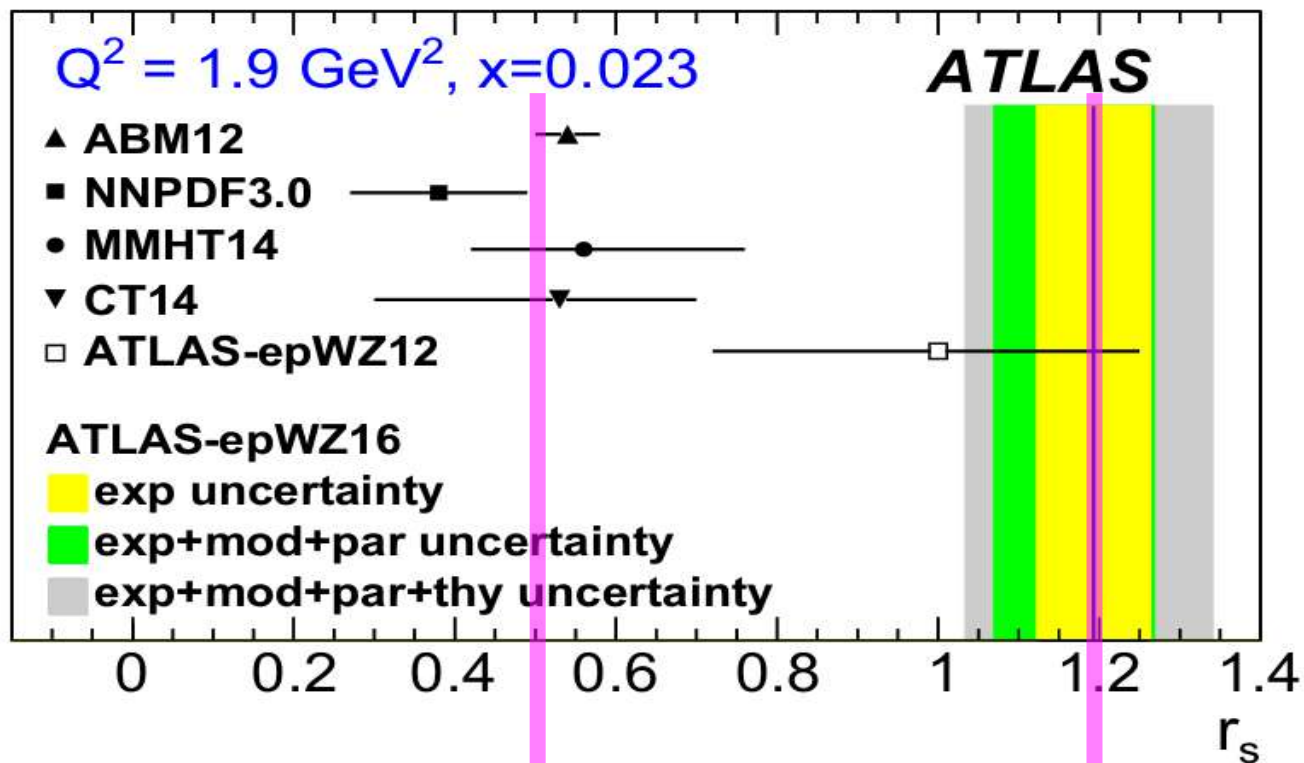
LHC Heavy Ion

... there's another
way to measure the
strange quark



Surprise:

We expected $r_s = 1/2$
LHC finds $r_s > 1$



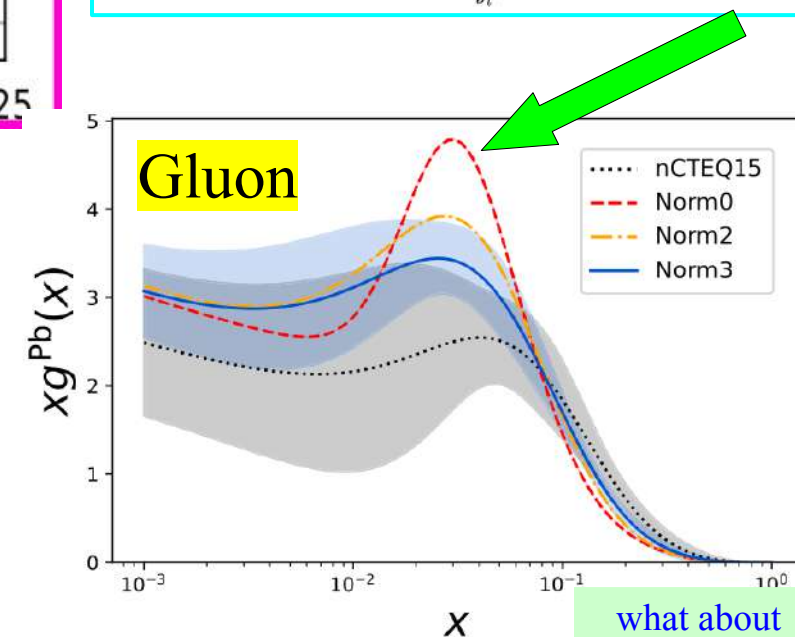
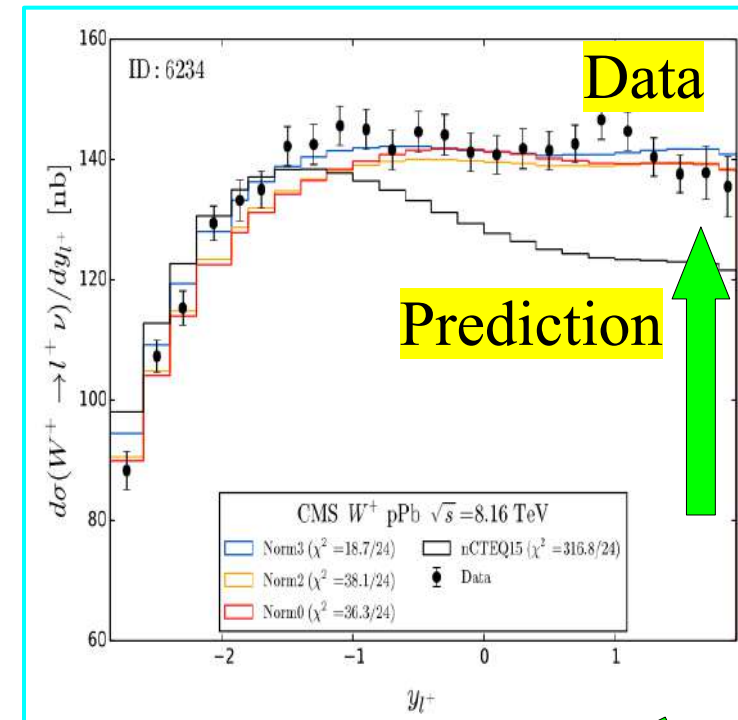
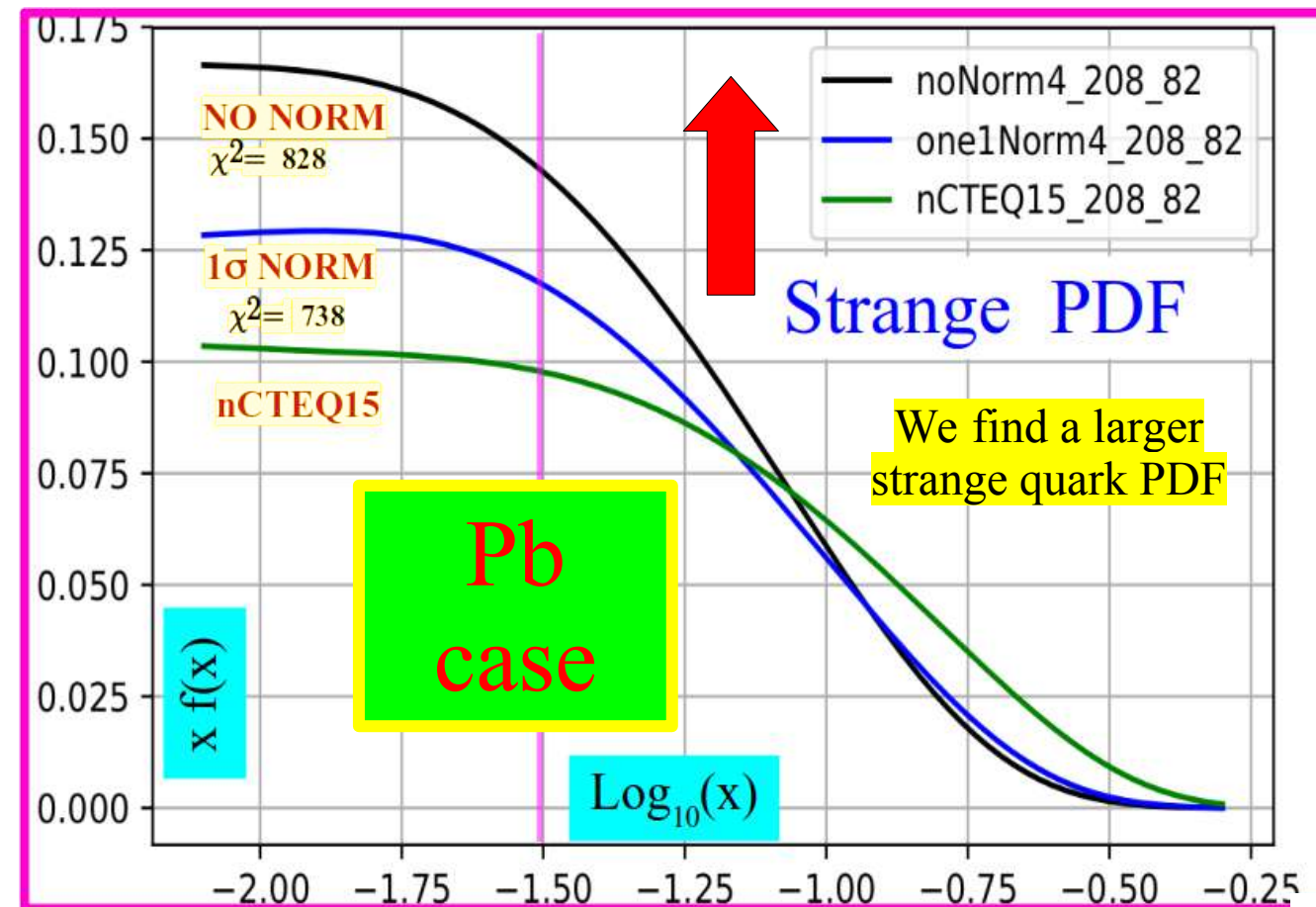
**Proton
case**

$$r_s \sim \bar{s}/\bar{d}$$

We expect:

At the LHC:

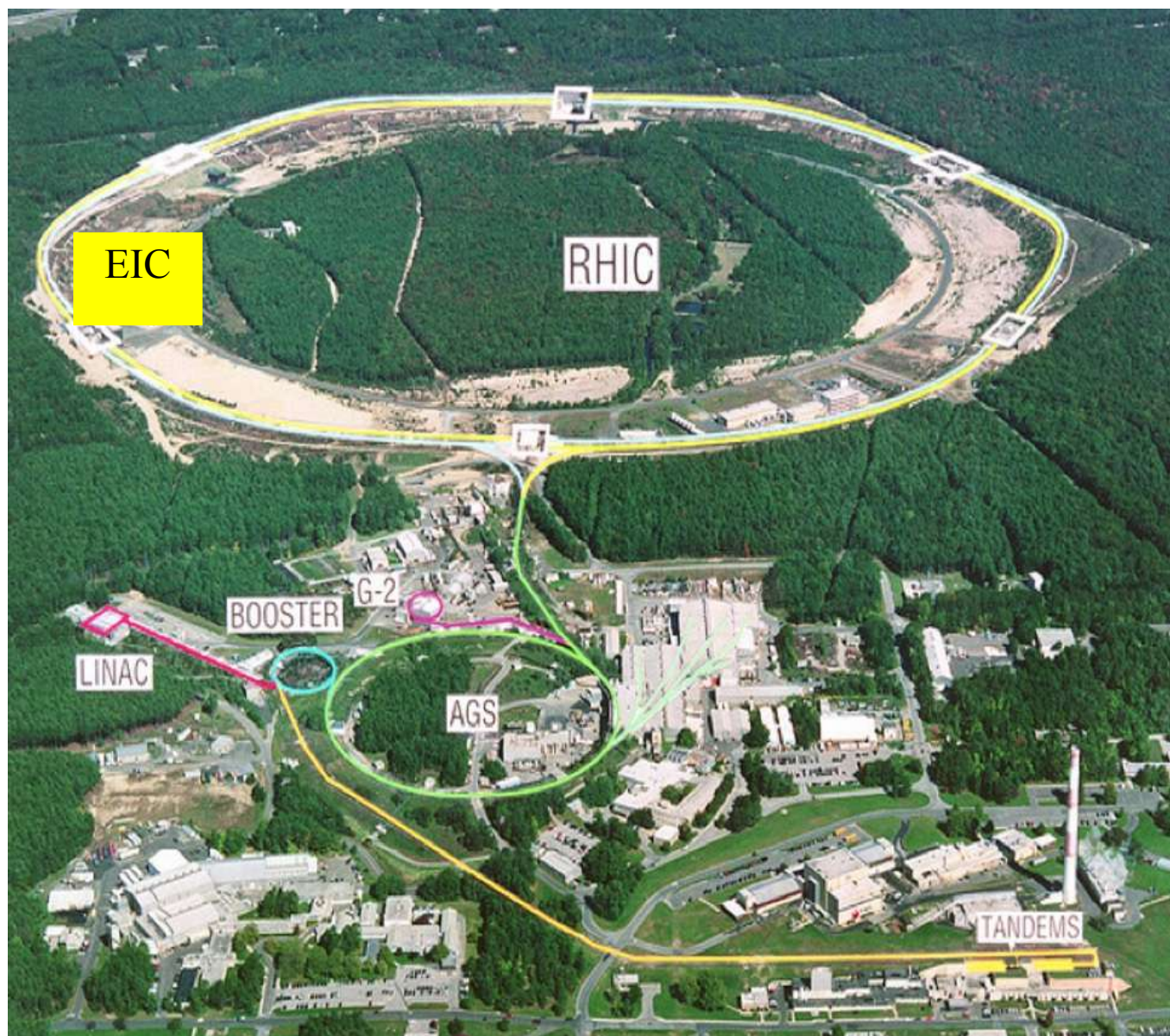
$$r_s = \frac{\bar{s} + s}{2\bar{d}}$$



Is the strange PDF driving the data ...
Or is the data driving the strange ???

what about
the gluon???

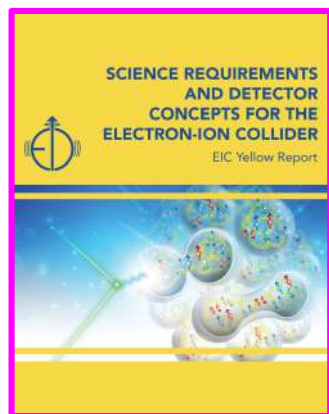
If only we had more DIS data



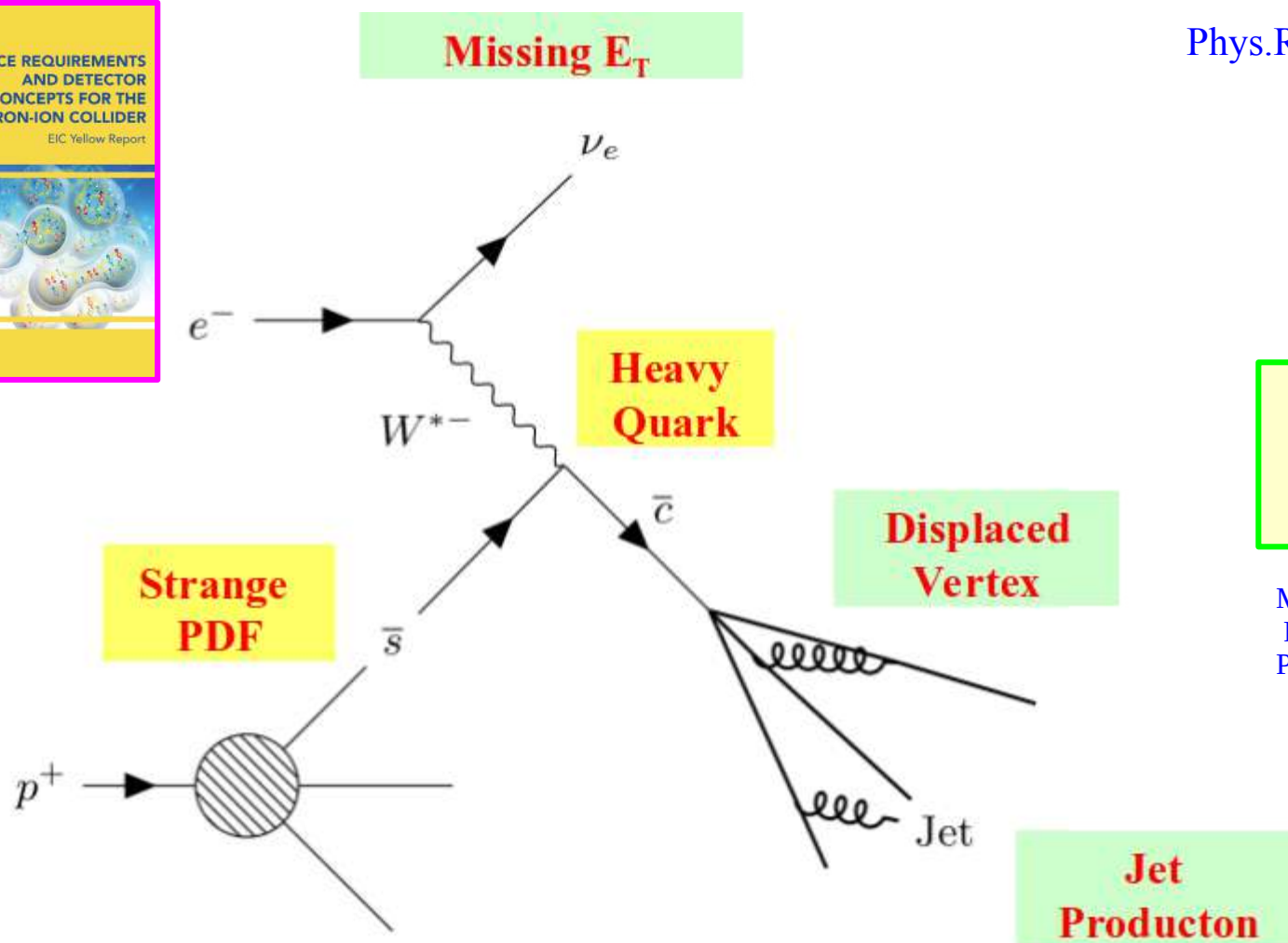
JLAB-PHY-20-3205, SMU-HEP-20-05

Charm jets as a probe for strangeness at the future Electron-Ion Collider

Miguel Arratia,^{1,2} Yulia Furletova,² T. J. Hobbs,^{3,4} Fredrick Olness,³ and Stephen J. Sekula^{3,*}

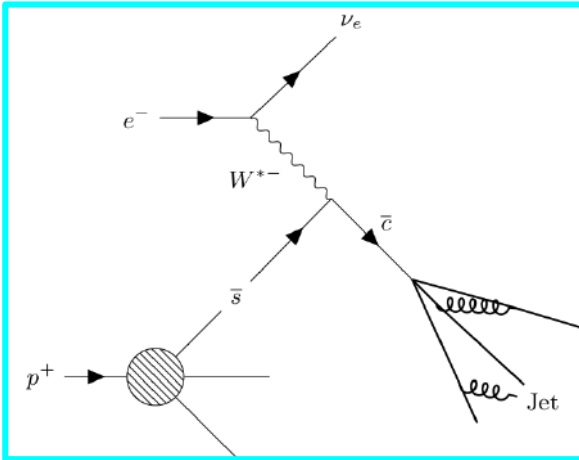


Phys.Rev.D 103 (2021) 7, 074023



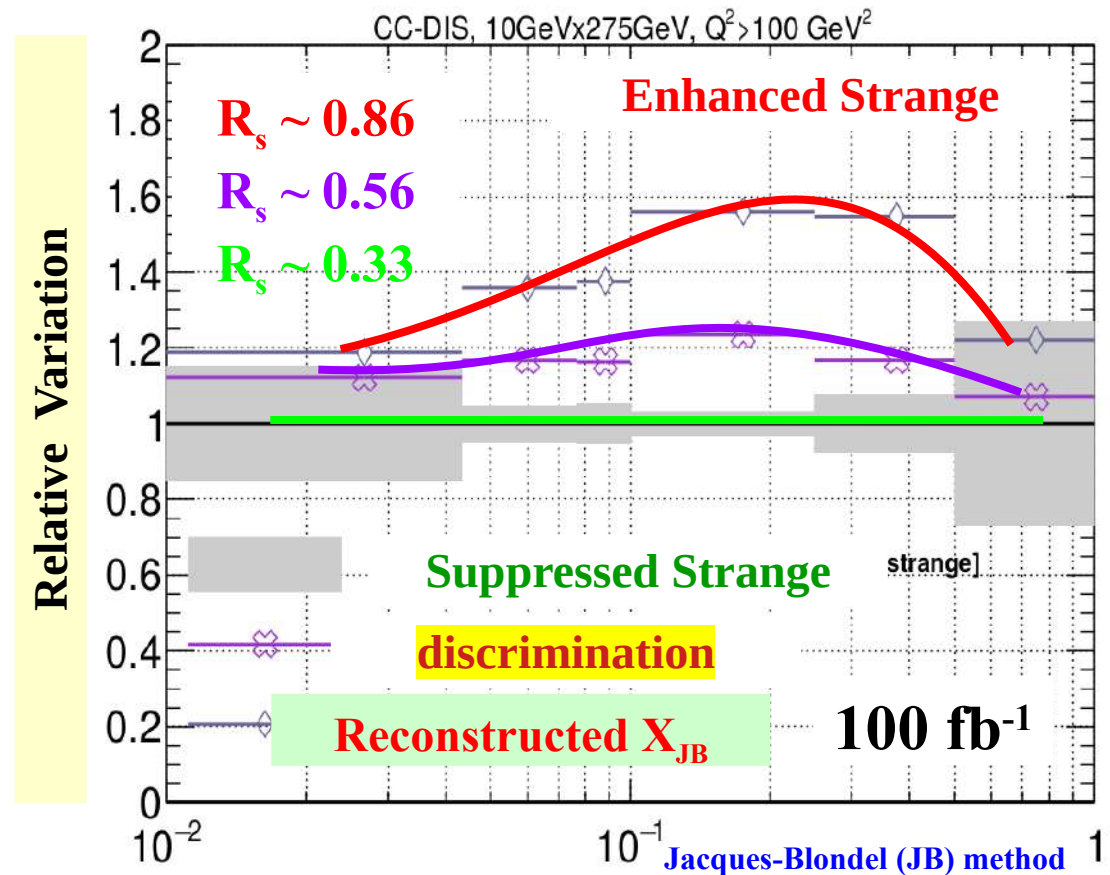
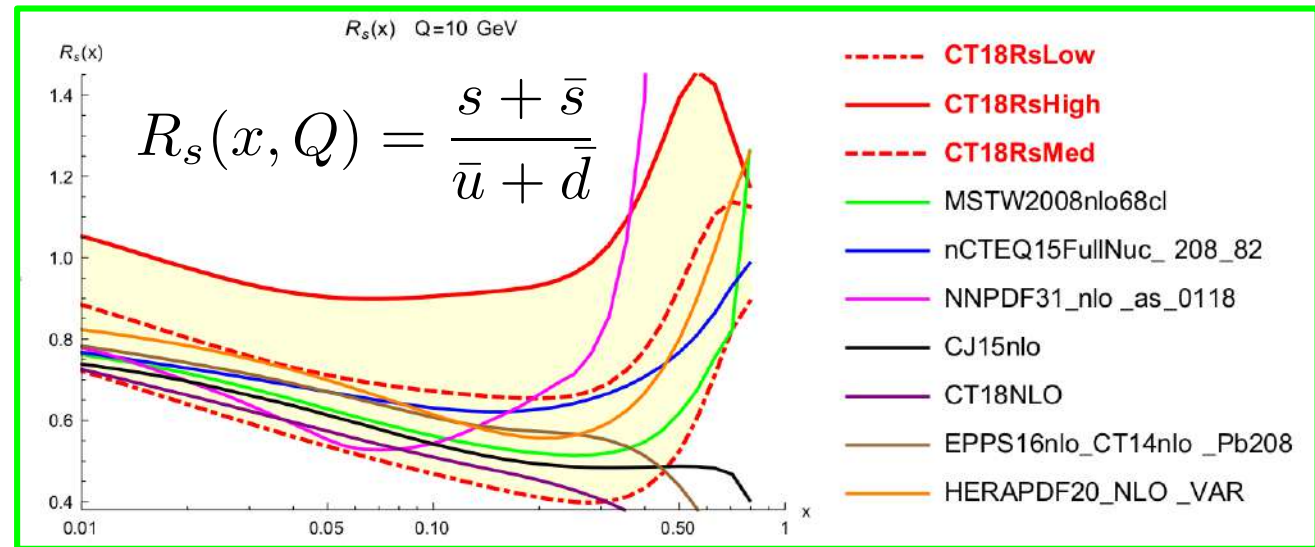
**Clear measure of
Strange PDF beyond
uncertainties**

M. Arratia, Y. Furletova, T.J. Hobbs,
F. Olness, S.J. Sekula,
Phys.Rev.D 103 (2021) 7, 074023

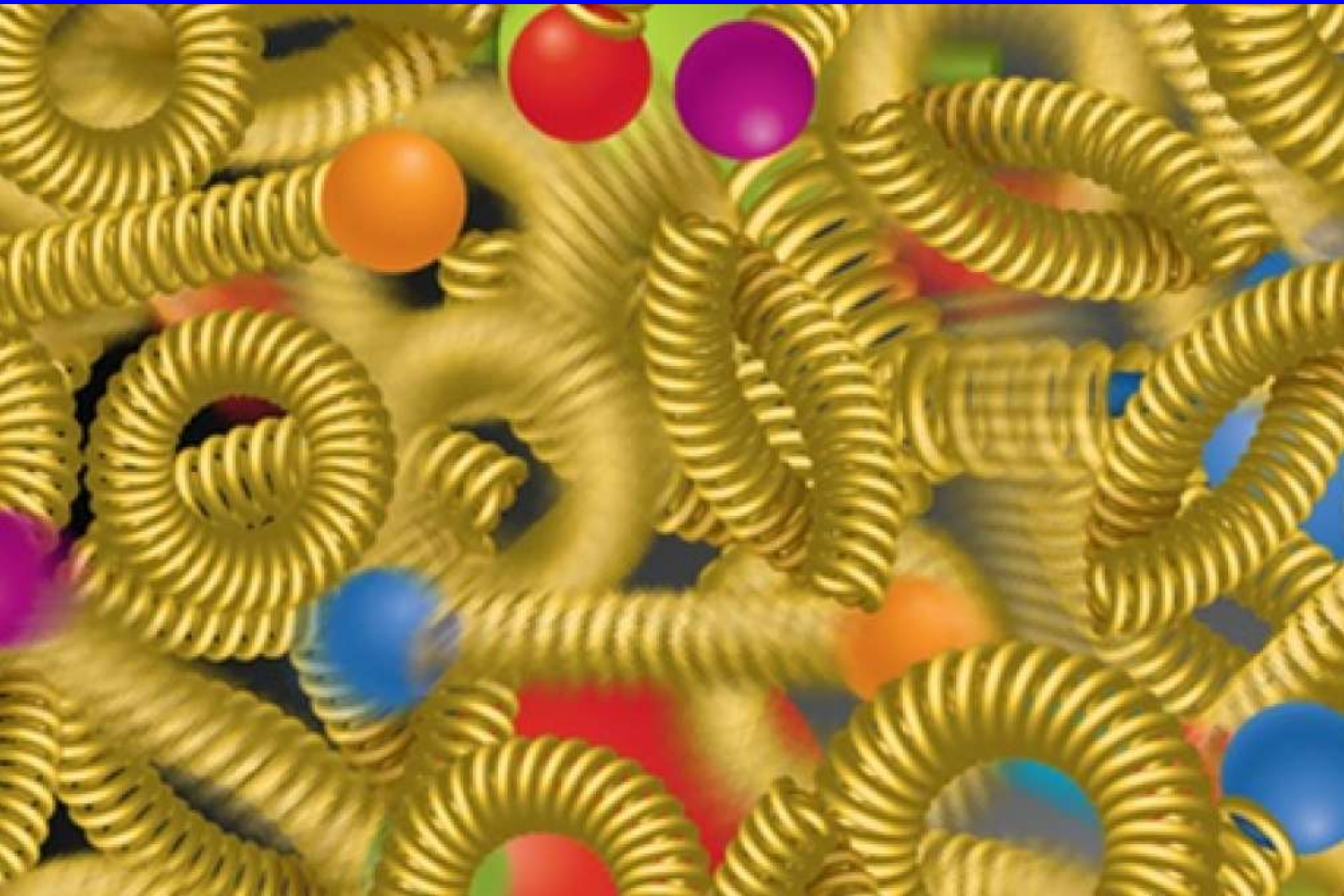


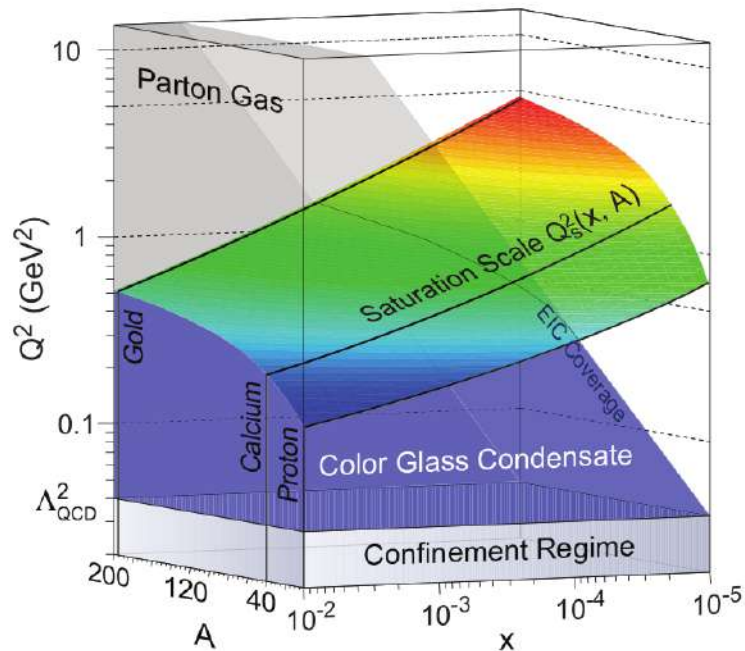
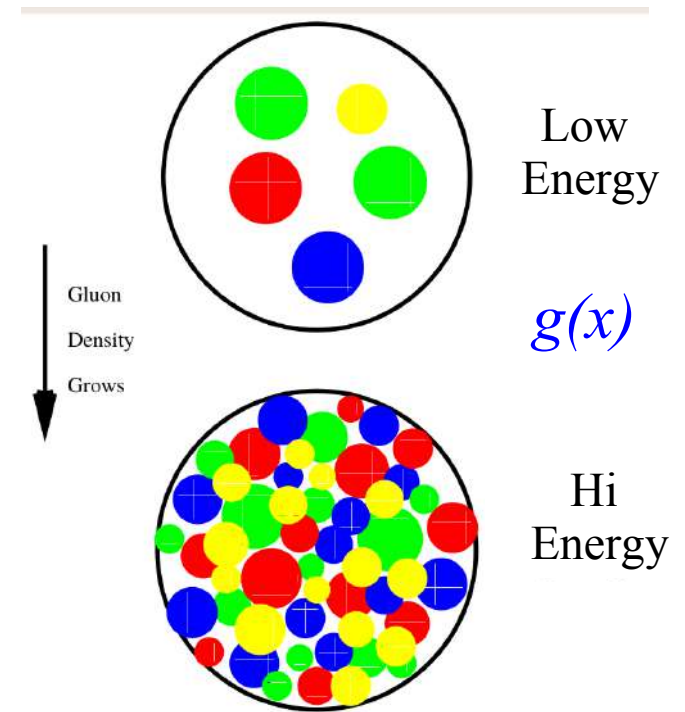
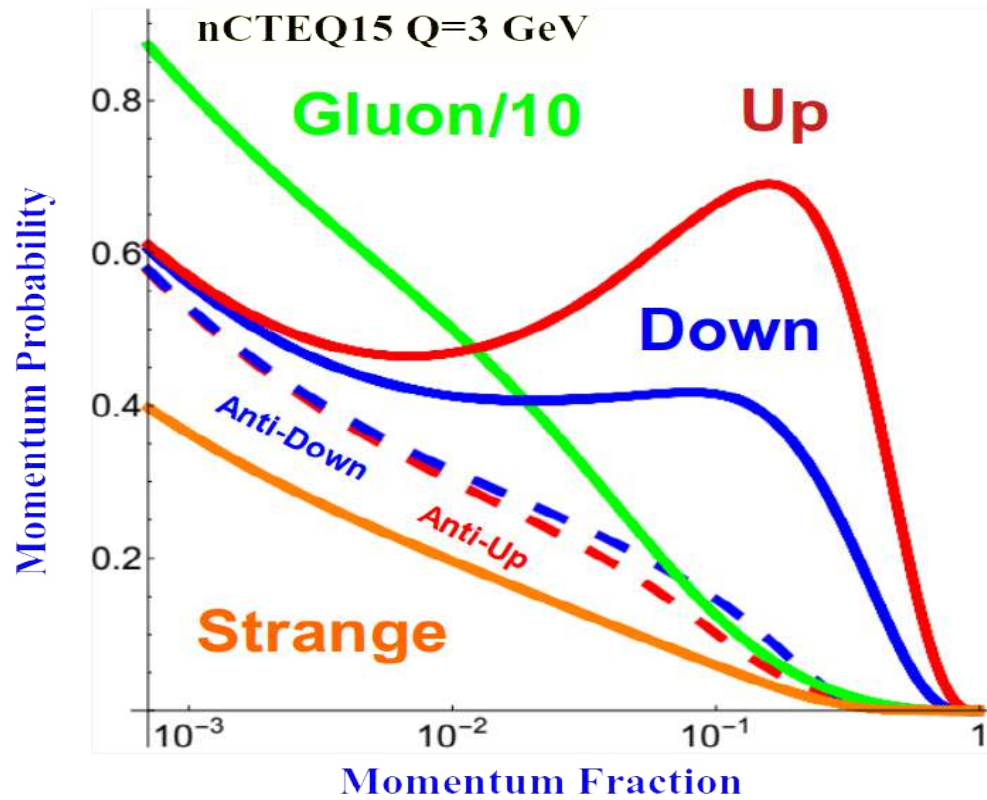
$W+S \rightarrow C_{jet}$

**Clear measure of
Strange PDF beyond
uncertainties**



The Gluon

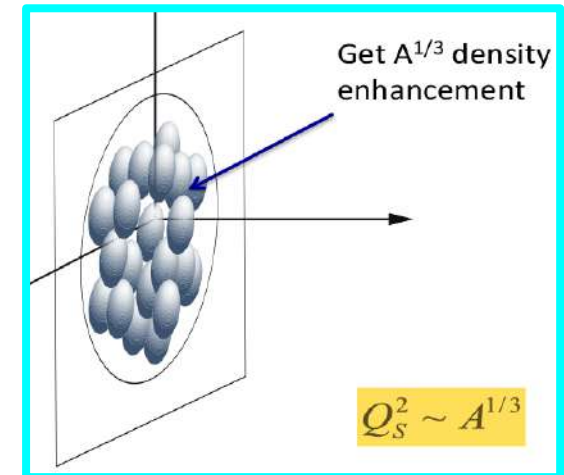


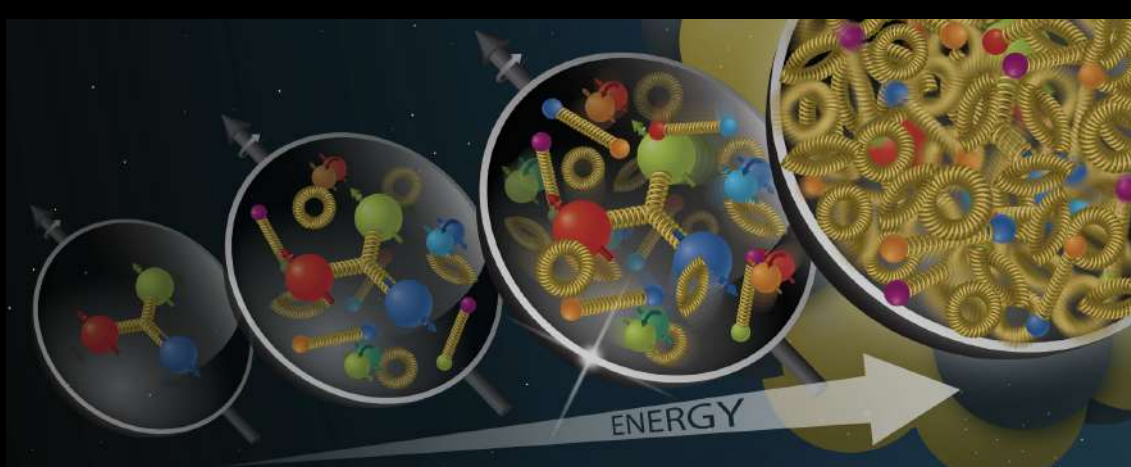


Nuclear medium effects:

- Quark Gluon Plasma
- Color Glass Condensate
- Recombination
- Saturation
- Resummation
- ... *your theory here*

We gain a geometric factor of $A^{1/3}$





Discover and explore the gluon saturation regime of quantum chromodynamics

<https://www.bnl.gov/physics/surge/>

Members

Brookhaven National Laboratory

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P. Petreczky, R. Venugopalan

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D. Pitonyak

New Mexico State University

M. Sievert

North Carolina State University

V. Skokov

Penn State University

A. Stasto

University of California Berkeley / Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

X.-N. Wang

Penn State U

CUNY Baruch College

BNL

Washington D.C.

Old Dominion U

NCSU

Lebanon Valley College

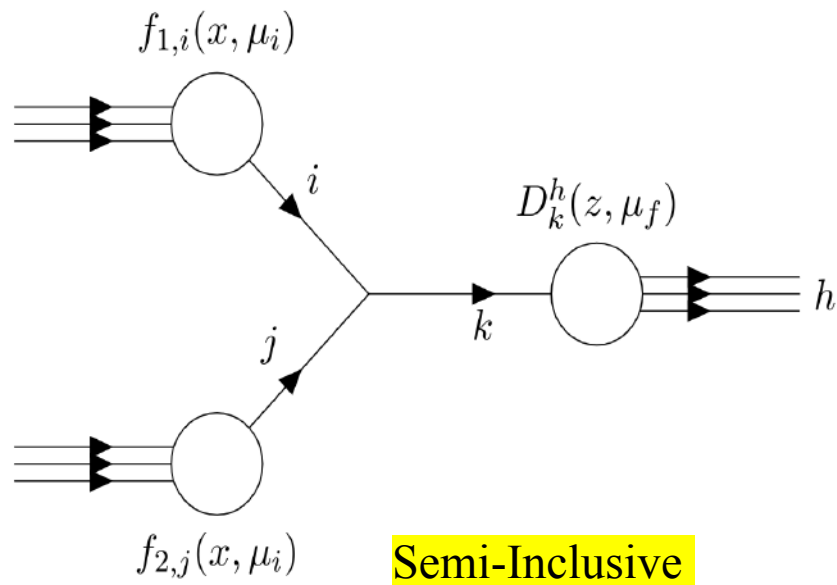
UConn

McGill U

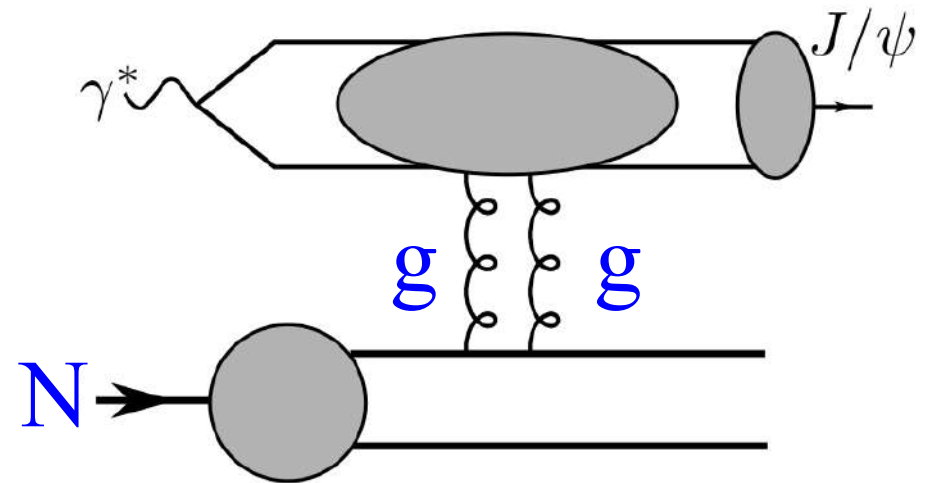
Measuring the nuclear Gluon PDF 25

Parton Distribution Functions

(nCTEQ) Pit Duwentaster, Michael Klasen, ...



Semi-Inclusive
Hadron Production

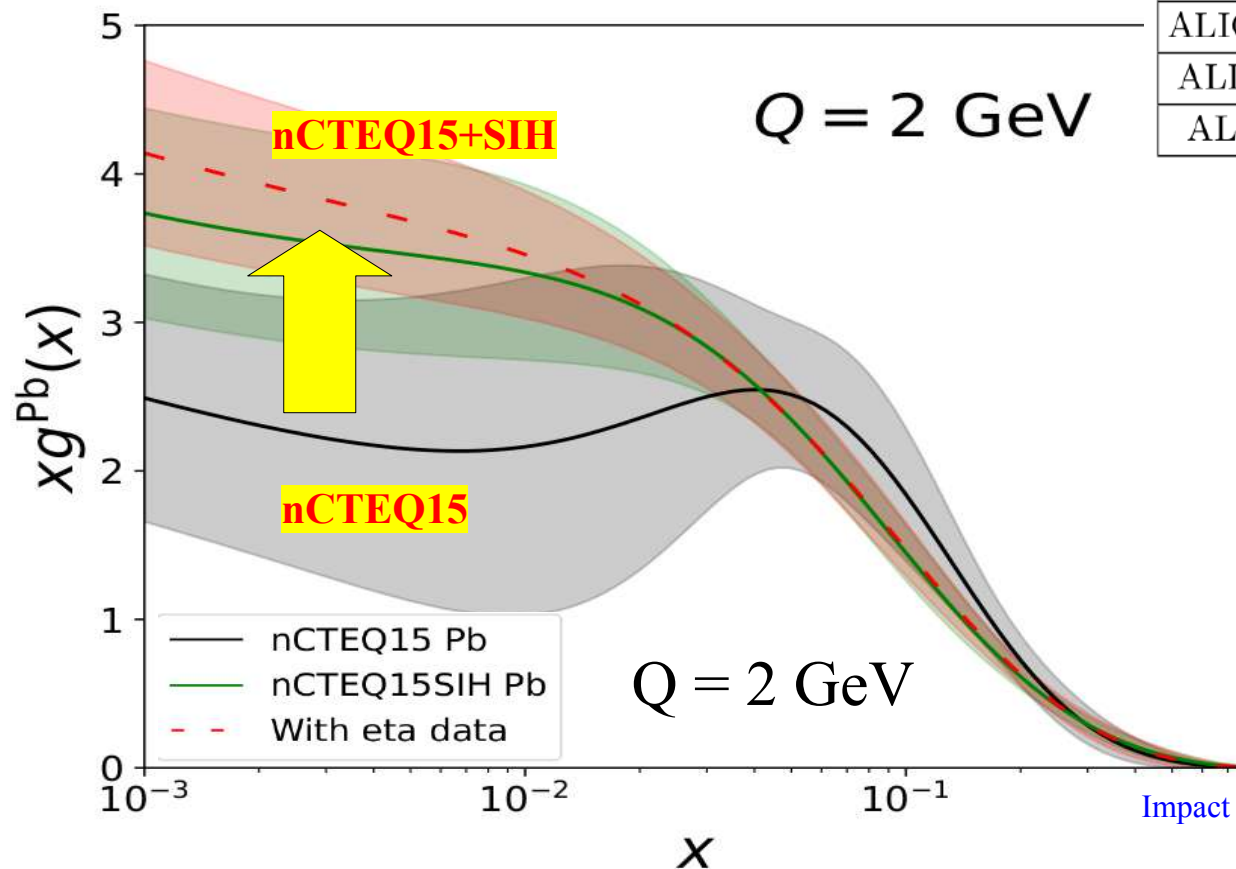
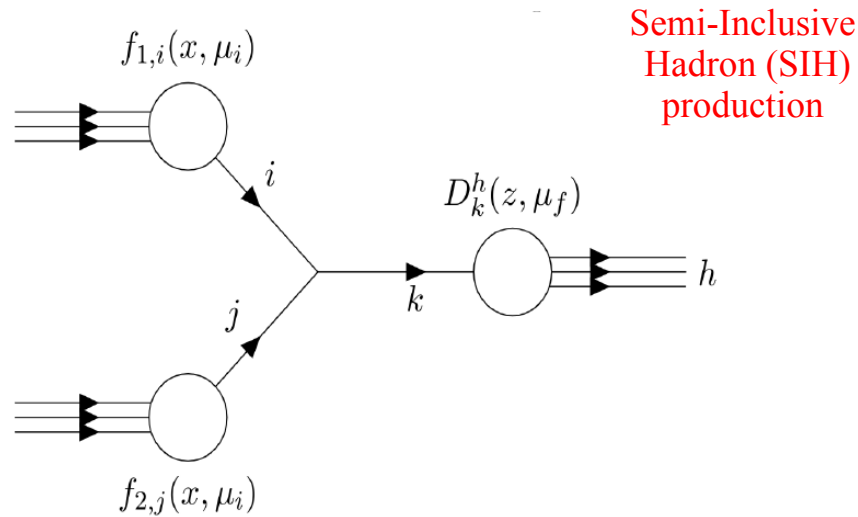


Quarkonia
Production



how can we determine
the gluon

Pit Duwentaster, Michael Klasen, ...

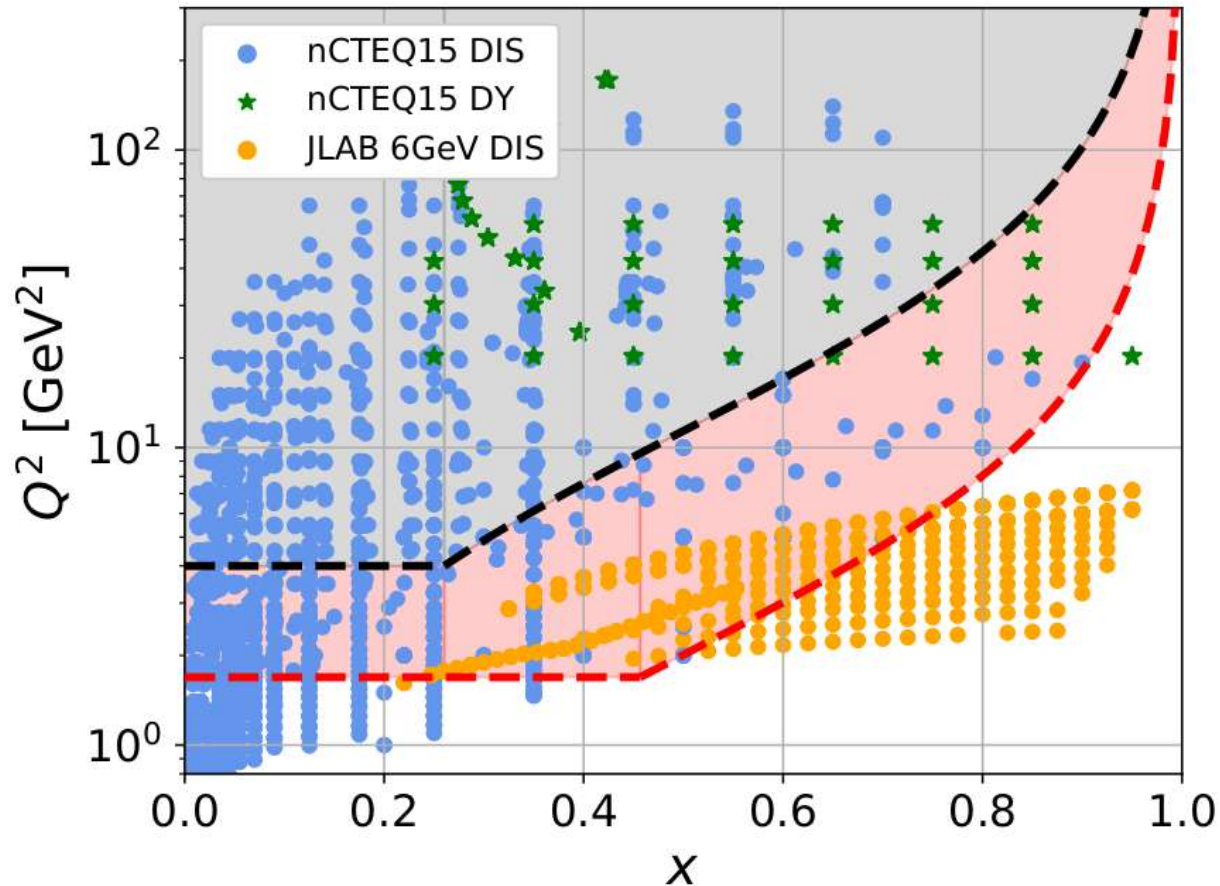


Data set	$\sqrt{s_{NN}}$ [GeV]	Observ.	No. points
PHENIX π^0	200	R_{dAu}	21
PHENIX η	200	R_{dAu}	12
PHENIX $\pi^\pm$	200	R_{dAu}	20
PHENIX $K^\pm$	200	R_{dAu}	15
STAR π^0	200	R_{dAu}	13
STAR η	200	R_{dAu}	7
STAR $\pi^\pm$	200	R_{dAu}	23
ALICE 5 TeV π^0	5020	R_{pPb}	31
ALICE 5 TeV η	5020	R_{pPb}	16
ALICE 5 TeV $\pi^\pm$	5020	R_{pPb}	58
ALICE 5 TeV $K^\pm$	5020	R_{pPb}	58
ALICE 8 TeV π^0	8160	R_{pPb}	30
ALICE 8 TeV η	8160	R_{pPb}	14

Semi-Inclusive
Hadron (SIH)
production

*Determines gluon
in small x region*

Extended $\{x, Q^2\}$ Kinematics



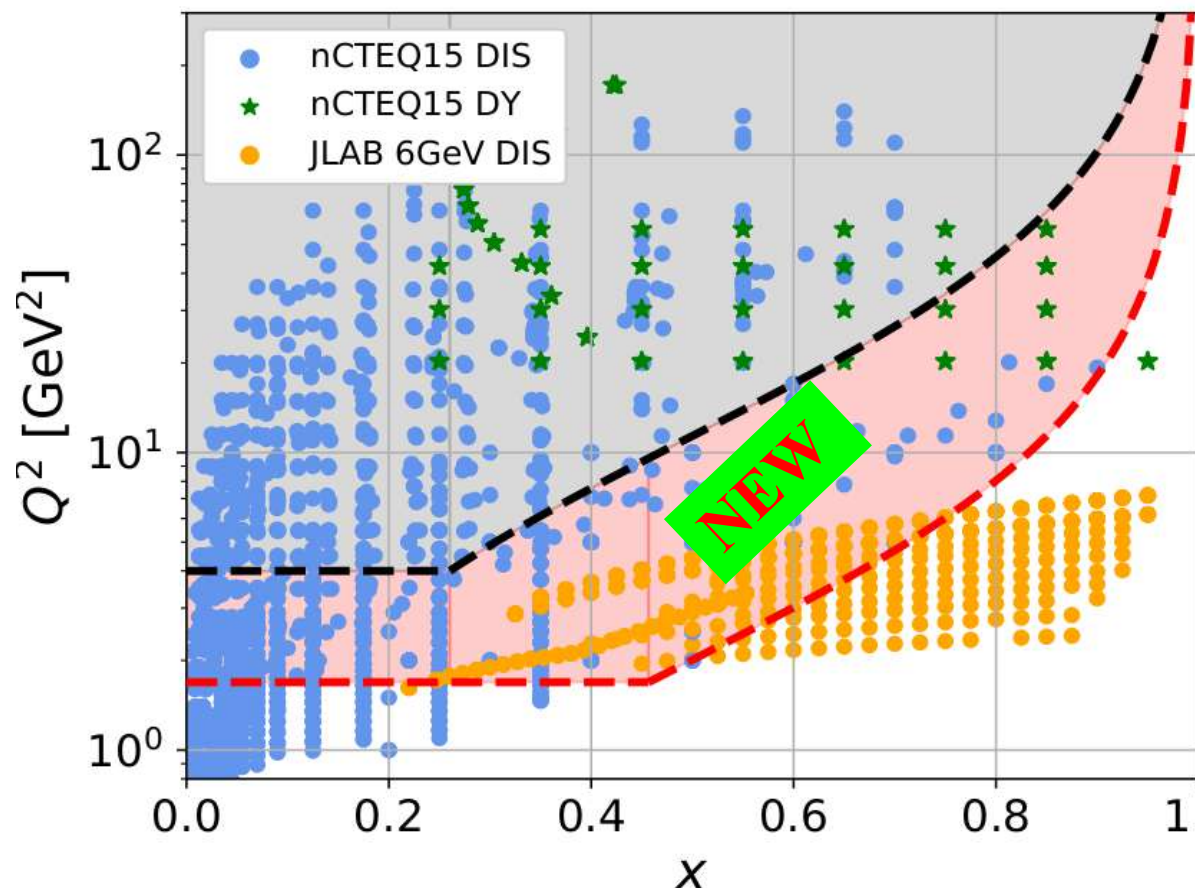
PHYSICAL REVIEW D **103**, 114015 (2021)

Extending nuclear PDF analyses into the high- x , low- Q^2 region

E. P. Segarra^{1,*}, T. Ježo^{2,†}, A. Accardi^{3,4}, P. Duwentaster⁵, O. Hen^{6,1}, T. J. Hobbs^{6,4,7}, C. Keppel⁴, M. Klasen⁵,
K. Kovarik⁵, A. Kusina⁸, J. G. Morfin⁹, K. F. Muzakka⁵, F. I. Olness^{6,‡}, I. Schienbein¹⁰, and J. Y. Yu¹⁰

Important effects:

- Deuteron Corrections
- Higher twist
- Target Mass Effects



Nuclear PDFs: $x > 1$ allowed;
impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Iso}}$ in Fermi region

Target Mass Corrections

pick up M^2/Q^2 higher twist cont.

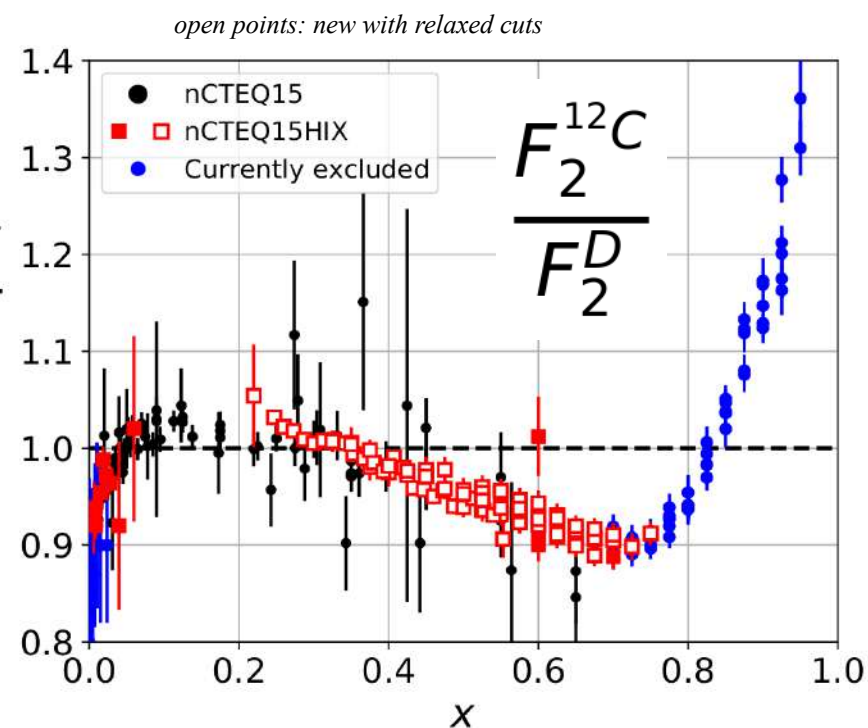
Deuteron Corrections

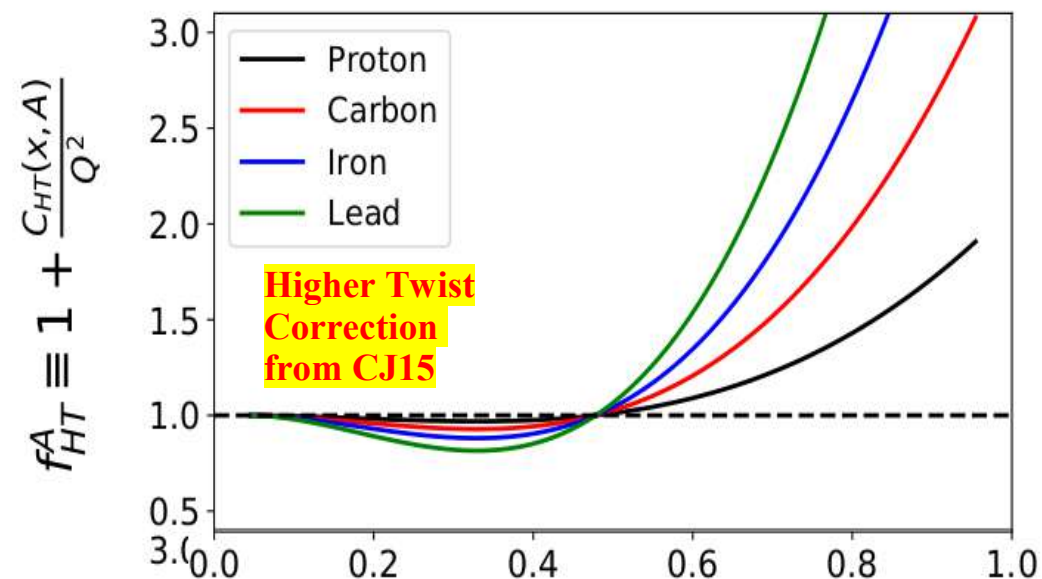
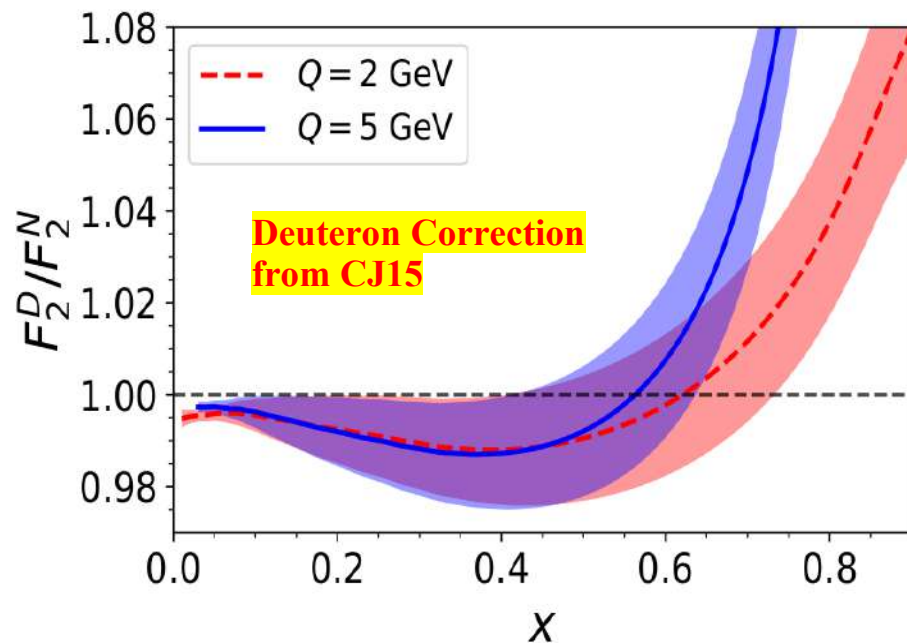
impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Deuteron}}$ ratio

Extend nCTEQ framework
to accommodate this region

$\{Q, W\} = \{2, 3.5\} \Rightarrow \{1.3, 1.7\}$

nCTEQ15HIX -- Extending nPDF Analyses
into the High- x , Low Q^2 Region
E.P. Segarra, T. Ježo, et al., PRD 103, 114015 (2021)





Fit	χ^2	N_{data}	χ^2/N_{dof}	Q_{cut}	W_{cut}
nCTEQ15	587	740	0.81	2.0	3.5
nCTEQ15*	2664	1564	1.70	1.3	1.7
BASE	1525	1564	0.99		
HT	1482	1564	0.96		
DEUT	1331	1564	0.85		
nCTEQ15HIX	1291	1564	0.83		

Reference

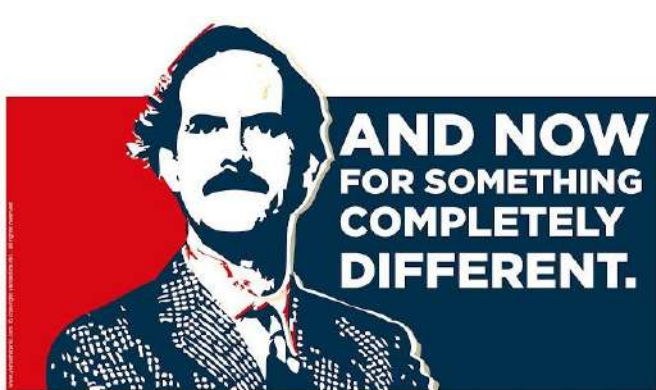
Higher Twist ~3%

Deuteron ~14%

Combined ~16%

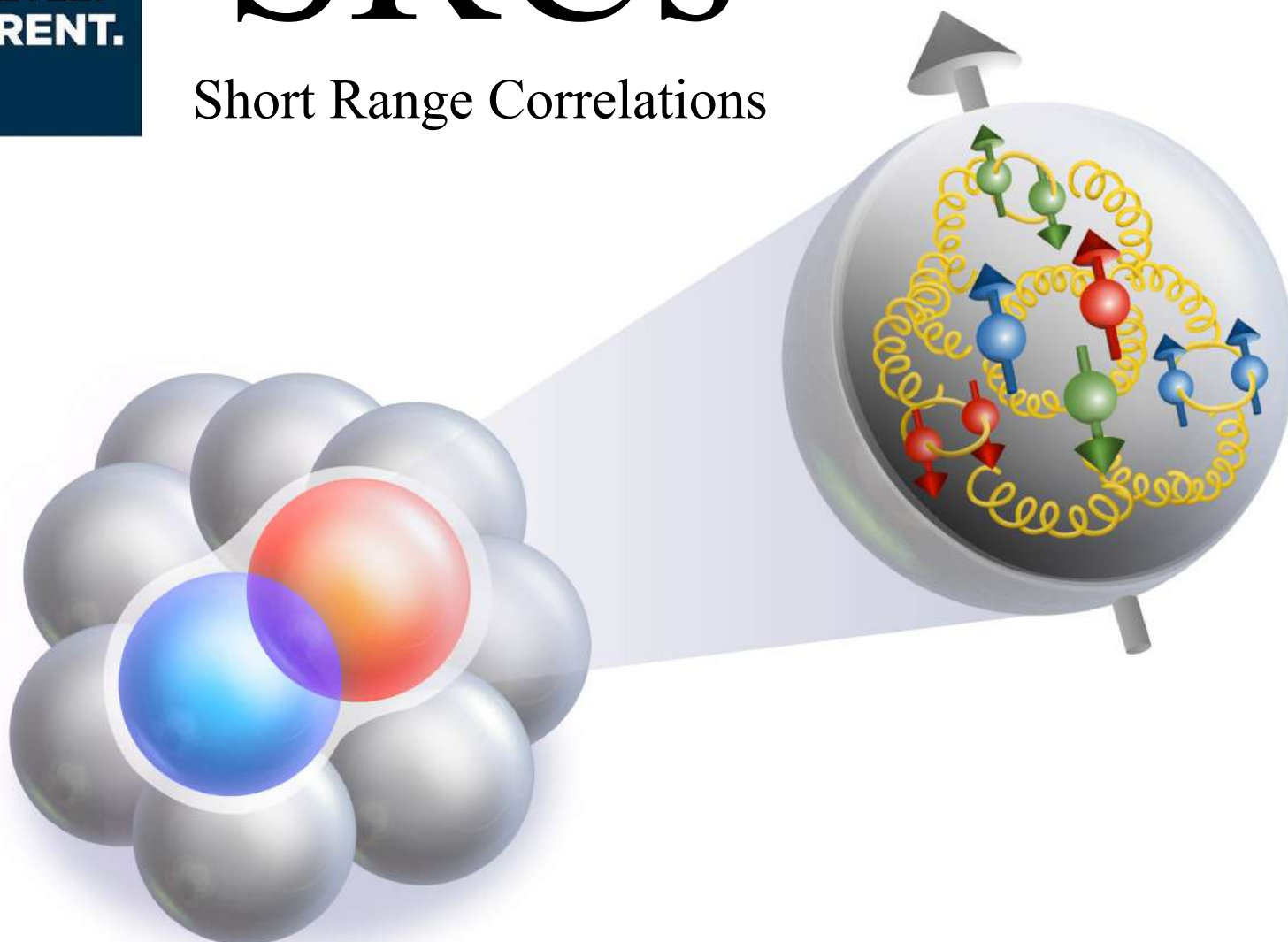
We can extend our kinematic reach in $\{x, Q^2\}$

what about mid x region



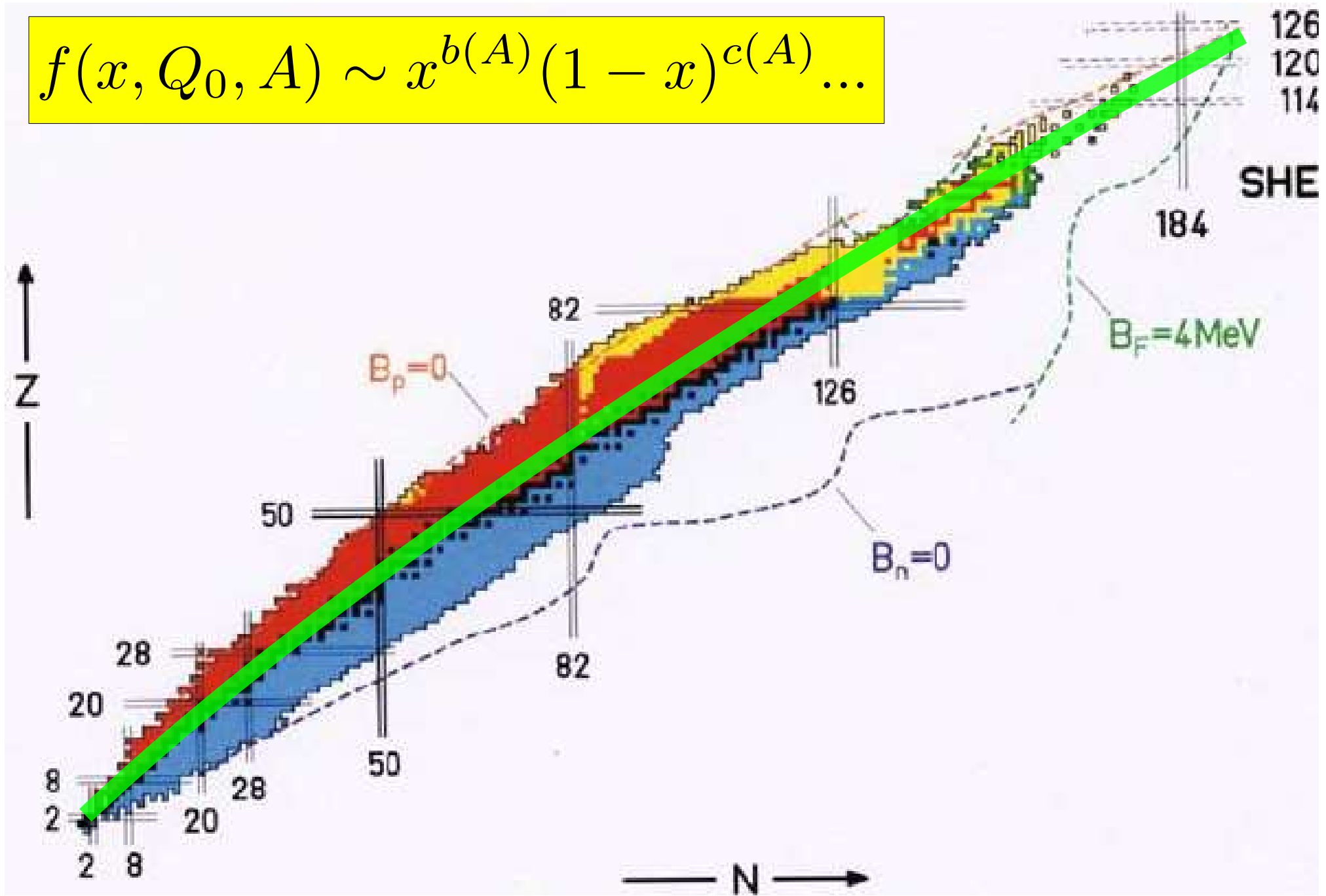
SRCs

Short Range Correlations

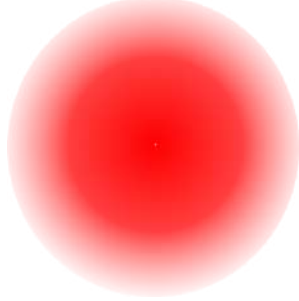


Connecting nuclear and partonic properties

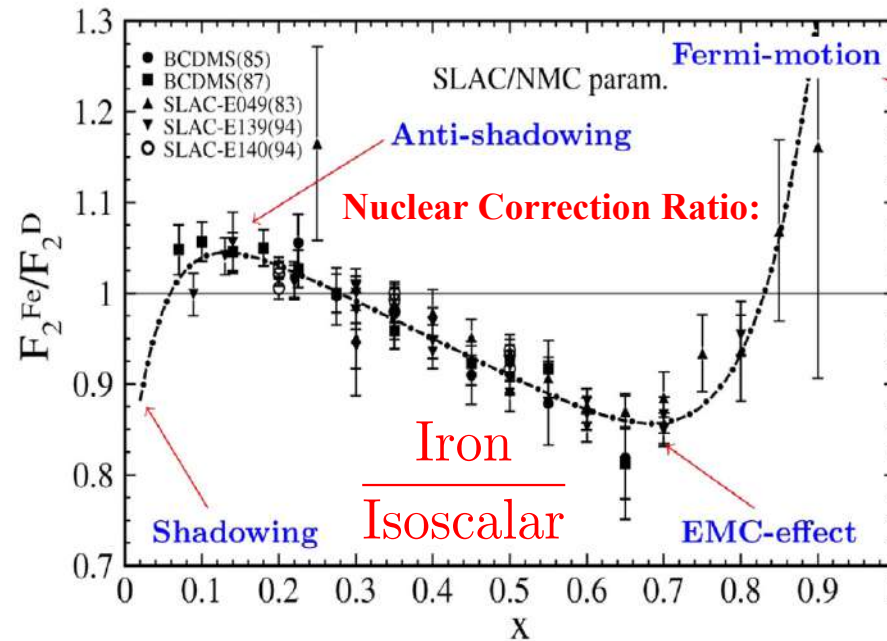
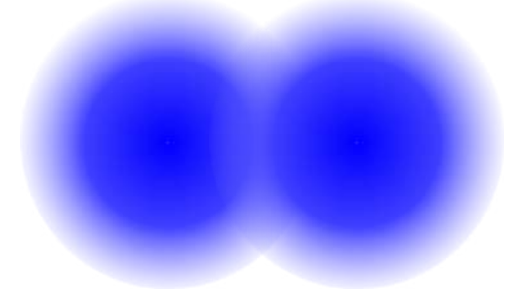
$$f(x, Q_0, A) \sim x^{b(A)} (1 - x)^{c(A)} \dots$$



nucleon



nucleon - nucleon



$f^p(x, Q_0)$

FREE PROTON

SRC PAIR

Universal
A-Independent

$f^{SRC}(x, Q_0)$

Linear Combination
of 2 functions

$$f^A(x, Q_0) = (1 - c_A) f^p(x, Q_0) + (c_A) f^{SRC}(x, Q_0)$$

Very different from standard parm. (e.g., nCTEQ)

Question: do C_A coefficients display any patterns???

Universal
A-Independent

Is the fit reasonable???

Improved fit compared to traditional approach

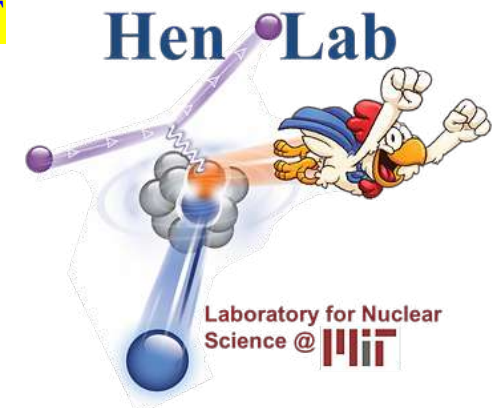
χ^2/N_{data}	DIS	DY	W/Z	JLab	χ^2_{tot}	$\frac{\chi^2_{\text{tot}}}{N_{\text{DOF}}}$
traditional	0.85	0.97	0.88	0.72	1408	0.85
baseSRC	0.84	0.75	1.11	0.41	1300	0.80
pnSRC	0.85	0.84	1.14	0.49	1350	0.82
N_{data}	1136	92	120	336	1684	

Standard
Free p & n
Link p & n

Fully accounts for all DOF

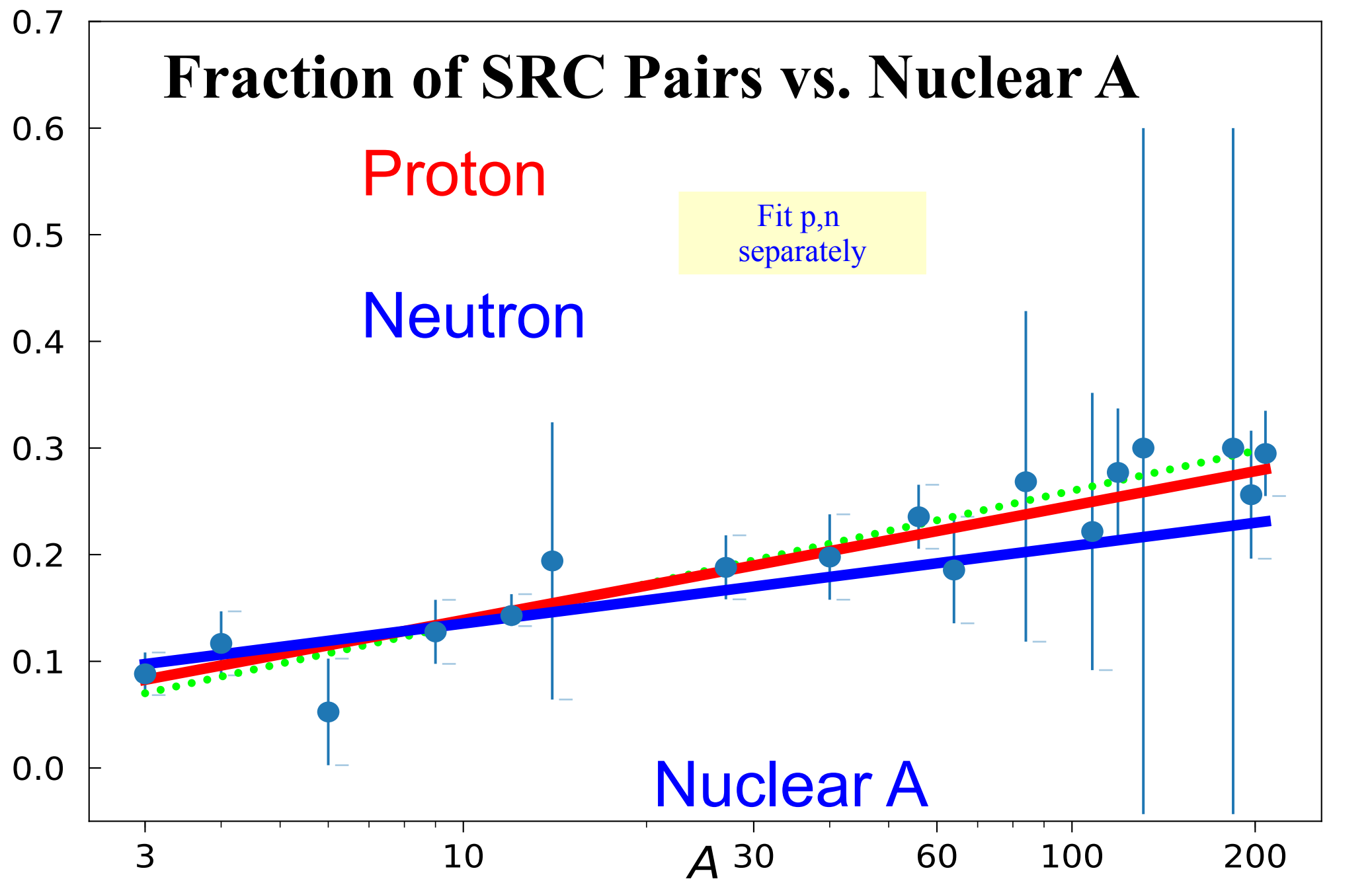
Evidence for Modified Quark-Gluon Distributions in Nuclei by Correlated Nucleon Pairs

A.W. Denniston ^{1,*} T. Ježo ^{2,†} A. Kusina ³ N. Derakhshanian ³ P. Duwentäster ^{2,4,5}
O. Hen ¹ C. Keppel ⁶ M. Klasen ^{2,7} K. Kovařík ² J.G. Morfin ⁸ K.F. Muzakka ^{2,9}
F.I. Olness ¹⁰ E. Piasetzky ¹¹ P. Risse ² R. Ruiz ³ I. Schienbein ¹² and J.Y. Yu. ¹²



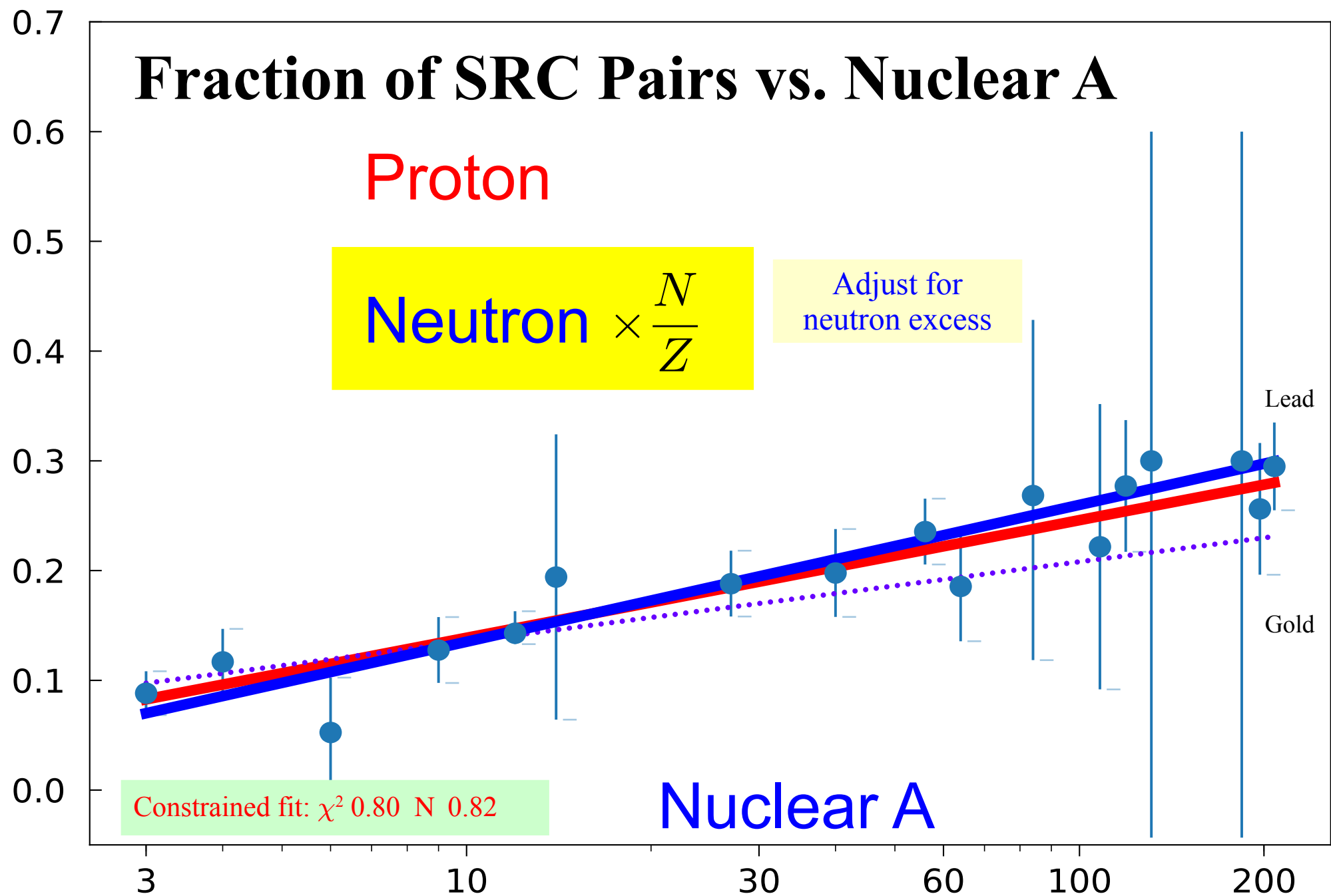
ArXiv:2312.16293

Fraction of SRC Pairs vs. Nuclear A



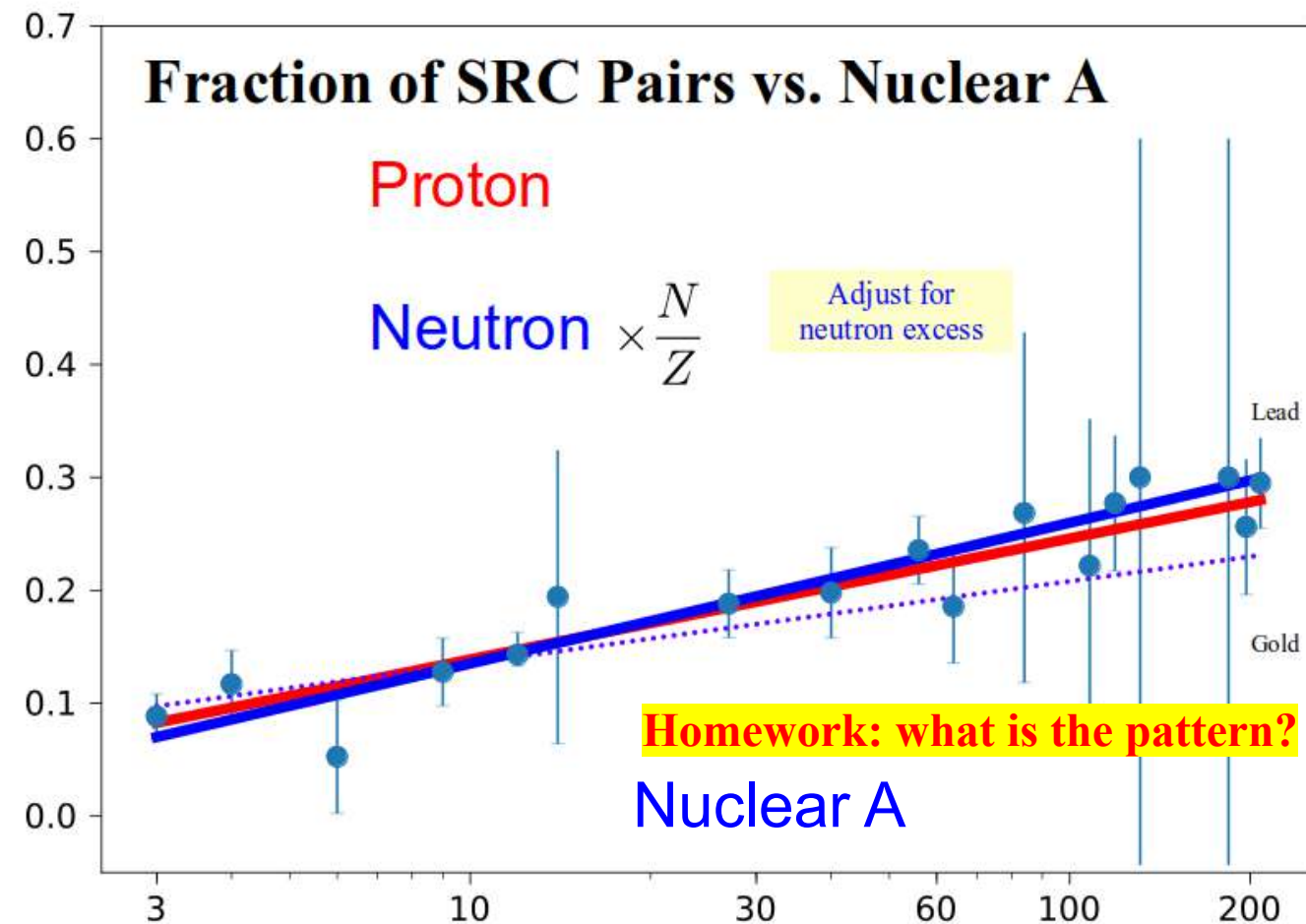
Nuclear A	2	3	4	6	9	12	14	27	40	56	64	84	108	119	131	184	197	208
# data	275	125	66	15	49	196	101	73	92	134	61	84	7	152	4	37	50	163

P, H2, HE3, HE4, LI6, LI7, BE9, C12, N14, AL27, CA40, FE56, CU64, KR84, AG108, SN119, XE131, W184, AU197, PB208



Nuclear A	2	3	4	6	9	12	14	27	40	56	64	84	108	119	131	184	197	208
# data	275	125	66	15	49	196	101	73	92	134	61	84	7	152	4	37	50	163

P, H2, HE3, HE4, LI6, LI7, BE9, C12, N14, AL27, CA40, FE56, CU64, KR84, AG108, SN119, XE131, W184, AU197, PB208



Gold $^{197}_{79}\text{Au}$

$$C_p = 0.256$$

$$C_n = 0.177$$

$$A = 197$$

$$Z = 79$$

$$N = 118$$

$$C_p \times Z = 20.2$$

$$C_n \times N = 20.9$$

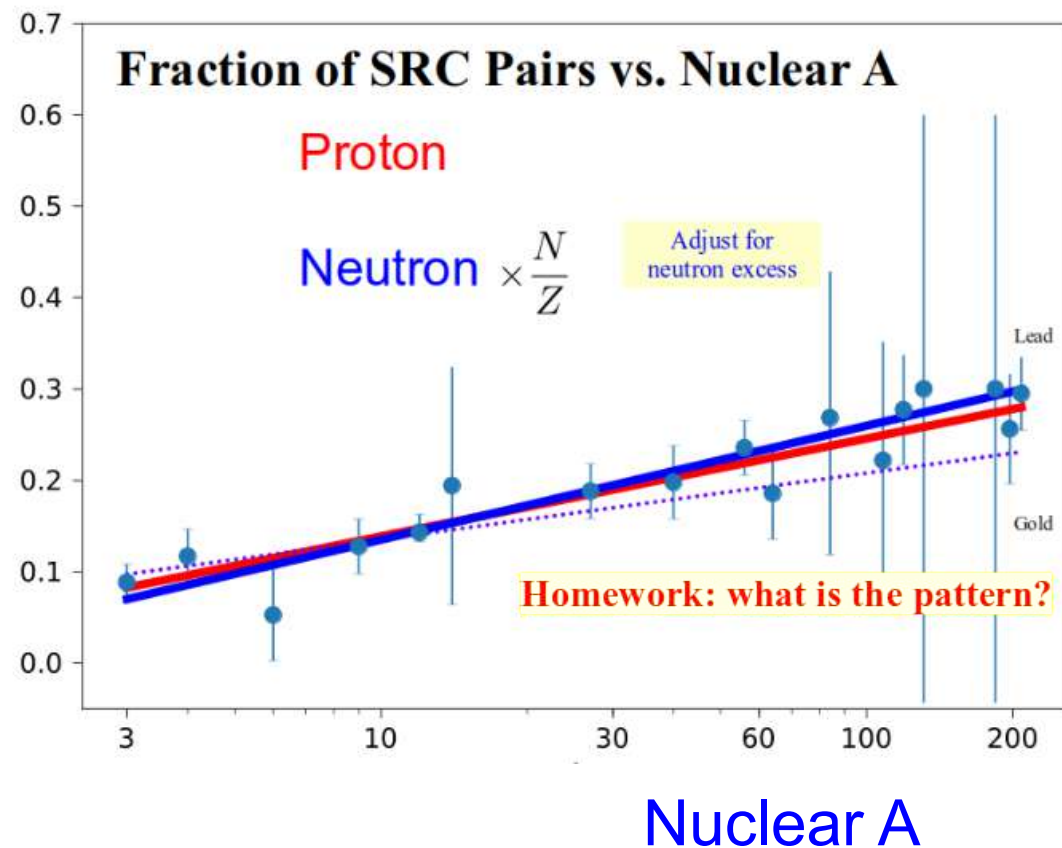
The fit suggests equal # of protons & neutrons participate

Consistent with hypothesis that SRCs are (pn) pairs

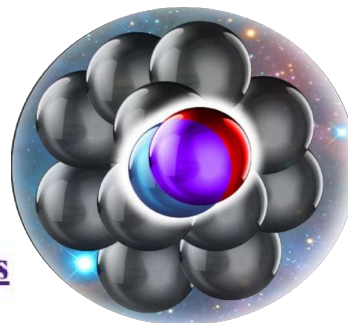
Nuclear A	2	3	4	6	9	12	14	27	40	56	64	84	108	119	131	184	197	208
# data	275	125	66	15	49	196	101	73	92	134	61	84	7	152	4	37	50	163

Nature is trying to tell us something

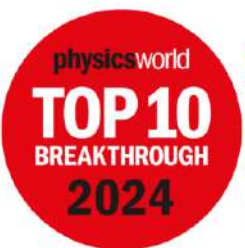
38



- ➔ Simple Nearest-Neighbor (SRC) inspired form yields remarkably good fit
- ➔ Comparable/better than traditional approach
- ➔ Coefficients scale with $\ln(A)$
- ➔ Separate p,n fits are consistent with (pn) SRC pairs



Relate nuclear to particle properties



Physics World 2024:
Top 10 Breakthroughs of the Year in Physics

Press Release: "Two distinct descriptions of nuclei unified for the first time"

This nCTEQ project partnered SMU with JLab, MIT, and Muenster, to produce the new analysis published in [Physical Review Letters](#).

This parameter form connects to new concepts

Current Tools

xFitter



xFitter Collaboration Meeting
February 2020, DESY

Sample data files:

LHC: ATLAS, CMS, LHCb

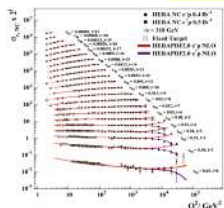
Tevatron: CDF, D0

HERA: H1, ZEUS, Combined

Fixed Target: ...

User Supplied: ...

Experimental Data



Data: HERA, Tevatron, LHC, fixed target experiments

Processes:

Inclusive DIS, Jets, Drell-Yan, Diffraction, Top production W and Z production

Theory Calculations

HQ Schemes: MSTW, NNPDF, ABM, ACOT

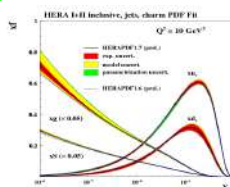
Jets, W, Z: FastNLO, ApplGrid

Top: Hathor

Evolution: QCDNUM, APFEL, k_T

Other: NNPDF reweighting
TMDs, Dipole Model, ...

xFitter



Parton Distribution Functions:
PDF, Updf, TMD

$\alpha_s(M_Z)$, m_c, m_b, m_t ...

Theoretical Cross Sections

Comparisons to other PDFs (LHAPDF)



extensions include nuclear PDFs

Features & Recent Updates:

NNLO DGLAP

Photon PDF & **QED**

Pole & $\overline{\text{MS}}$ masses

Profiling and Re-Weighting

BFKL interface

Heavy Quark Variable Threshold Improvements in χ^2 and correlations

TMD PDFs (uPDFs)

... and many other

xFitter 2.2.0
Future Freeze

New Tools

PDFSense
&
... borrowing from AI

Artificial Intelligence Tools: **Projector Tool** of Google TensorFlow

Embedding Projector

DATA



Points: 4021 | Dimension: 56

5 tensors found

Word2Vec 10K

Label by

Type

Color by

Type



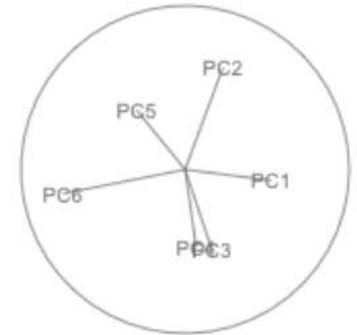
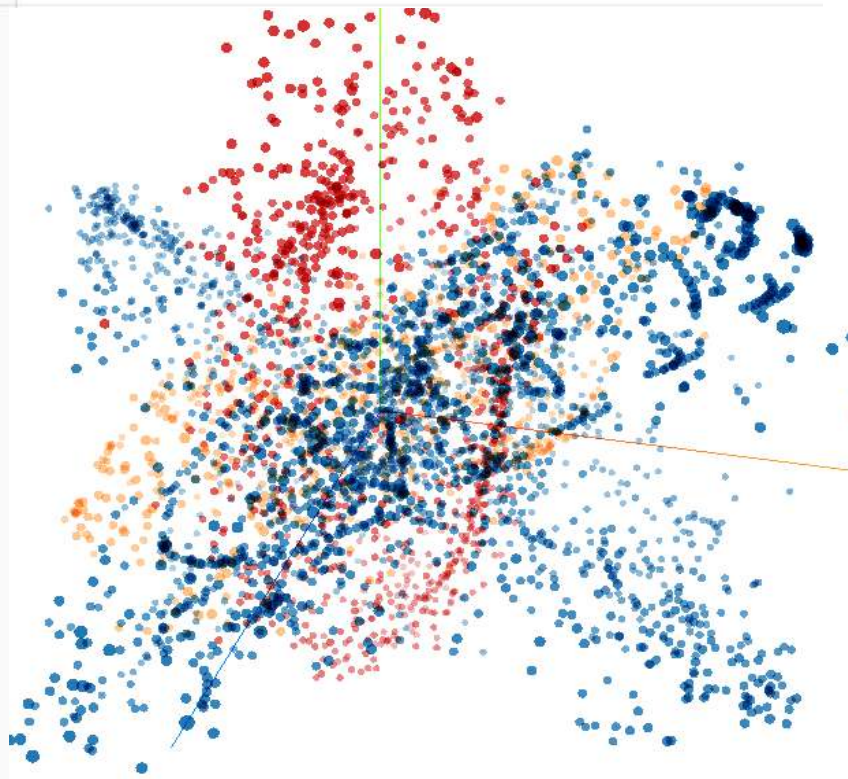
Sphereize data ?

Load data

Publish

Checkpoint: residual_all_norm_1_RawData.tsv

Metadata: metadata_RawData.tsv

<https://metapdf.hepforge.org/PDFSense/>

$$r_i(\vec{a}) = \frac{1}{s_i} (T_i(\vec{a}) - D_{i,sh}(\vec{a}))$$

Mapping the sensitivity of hadronic experiments to nucleon structure

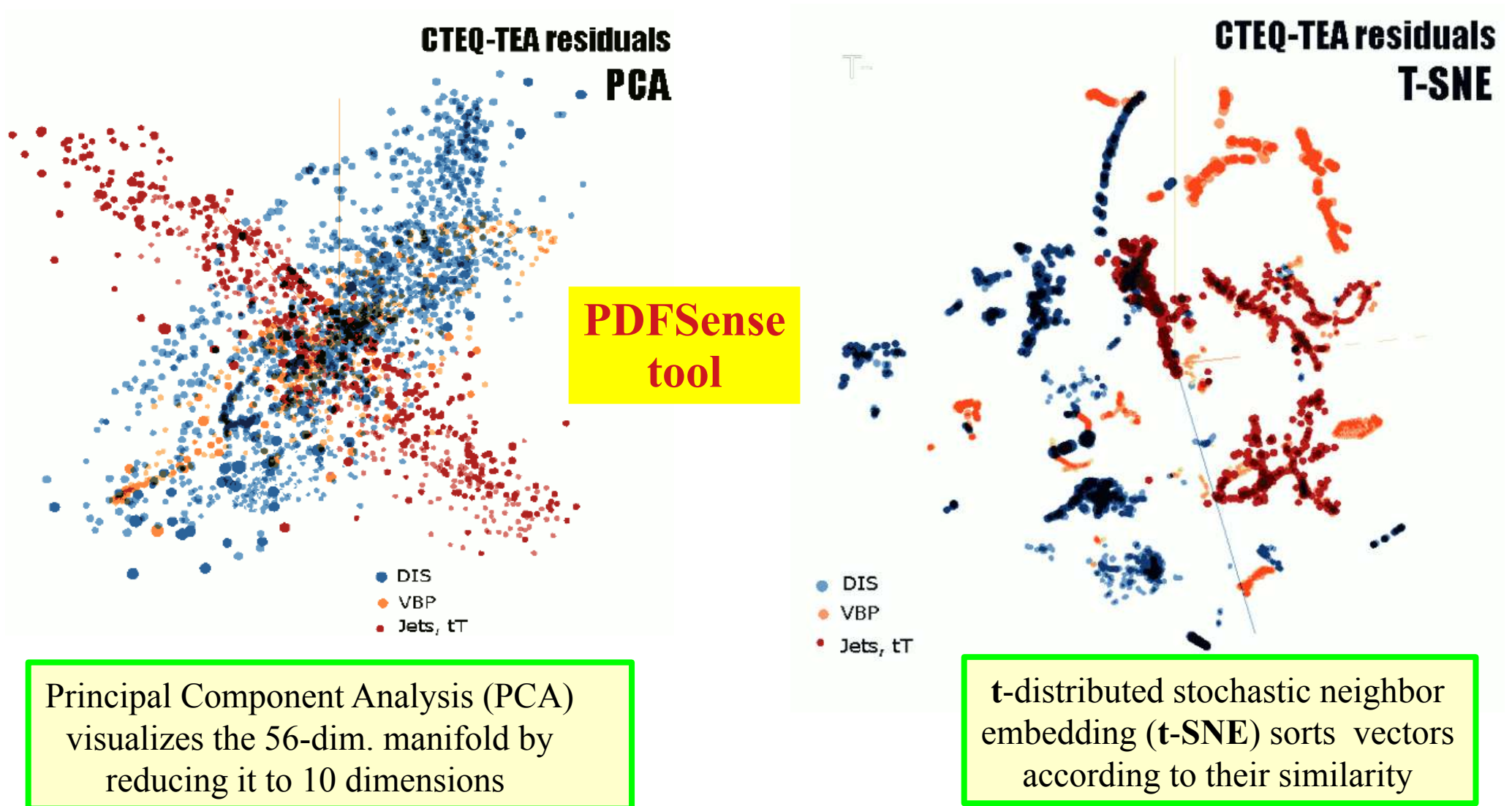
B.T. Wang, T.J. Hobbs, S. Doyle, J. Gao, T.J. Hou, P. Nadolsky, F. Olness

<https://arxiv.org/abs/1803.02777> Phys. Rev. D 98, 094030 (2018)

Dynamical projections for the visualization of PDFSense data

Dianne Cook, Ursula Laa, German Valencia arXiv:1806.09742

<https://metapdf.hepforge.org/PDFSense/>



$$r_i(\vec{a}) = \frac{1}{s_i} (T_i(\vec{a}) - D_{i,sh}(\vec{a}))$$

Mapping the sensitivity of hadronic experiments to nucleon structure
 B.T. Wang, T.J. Hobbs, S. Doyle, J. Gao, T.J. Hou, P. Nadolsky, F. Olness
<https://arxiv.org/abs/1803.02777> Phys. Rev. D 98, 094030 (2018)

<http://projector.tensorflow.org>

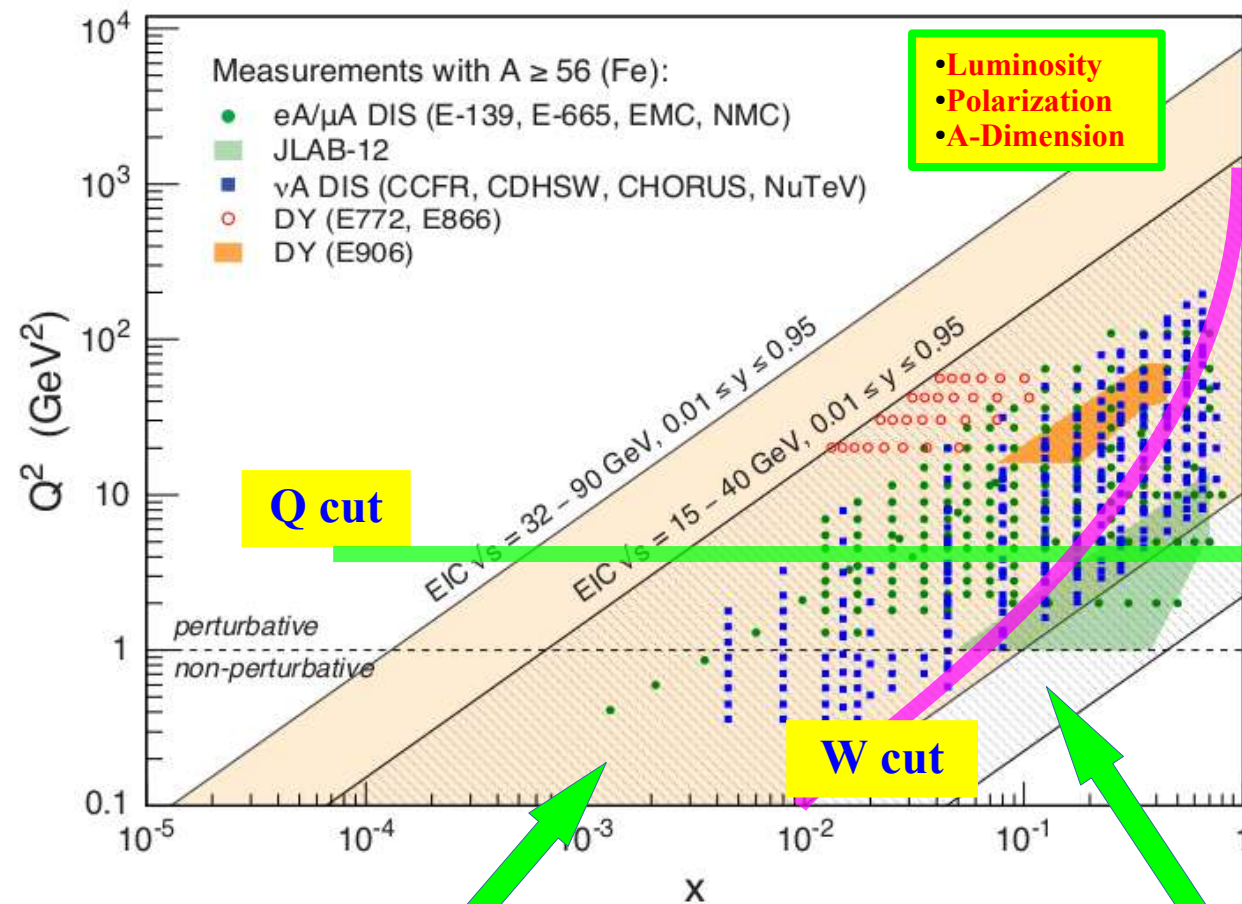
CONCLUSIONS

The most exciting phrase to hear in science,
the one that heralds new discoveries, is not “Eureka!” (*I found it!*)
but “That’s funny ...”

— Isaac Asimov

Chance favors the prepared mind

Louis Pasteur



High- x :

Nuclear PDFs: $x > 1$ allowed;
impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Iso}}$ in Fermi region

Target Mass Corrections

pick up M^2/Q^2 higher twist
Deuteron Corrections

impacts $F_2^{\text{Nuc}}/F_2^{\text{Deuteron}}$ ratio

Low- x :

Shadowing
Recombination
Resummation
BFKL
Saturation

Low- Q^2 :

Non-Perturbative interface
collective effects
Target Mass Corrections
pick up M^2/Q^2 higher twist
 F_L at low Q^2 access to $g(x)$
Run at multiple energies

