

The Gamma-Ray Spectrum Resulting from Capture of Negative π -Mesons in Hydrogen and Deuterium

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π^- mesons produced in an internal wolfram target bombarded by 330-Mev protons in the 184-inch cyclotron are absorbed in a high pressure hydrogen target. The resulting gamma-ray spectrum is analyzed outside the shielding of the cyclotron by means of a 30-channel electron-positron pair spectrometer. The principal results are as follows. (1) The gamma-rays result from two competing reactions: $\pi^- + p \rightarrow n + \gamma$ and $\pi^- + p \rightarrow n + \pi^0$; $\pi^0 \rightarrow 2\gamma$. (2) The ratio between the π^0 yield to the single gamma-ray yield is $= 0.94 \pm 0.20$. (3) The mass difference between the π^- meson and the π^0 meson is given by 10.6 ± 2.0 electron masses. (4) The π^- mass is 275.2 ± 2.5 electron masses. The large mass difference between π^- and π^0 precludes the conclusion that the unexpectedly small π^0 to γ ratio is due to the small amount of momentum space available for π^0 emission. It rather indicates that π^0 emission is slowed down by the nature of the coupling of the π^0 field to the nucleons. The experiment has been repeated by substituting D_2 for H_2 in the vessel. The result is that the reaction $\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n$ and $\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \gamma$ compete in the ratio 2 : 1. The reaction $\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \pi^0$ is absent.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE classic experiments of Conversi, *et al.*¹ on the absorption of negative μ -mesons in matter gave the first information on the fact that the coupling of μ -mesons with nuclei is weak. On the other hand, experiments on the absorption of π^- mesons^{2,3} have confirmed the fact that π -mesons are strongly coupled and that they have integral spin. This is evidenced by the fact that the process

$$\pi^- + p \rightarrow n^* \quad (1)$$

taking place within a nucleus could not give rise to the large nuclear stars observed if an additional light particle of half-integral spin had to be emitted, as in the absorption of μ^- mesons. Other than confirming this qualitative fact, the absorption of slow π^- mesons in matter has led to no quantitative information as to the nature of the coupling of π -mesons to nuclei, since the dominant time in the capture process is the slow-down time by ionization; once a π^- meson has arrived in the K shell of an atom, absorption is presumed to take place in about 10^{-14} sec.

The case of π^- absorption in hydrogen is a singular one since clearly process (1) is forbidden by the conservation laws in the case of a free proton. Absorption of a π^- meson in hydrogen must thus lead to the emission of one or more additional particles. Excluding processes involving several spin $\frac{1}{2}$ particles which are clearly too slow to compete, the possible processes which might result are:

$$\pi^- + p \rightarrow n + \gamma, \quad (2)$$

$$\pi^- + p \rightarrow n + 2\gamma, \quad (3)$$

$$\pi^- + p \rightarrow n + \pi^0. \quad (4)$$

Prior to this work the possibility for process (4) rested,

of course, on the possibility that the π^- might be sufficiently heavier than the π^0 to make the process energetically possible. Evidence from direct gamma-ray production in a cyclotron target bombarded by 350-Mev protons⁴ points to the existence of a π^0 of mass of the order of the π^- mass, but the center of the gamma-ray spectrum cannot be localized with sufficient accuracy to decide the sign of the mass difference. Cosmic-ray evidence⁵⁻⁸ and particularly the observations of gamma-gamma coincidences observed from targets bombarded in the x-ray beam of the Berkeley synchrotron⁹ have shown conclusively that a π^0 exists and that it disintegrates into two gamma-rays and thus cannot have spin one. Recently, Carlson, Cooper, and King¹⁰ have succeeded in analyzing positron-electron pairs observed in nuclear emulsions exposed at 70,000 ft in terms of neutral mesons. They show that the observed energy spectrum of such pairs is compatible with their origin from gamma-rays from a π^0 meson of mass 295 ± 20 electron masses, where only the statistical error is included in the mass estimate. Carlson, Cooper, and King also deduce the mean life, τ , of the π^0 meson to be $\tau < 5 \times 10^{-14}$ sec.

Preliminary reports of the present experiment¹¹ have indicated qualitatively that both processes (2) and (4) exist. However, no accurate mass determination of the π^0 was possible and thus no very significant branching ratio between the processes could be inferred.

The evidence presented here excludes any appreciable competition from process (3). The reason is firstly a

⁴ Bjorklund, Crandall, Moyer, and York, Phys. Rev. **77**, 213 (1950).

⁵ W. Fretter, Phys. Rev. **73**, 41 (1948); Phys. Rev. **76**, 213 (1949).

⁶ C. Y. Chao, Phys. Rev. **75**, 581 (1949).

⁷ Gregory, Rossi, and Tinlot, Phys. Rev. **77**, 299 (1949).

⁸ Kaplon, Peters, and Bradt, Phys. Rev. **76**, 1735 (1949).

⁹ Steinberger, Panofsky, and Steller, Phys. Rev. **78**, 802 (1950).

¹⁰ Carlson, Cooper, and King, Phil. Mag. **41**, 701 (1950).

¹¹ W. K. H. Panofsky, Post Deadline Paper, New York Meeting A.P.S., 1950; Panofsky, Aamodt, and York, Phys. Rev. **78**, 825 (1950).

* This work was done under the auspices of the AEC.

¹ Conversi, Pancini, and Piccioni, Phys. Rev. **68**, 232 (1945).

² Manon, Muirhead, and Rachat, Phil. Mag. **41**, 583 (1950).

³ F. Adelman and S. Jones, Science **111**, 226 (1950); W. Cheston and L. Goldfarb, Phys. Rev. **78**, 320A (1950).

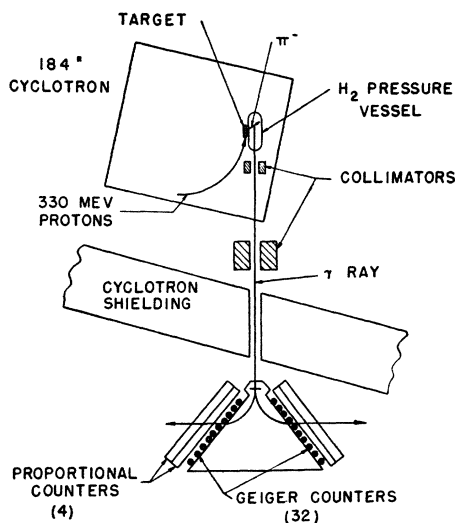


FIG. 1. Geometrical arrangement of π^- capture experiment. π^- mesons produced in a primary wolfram target of the 184-inch cyclotron are captured in the H_2 pressure vessel. The resultant gamma-rays are collimated and leave the cyclotron shielding through a hole tapering from 2 in. to 3 in. in diameter. The gamma-rays are then analyzed by a pair spectrometer.

theoretical one. It appears to be difficult to construct a selection rule which would make double gamma-emission compete effectively with single gamma-emission. Secondly, the double peaked energy distribution (see Fig. 12) of the emitted radiation practically excludes a two-gamma-process.

The details of the slowdown process of π^- in hydrogen have been discussed in considerable detail by Wightman.¹² The significant sequence of the process is as follows. (1) Slowdown of the fast meson by the ordinary stopping power mechanism ($\sim 10^{-10}$ sec). (2) Slowdown by collisions with orbital electrons of velocities comparable with that of the meson ($\sim 10^{-12}$ sec). (3) Capture of the mesons in an outer orbit leading to an excited $\pi^- - H^+$ system.¹³ (4) Reduction of energy of the neutral $\pi^- - H^+$ system to the lowest quantum state. This latter process principally is not radiative but is due to collisions of the neutral system with hydrogen molecules which leads by various mechanisms to the emission of an Auger electron ($\sim 10^{-10} - 10^{-9}$ sec). In liquid or high pressure hydrogen the over-all time to enter the K shell is thus sufficiently short to compete effectively with the $\pi^- - \mu$ decay time.¹⁴ This is true, however, only if the H_2 density is sufficient. This point has been verified experimentally (see Sec. VII).

Capture in flight¹⁵ corresponds to a lifetime of the order of 10^{-4} to 10^{-5} sec, depending on assumptions as to the interaction.

¹² A. S. Wightman, thesis, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey (June, 1949), and Phys. Rev. **77**, 521 (1950).

¹³ E. Fermi and E. Teller, Phys. Rev. **72**, 399 (1947).

¹⁴ J. R. Richardson, Phys. Rev. **74**, 1720 (1948); E. A. Martinelli and W. K. H. Panofsky, Phys. Rev. **77**, 465 (1950); Chamberlain, Mozley, Steinberger, and Wiegand, Phys. Rev. **79**, 394 (1950); M. Jakobsen, private communication.

¹⁵ R. Marshak and A. S. Wightman, Phys. Rev. **76**, 114 (1949).

We can therefore conclude that at densities approximating that of liquid hydrogen all but of the order of 10^{-3} of the secondary radiations resulting from the capture of π^- in H_2 result either from absorption of the π^- meson from an inner shell or from $\pi^- - \mu$ -decay; the $\pi^- - \mu$ -decay branching is small.

II. GEOMETRICAL ARRANGEMENT; THE HYDROGEN SYSTEM

The geometrical layout of the experiment is shown in Fig. 1. The 330-Mev protons circulating in the internal beam of the 184-inch cyclotron strike a wolfram target $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep (parallel to the beam) and 0.040 in. thick (transverse to the beam). Wolfram was chosen, since the π^- cross section measurements of Weissbluth¹⁶ showed that a heavy element favors π^- production. Also, auxiliary measurements on beam penetration and "scattering out" showed that a high density target was desirable here from the point of view of total meson yield. Finally, as discussed later, the background in this experiment is principally produced by high energy protons elastically scattered and striking the hydrogen vessel. At this energy scattering at the angles in question is principally diffraction scattering; heavy elements produce a smaller diffraction angle.

The π^- mesons enter the high pressure hydrogen through the walls of the pressure vessel shown in Fig. 2. To produce maximum yield the wall thickness is limited in order that the mesons absorbed in the hydrogen are those produced at a sufficiently low energy to correspond to a rising portion of the meson yield curve as a function of meson energy. Such considerations limit the wall thickness to ~ 4 g/cm². However, an H_2 density near that of the liquid phase is desirable by the capture considerations already given. The use of liquid H_2 was

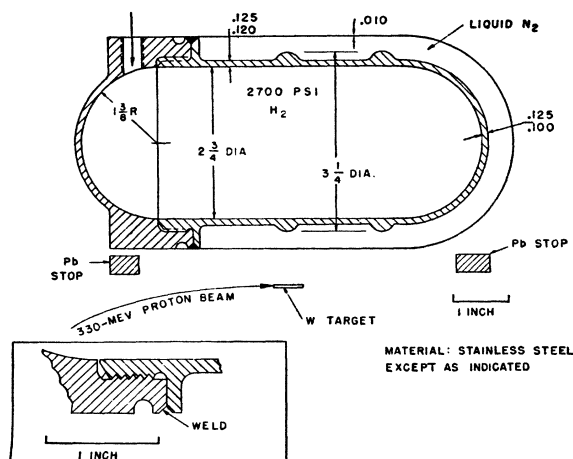


FIG. 2. High pressure vessel used for absorption of H_2 and D_2 . The vessel is constructed of stainless steel machined as indicated. The load is carried by threads with the weld serving as a seal only. The outer stainless steel liquid N_2 jacket (0.010 in. thick) is soft soldered to the thick portion of the main vessel.

¹⁶ M. Weissbluth, Phys. Rev. **78**, 86A (1950).

not advisable here owing to the difficulty of cooling a long horizontal filling tube required by the geometry of the cyclotron. The vessel shown in Fig. 2 operates at a factor of safety of about 2.5 when maintained at 2700 psi and at liquid N_2 temperature. The specific gravity¹⁷ under these conditions is 0.046. The aforementioned factor of safety makes use of the appreciable increase in strength of stainless steel at low temperature.¹⁸ The outer jacket is fed by an external liquid N_2 Dewar vessel. The pressure vessel is filled by an external oil piston pressure pump^{18a} fed by commercial H_2 , dried and purified in a liquid N_2 trap. A flow diagram of the arrangement is shown in Fig. 3. A similar system is used for deuterium with certain modifications to permit recovery.

III. THE PAIR SPECTROMETER

Since the expected pair spectra from processes (2) and (4) exhibit discontinuities, satisfactory analysis and also good signal-to-background ratio requires a spectrometer with a large number of channels. Since the counting rates in this experiment are limited entirely by absolute available intensity and not by errors introduced by accidental coincidences, etc., Geiger counters as used by Lawson¹⁹ seem to offer the best solution to the multiple channel problem. The geometrical layout of the pair spectrometer is shown in Fig. 4. The magnet has a useful gap of 3.5 in. and a maximum field of 14,000 gauss although for this experiment only fields of the order of 5000 to 10,000 gauss were used. The pole piece is in the shape of a 90° triangle, the hypotenuse of the triangle being 30 in. The pole is widened near the converter position to improve the uniformity of the field near the converter; field uniformity is not as

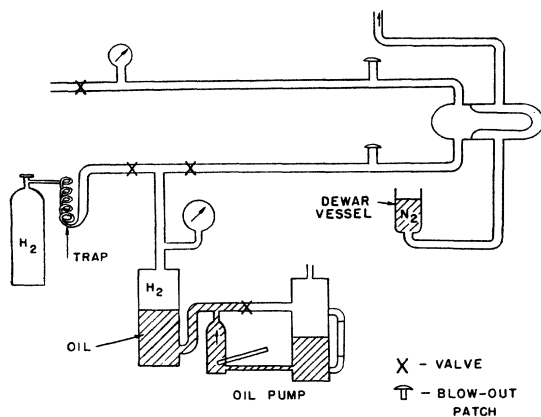


FIG. 3. Flow diagram of H_2 pressure system. H_2 , purified in a liquid N_2 trap, is admitted into the pressure chamber above the pump and at tank pressure. The pressure is then raised by displacing the H_2 in the pressure chamber with oil pumped as shown.

¹⁷ Johnston, Berman, Rubin, Rifkin, Swanson, and Corak, MDDC-850 (to be published).

¹⁸ E. E. Thum, *The Book of Stainless Steels* (American Society for Metals, Cleveland, 1935), second edition, p. 376.

^{18a} Manufactured by the American Instrument Company, Superpressure Division, Silver Spring, Maryland.

¹⁹ J. L. Lawson, Phys. Rev. **75**, 433 (1949).

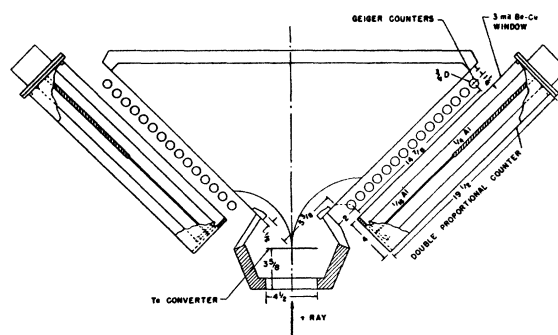


FIG. 4. Outline diagram of pair spectrometer. The converter, Geiger counter array, and the proportional counters are shown. Note the geometry of the pole piece to give a uniform field in the area of the converter.

essential near the counters as it is near the converter. There is no specific advantage to the choice of 90° for the triangle apex angle; the angle was defined principally by arguments of size and weight. A 90° apex angle (and hence a 90° deflection angle!) provides for first-order horizontal focusing for particles of the same energy originating in different parts of the converter; this is, however, not an essential consideration if one is interested only in the sum of the energy of the two pair fragments.

The resolving power of a pair spectrometer of this type is essentially defined by three factors: (1) channel width; (2) multiple scattering in the converter; and (3) radiation straggling of the pair members. A feature of the triangular design is the fact that the energy width due to multiple scattering is constant. The converter thickness has been chosen such that the combination of the latter two widths approximately matches the first. This condition can only be approximately achieved, since the ratio of the radiation error to the scattering error varies as the pair energy. The choice of converter material is not critical, since pair conversion efficiency, multiple scattering, and radiation straggling depend only on the number of radiation lengths of converter used. Tantalum converters were used in this experiment. The choice of triangular shape of magnet and the analysis of the resolution of such a magnet are due to Professor Edwin McMillan. The initial design of the pair spectrometer magnet was carried out by Herbert F. York and the mechanical engineering design is due to Robert Meuser; the authors are greatly indebted to them for their contributions.

Because of the high singles rates (approximately 3 counts/sec) of the Geiger counters (Victoreen type 1B85) and the low true pair rate (approximately 30 c/hr), additional selection of events is necessary. This is provided by 4 large proportional counters (Fig. 4) backing up the counter arrangements. A pair event is selected by a quadruple coincidence count in the proportional counters; this quadruple coincidence opens a gate which passes the amplified Geiger pulses into a recorder. This recorder consists of 30 pens mark-

ing voltage-sensitive paper on a rotating drum. A typical event thus appears as two dots in the appropriate channels. The arrangement of the electronic components is shown in Fig. 5. The counting rate is sufficiently slow to permit this mechanical method of recording. The proportional counter gate width is 1.5 μ sec; accidental counts are entirely negligible; the counting rate loss due to Geiger counter dead time is estimated at less than 2 percent.

The magnet is fed by a motor generator set, electronically regulated; the magnetic field has been calibrated against the magnetic moment of the proton; during runs the fields are monitored by current readings with a shunt and potentiometer or with a proton moment apparatus if the accuracy is needed.

The sensitivity of a pair spectrometer is not constant over the energy range covered by the instrument. This is due to (a) the variability of number of channels available to record the pair fragments of a given total energy, (b) the variation of pair production cross

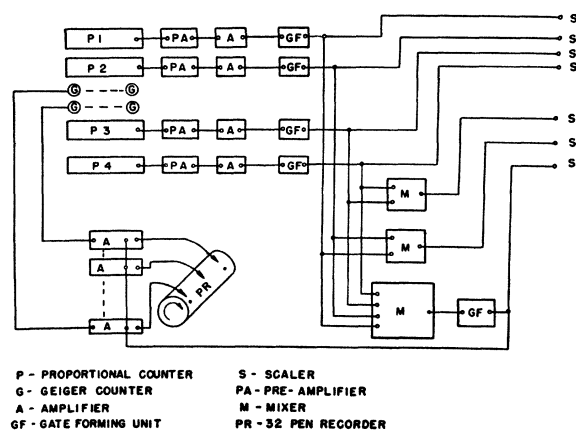


FIG. 5. Block diagram of electronic components.

section with energy, and (c) the variability of loss by scattering. It can be shown easily that (c) can be neglected in this geometry. The correction curve of the instrument due to causes (a) and (b) is given in Fig. 6.

IV. OPERATION OF RUNS

Before every run the spectrometer is checked by using gamma-rays directly produced in the cyclotron target.⁴ The yield of the direct gamma-rays is sufficient to permit the plateaus of all counters to be checked with good statistics. Also, all Geiger channels are checked for singles rates by removing the gate formed by the proportional counters. The target and pressure vessel are then moved so that the primary target is well shielded from the spectrometer and the hydrogen vessel is aligned with the collimators and the spectrometer (Fig. 1).

Readings are made with the pressure vessel either evacuated or pressurized with H_2 or D_2 . If the vacuum runs are to represent the true background it is necessary that no other process (e.g., scattering of protons from

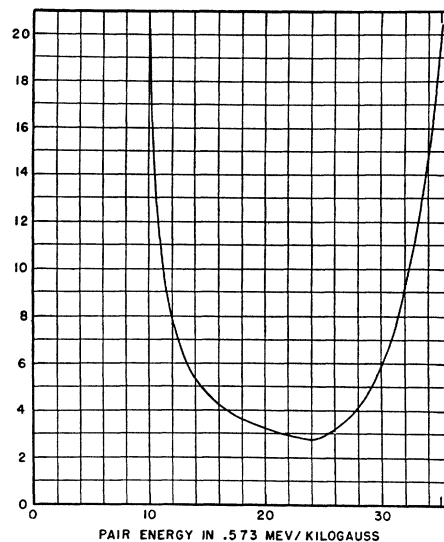


FIG. 6. Multiplication factor to be used to reduce observed counting rates to gamma-ray intensity. This factor arises from (a) variation of pair production cross section with energy and (b) number of available channels into which a given total pair energy can divide.

the target) produce gamma-rays in hydrogen. This assumption receives support from experiments by Crandall, Hildebrand, Moyer, and York,²⁰ indicating that the production cross section for gamma-ray production by bombardment with 345-Mev protons in hydrogen is less than 2 percent of the cross section in carbon. This means that if a sufficient number of primary protons were scattered into the hydrogen to produce gamma-rays of significant intensity, then the background due to gamma-rays hitting the steel vessel would be much higher. It therefore appears to be certain that the gamma-rays depending on the introduction of the H_2 are not produced by fast particle collisions in H_2 . This argument is not as significant in the case of D_2 . As a further link in the qualitative interpretation of the experiment it was shown that no statistically significant gamma-ray counts beyond background were produced by the introduction of He into the pressure vessel. This check was done with relatively poor statistics; a positive helium effect in the form of a broad gamma-ray spectrum of 10 percent total intensity of that observed in H_2 is not excluded by the data.

The background has the general character of the gamma-ray spectra observed by Bjorklund, Crandall, Moyer, and York⁴ at 180° from the target. The background is almost certainly due to protons scattered by the primary target onto the steel jacket of the pressure vessel and other parts of the cyclotron. The background is negligible in the 130-Mev region but is of the same order of intensity as the H-capture gamma-rays in the 70-Mev region.

²⁰ Crandall, Hildebrand, Moyer, and York, private communication.

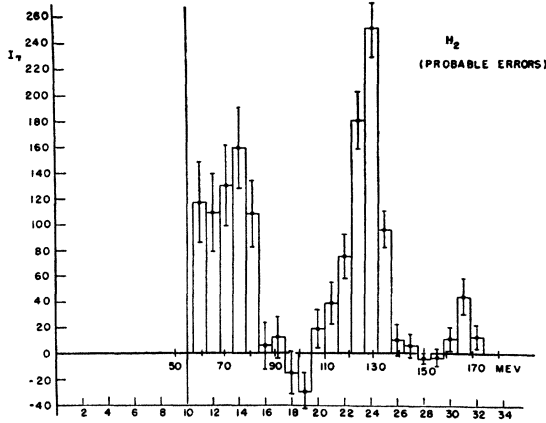


FIG. 7. Pair spectrum of gamma-rays produced by capture of π^- in H_2 . Center of spectrometer set near 130 Mev.

V. GAMMA-RAY SPECTRA FROM HYDROGEN

As can be seen from the spectrometer response curve (Fig. 6) it is not possible to cover the entire spectrum of the spectrometer with good efficiency. Accordingly, different runs were made with the spectrometer set with its central point at (a) single gamma-ray peak, (b) center between the two peaks to permit easy relative area measurements, and (c) π^0 peak.

(a) The High Energy Peak; The π^- Mass

Figure 7 shows the spectrum observed with the spectrometer maximum set near the high energy peak. Note that the " π^0 peak" also appears clearly.

Since the position of the single gamma peak gives a precise measurement of the π^- mass, it is a matter of considerable interest to analyze the observed peak accurately in terms of resolving power of the pair spectrometer. Figure 8 shows plotted individually the resolving power curves due to the three principal causes of finite resolving power. The first cause is the finite channel width. This gives rise to a triangular resolution $R_1(E)$ of base equal to twice the channel width, which is 5.36 Mev. The second cause is the multiple Coulomb scattering in the converter. One can show easily that if $\langle\theta\rangle$ is the root mean square plane projected scattering angle²¹ of an electron of energy of one-half the gamma-energy after having passed through the full converter thickness, then the fractional rms error in gamma-energy is given by

$$\delta = \delta E_\gamma / E_\gamma = (\sqrt{2}\langle\theta\rangle)/3. \quad (5)$$

This gives a resolving power $R_2(E)$ given by

$$R_2(E) = \exp[-(E - E_\gamma)^2 / (2\delta E_\gamma^2)] \quad (6)$$

plotted in Fig. 8b.

The third cause is radiation straggling of the outgoing pair represented by a resolving power curve $R_4(E)$. Let, in the notation used by Heitler,²² $w(y)dy$ be the prob-

ability that the energy of a single electron has decreased to e^{-y} times its initial value after traversing a thickness t . Let $W(p)dp$ be the resultant probability that an outgoing pair fragment has retained a fraction between p and $p+dp$ of its energy of formation. $W(p)$ can be generated by averaging $w(y)$ over the converter thickness. Let $P(E_1, E)dE_1$ be the probability that a pair fragment have an energy between E_1 and E_1+dE_1 for a total pair energy E_γ . It can be shown that the probability $\pi(f)df$ that the resultant pair shall have retained a fraction between f and $f+df$ of its initial energy is

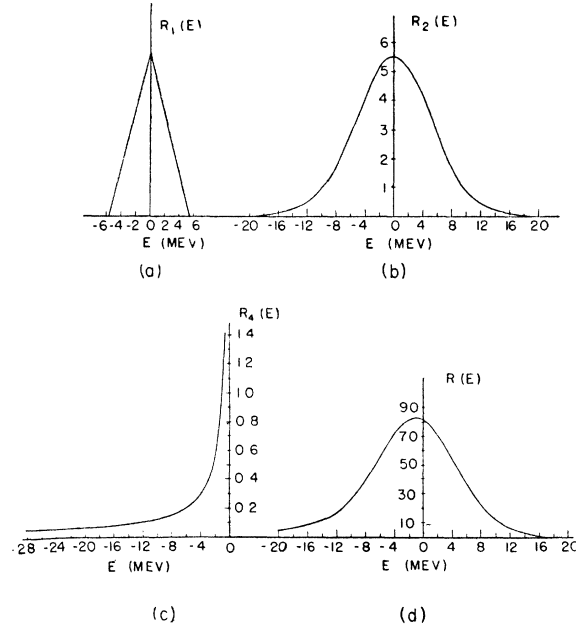


FIG. 8. Curves showing the components of the resolving power curve of the spectrometer. (a) Resolving power due to finite channel width. (b) Resolving power due to multiple scattering of pairs in converter. (c) Resolving power due to radiation straggling of outgoing pair. (d) "Fold" of a, b, and c giving total resolving power.

given by:

$$\pi(f)df = df \int_{E_A}^{E_B} dE_1 \left\{ \int_{1-(E_\gamma/E_1)(1-f)}^1 \left(\frac{E_\gamma}{E_\gamma - E_1} \right) \times W(p)W\left(\frac{E_\gamma f - pE_1}{E_\gamma - E_1}\right) P(E_1, E_\gamma) dp \right\}. \quad (7)$$

Here E_A and E_B are the pair fragment energy limits defined by the spectrometer. This integral has been evaluated using the forms $P(E_1, E_\gamma)dE_1 = dE_1/E_\gamma$ and $W(p) = K/(1-p)^{1-\alpha}$, where α was fitted to the computed radiation curves. The result shows that the resolving power has the approximate form:

$$R_4(E) = 1/(E_\gamma - E)^{1-2\alpha}, \quad E < E_\gamma \\ = 0, \quad E > E_\gamma. \quad (8)$$

²¹ B. Rossi and K. Greisen, Rev. Mod. Phys. **13**, 240 (1941).

²² W. Heitler, *The Quantum Theory of Radiation* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1936), p. 223 ff.

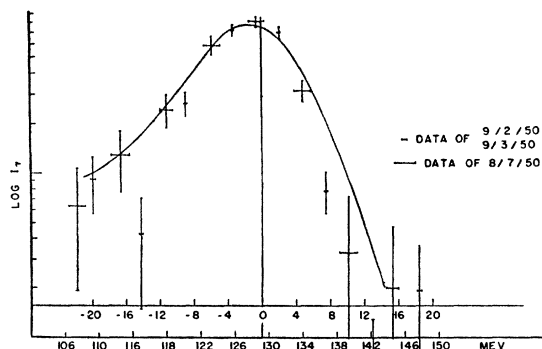


FIG. 9. Pair spectra of gamma-rays from the process $\pi^- + H \rightarrow n + \gamma$ plotted on a logarithmic scale. Plotted (solid line) also is the theoretical resolving power curve adjusted for best fit. The origin of the resolving power curve marks the energy value of the gamma-ray on the abscissa of the pair spectrum.

This is plotted in Fig. 8c for $\alpha=0.081$, $E_\gamma=132$ Mev. This corresponds to a 0.020-in. tantalum radiator. The three resolving powers are then combined numerically by a successive folding^{22a} process; the resultant curve is shown in Fig. 8d.

Figure 9 shows both the final resolving power curve and the experimental data superimposed to give optimum fit. A logarithmic scale is chosen for the intensity to permit satisfactory normalization. It is observed that the fit is quite satisfactory.

It is estimated that the probable error in fitting the curves is ± 0.8 percent. The remaining errors deal with the establishment of the energy scale.

The magnetic field was monitored continuously during operation by means of a magnetic moment of the proton apparatus. The probable error in magnetic field measurement of a chosen reference point is estimated at ± 0.03 percent. The magnetic field was mapped with a flip coil accurate in relative measure to an accuracy of 0.1 percent probable error. Trajectories were laid out to determine the small corrections for field nonuniformity. It is estimated that the error due to uncertainty in trajectory layout is a ± 0.3 percent probable error. The geometry was laid out accurately to a ± 0.1 percent probable error. As a result the over-all probable error is ± 0.9 percent, the principal contribution being the accuracy of curve fitting. We thus obtain

$$M_{\pi^-} = 275.2 \pm 2.5 \text{ electron masses.}$$

A more accurate measurement based on this method is planned.

The excellent agreement of this result with the photographic work^{23, 24} confirms also the argument that we are, in fact, observing process (2).

(b) The Low Energy Peak

The spectrum in the neighborhood of the low energy peak is shown in Fig. 10. The resolving power at this

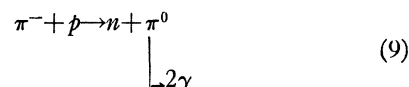
^{22a} The "fold," $f(x)$, of two functions $g(x)$ and $h(x)$ is defined by the formula $f(x) = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} g(t-x)h(t)dt$.

²³ Gardner, Barkas, Smith, and Bradner, Science **111**, 191 (1950).

²⁴ F. Smith, private communication.

energy is defined principally by multiple scattering of the pair fragments. The resolving power is again calculated as before and has been plotted in Fig. 10. Note that the resolution is sufficient to assure that the width of the curve of Fig. 10 is real rather than instrumental. Experimentally we take the lower and upper limits at $W_1 = 53.6 \pm 2.8$ Mev and $W_2 = 85 \pm 2.8$ Mev, respectively. The probable errors are estimated on the basis of the uncertainty in fit of these computed curves to the experimental data.

Analysis of the process



is based on the following physical picture. Since essentially all the observed radiation results from π^- mesons of initial velocity $\beta \sim 1/137$, we can assume that the kinetic energy of the π^0 plus that of the neutron in process (9) are essentially equal to the mass differences involved. Since the Doppler width of the emitted gamma-ray are proportional to the momentum of the π^0 , the following equation can be deduced:

$$\delta = M_{\pi^-} - (M_{\pi^-} - \Delta) \left[1 - \frac{2M_n \alpha (M_{\pi^-} + M_p)}{(M_{\pi^-} - \Delta)^2} \right]^{\frac{1}{2}}, \quad (10)$$

where

$$\alpha = (1/M_n) \{ (M_n^2 + \Delta W^2)^{\frac{1}{2}} - M_n \} \approx \Delta W^2 / 2 M_n^2.$$

Here δ is the mass difference between π^- and π^0 , Δ is the neutron-proton mass difference,²⁵ and ΔW is the width of the peak: $(\delta - \Delta)$ depends thus essentially on the width of the peak of Fig. 10.

It can easily be shown statistically that the expected distribution of γ -energies is uniform on an energy scale between the two Doppler limits. The sum of the lower and upper limits of the γ -peak represents the total relativistic energy of the π^0 ; it is thus equal to the π^- mass less the neutron-proton mass difference and the neutron recoil energy; thus, if S is the sum of the upper and lower spectral limits,

$$S = M_{\pi^-} - \Delta - [(\Delta W)^2 / 2 M_n]. \quad (11)$$

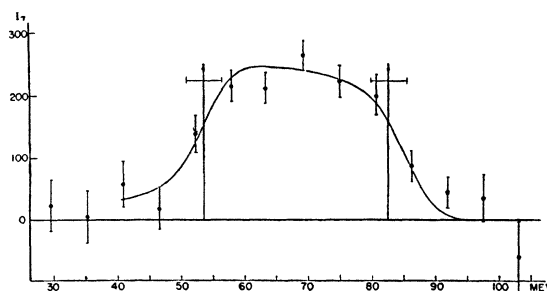


FIG. 10. Pair spectrum of gamma-rays presumably due to the process $\pi^- + H \rightarrow n + \pi^0 \rightarrow n + 2\gamma$. Plotted also is the theoretical spectral shape assuming that the spectrum lies between the limits of 53.6 Mev and 85 Mev. The estimated probable errors of these limits are indicated.

²⁵ R. E. Bell and L. G. Elliott, Phys. Rev. **74**, 1552 (1948).

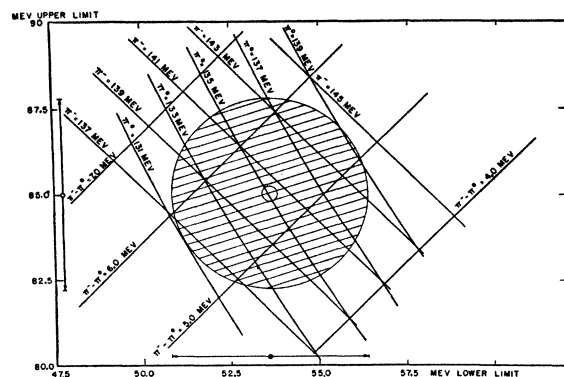


FIG. 11. Graphical representation of the relations defining the meson masses in terms of the lower and upper limit of the spectrum of Fig. 10. The ordinate and abscissa are the upper and lower limits, respectively. Plotted on this graph are: (a) The experimental values and the probable errors of the lower and upper limits. (b) The ellipse (a circle in this case) in the coordinate plane representing the area of 50 percent probability for the quoted masses. (c) The lines of constant π^- mass. (d) The lines of constant $\pi^- - \pi^0$ mass difference. (e) The curves of constant π^0 mass.

Figure 11 shows graphically the relation between the energy limits and the masses involved. The ordinates and abscissae of Fig. 11 are W_2 and W_1 , the upper and lower limits, respectively, of the spectrum of Fig. 10, and the measured values are indicated. Lines of constant $\pi^- - \pi^0$ mass difference (δ) are practically of the form $W_2 - W_1 = \text{const.}$, while lines of constant π^- mass are of the form $W_2 + W_1 = \text{const.}$ Both of these functions have been plotted, in addition to the lines of constant π^0 mass. The measured values of W_1 and W_2 and their probable errors generate an ellipse of error in the $W_2 - W_1$ plane which is given here. Accordingly,

$$\delta = M_{\pi^-} - M_{\pi^0} = 5.4 \pm 1.0 \text{ Mev} \approx 5.4 \pm 1.0 \text{ Mev} \\ = 10.6 \pm 2.0 \text{ electron masses.} \quad (12)$$

From the diagram:

$$M_{\pi^0} = 135 \pm 4 \text{ Mev} = 265 \pm 8 \text{ electron masses.}$$

Using the mass values already determined for the π^- mass, Eq. (12) leads to the π^0 mass:

$$M_{\pi^0} = 264.6 \pm 3.2 \text{ e.m.}$$

Further reduction of the probable errors of the π^- mass is, however, anticipated.

(c) Branching Ratio Between π^0 and γ -Emission

A run was made with the peak of the pair spectrometer intensity curve located at 100 Mev. This gives somewhat poorer statistics on either the low energy or the high energy peaks but permits a measurement of the branching ratio. The resulting curve is shown in Fig. 12. Figure 12 also shows a rectangular profile of area equal to the total intensity of the low energy group and of width equal to the width of the low energy peak in Fig. 10. Considering the fact that two photons are emitted per π^0 disintegration, we obtain a branching

ratio of

$$\Gamma_{\pi^0}/\Gamma_{\gamma} = 0.94 \pm 0.20. \quad (13)$$

The probable error quoted is due to the statistics of the data and a reasonable allowance for the uncertainty in the spectrometer sensitivity curve. In interpreting this branching ratio it should be noted that, from Fig. 10,

$$p/M_{\pi^0} = 0.23 \pm 0.03 \quad (14)$$

gives the momentum of the π^0 in process (4).

(d) Energy Distribution of Pair Fragments

The pair fragment energy of the pairs entering into the gamma-ray spectrum of Fig. 10 has been tabulated as a check on the performance of the pair spectrometer. Although the statistics are insufficient to provide data of interest to pair theory, it is relevant to show that the probability of division of a pair is essentially constant as a function of the division percentage.²² Figure 13 shows a graphical representation of the number of pairs of fragment energy E_1 and E_2 plotted as a function of the division fraction $E_1/(E_1 + E_2)$. The instrument does not permit recording of all possible division ratios, since (Fig. 4) the counter arrangement does not reach to the converter and is limited in radial extent. Accordingly, the scale of intensities of Fig. 13 is weighted inversely to the gamma-ray energy interval which contributes to the particular division ratio. Division ratios are given only in the range $0.2 < E_1/(E_1 + E_2) < 0.8$. It is seen that within statistics the distribution is uniform as predicted theoretically.

VI. RUNS WITH MATERIALS OTHER THAN HYDROGEN OR DEUTERIUM

In the beginning stages of these experiments hydrogenous compounds were used in place of the high pressure H_2 vessel.²⁶ The pair spectrometer used had only a

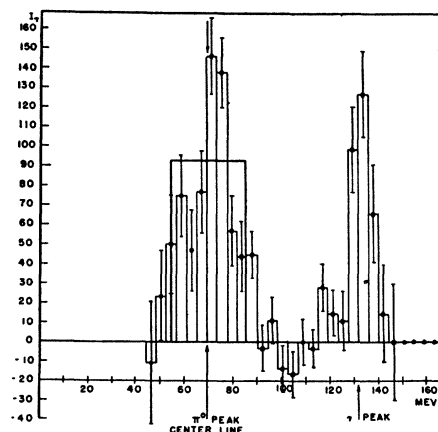


FIG. 12. Pair spectrum resulting from the absorption of π^- mesons in hydrogen. The center of the spectrometer is set near 100 Mev. The spectrum clearly shows the separation between processes (2) and (4). The branching ratio between these reactions can be derived from this spectrum.

²⁶ W. K. H. Panofsky and H. York, Phys. Rev. 78, 89(A) (1950).

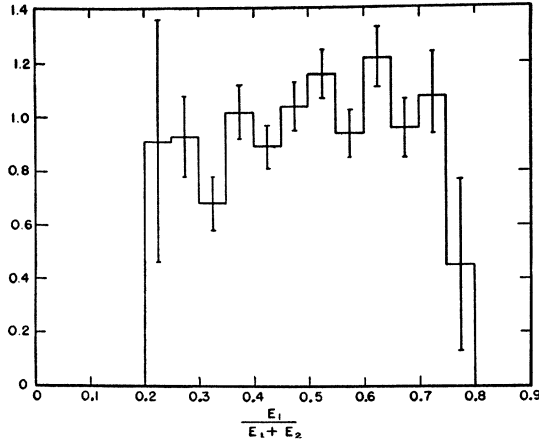


FIG. 13. Energy distribution of pair fragments. The frequency of occurrence of a given energy division is plotted against the energy fraction $E_1/(E_1+E_2)$; the measurements cover the range $0.2 < E_1/(E_1+E_2) < 0.8$. The ordinate does not represent the actual count but is divided by the gamma-ray energy value contributing to the particular division ratio interval. It is seen that the distribution is uniform within statistics.

single channel 30 percent, wide but the instrumentation was sufficient to show the presence or absence of gamma-ray yield within certain limits.

Let f = fraction of π^- absorbed which is finally absorbed by a hydrogen nucleus. The expected and observed intensities are tabulated in Table I.

The "expected count" was computed from evaluation of the geometry and the conversion yields. The calculations were checked by observing the gamma-rays originating directly from the target.⁴ The expected count is estimated to be certainly correct to within a factor of 3. We can conclude, therefore, that $f < 2 \times 10^{-3}$ for CH_2 and $f < 6 \times 10^{-3}$ for LiH . It is thus clear that the absorption probability is not simply proportional¹³ to Z , but that a special mechanism favors the absorption on a higher Z nucleus. This mechanism operates as follows. Once a π^- meson is captured by a hydrogen nucleus in an outer Bohr orbit, the atom loses its elec-

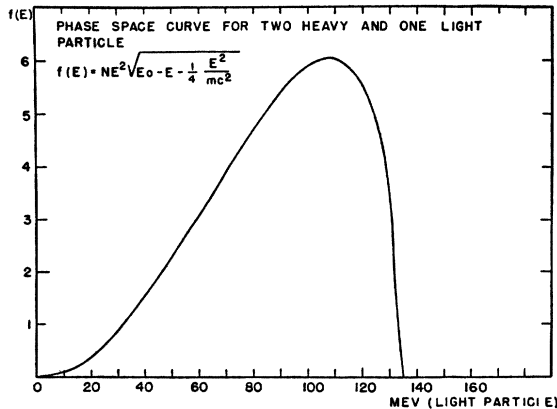


FIG. 14. Plot of the function giving the energy distribution of gamma-rays from the process $\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \gamma$ for a constant matrix element.

tron and hence its chemical binding. The lifetime of the resulting excited $\pi^- - \text{H}$ system toward radiation into the K shell is long compared with the collision time with other nuclei, during the collision of the $\pi^- - \text{H}$ system with a heavier nucleus, the probability is large that the π^- be captured by the heavier nucleus with the consequent production of a nuclear star, rather than a gamma-ray. Approximate estimates of the value of f have been made on the basis of this mechanism and are not inconsistent with the observations.

It has been suggested by Barkas²⁷ that π^0 emission might compete with nuclear stars induced by π^- capture. This is energetically possible if the mass of the capturing nucleus (Z, A) is less than that of the resulting $(Z-1, A)$ by less than the $\pi^- - \pi^0$ mass difference, δ . In particular if the corresponding β transition $(Z-1) \rightarrow Z$ is allowed, the gamma-rays from the disintegration of the resulting π^0 might be observable. This possibility is now being studied. A special case in this class is absorption in deuterium, studied theoretically by Marshak and his co-workers;²⁸ we shall discuss the process in the next section.

TABLE I. Tabulation of gamma-ray yield from the absorption of π^- -mesons in homogeneous materials. (f = fraction of π^- -mesons absorbed ultimately by a proton.)

Absorbing material	Gamma-ray energy (MeV)	Expected count (c/hr)	Observed count (c/hr)
CH_2	135	5000 f	0 ± 2
LiH	135	1500 f	0.5 ± 2
LiH	68	1500 f	-1 ± 4

VII. ABSORPTION IN DEUTERIUM

(a) Discussion of the Process

The absorption of π^- mesons in deuterium can lead to processes analogous to those previously outlined, in addition to pure heavy particle emission in the form of two neutrons. We consider thus the processes

$$\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n, \quad (15)$$

$$\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \gamma, \quad (16)$$

$$\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \pi^0. \quad (17)$$

Process (15) will lead to monoenergetic neutrons. At first sight one might expect that process (16) would lead to a very broad gamma-ray spectrum. This is actually not so, since if the gamma-ray has low energy the conservation laws are satisfied only if the neutrons are emitted nearly exactly in opposite directions. Consequently large gamma-ray energies will be favored. One can show easily that, in the absence of angular correlation between the particles, the gamma-ray distribution is given by

$$N_\gamma dE = (E_0 - E - E^2/4M_\pi c^2) 1/2 E^2 dE, \quad (18)$$

²⁷ W. H. Barkas, private communication.

²⁸ S. Tamor, Phys. Rev. **79**, 221 (1950); R. E. Marshak, private communication.

where $E_0 = M_{\pi^-} + M_D - 2M_n$. (See Fig. 14.) Actually, we shall see that the spectrum is still considerably narrower.

The spectrum of process (17) is expected again to lie between boundaries defined by the Doppler effect of the moving π^0 . Because of the extra energy required in dissociating the deuteron, the peak is expected to be narrower. Using the foregoing value for the π^0 mass, the kinetic energy of the π^0 is approximately 1.9 ± 1.0 Mev. Process (17) is thus energetically permitted nominally although the π^0 mass accuracy is not sufficient to establish this fact beyond reasonable doubt.

(b) Experimental Results

Two experimental runs on deuterium were performed in the geometry, pressure, temperature, and spectrometer setting identical to the conditions under which the high energy spectrum of the absorption of π^- in H_2 was taken (Fig. 7). Accordingly, we feel safe in comparing the yields of the two processes by assuming that the same number of π^- mesons reach the K shell in the two cases for a given proton bombardment of the primary target. There might be two qualifications to this statement. Both with H_2 and D_2 we are dealing with the same number of electrons/cm³ and thus comparable stopping power. The time required to reach an outer Bohr orbit is thus identical in the two cases. However, the time required for transition to lower states depends on collision processes;¹² the situation here is thus not quite identical in the two cases. Furthermore, possible capture from an orbit other than an S orbit depends, of course, on the process in question.

An experiment was carried out to determine whether an appreciable number of π^- mesons were lost by $\pi-\mu$ decay before reaching the K shell. If the time of the energy reduction process by collision were comparable to the $\pi-\mu$ decay time (contrary to the calculation by Wightman¹²), then the yield of gamma-ray from H_2 would fall off more rapidly with reduced density than the density itself. Table II shows the observed gamma-ray intensities at the usual operating pressure (2700 psi) and at reduced pressure.

Clearly, no significant nonlinear decrease is observed. Accordingly, we conclude that in agreement with Wightman,¹² no significant $\pi-\mu$ loss occurs; and hence, the intensity comparison between H_2 and D_2 γ -yields are valid. The evidence for process (15) (see Table III) thus rests on a good quantitative basis. A separate experiment now in progress²⁹ also tentatively confirms the existence of fast neutrons correlated to the presence of deuterium in the pressure vessel.

The spectrum corresponding to the spectrum of Fig. 7 is shown in Fig. 15. The first conclusion is that its spectrum does not conform to the momentum space function plotted in Fig. 14. The reason is that the two slow neutrons involved cannot be considered free but will interact to favor a small relative velocity between

TABLE II. Tabulation of the relative gamma-ray yields from H_2 at 2700 psi and 1300 psi. Intensities are tabulated in terms of counts/minute. Total quadruple coincidences in the proportional counters, total number of recorded pairs, and the pairs corresponding to the high energy peak only are tabulated.

	Intensity in counts/minute		Ratio
	2700 psi	1300 psi	
Total number of quadruple coincidences	0.853 ± 0.033	0.523 ± 0.042	1.63 ± 0.14
Total number of gamma-rays recorded on multiple channel unit	0.302 ± 0.021	0.190 ± 0.027	1.60 ± 0.25
Gamma-rays recorded in the high energy peak only	0.213 ± 0.013	0.121 ± 0.017	1.74 ± 0.27
Density	0.046	0.028	1.65

the neutrons. This will result in a spectrum peaked toward high energy. The effect is analogous to the high energy peak observed in the π^+ spectrum formed in $p-p$ collisions,³⁰ there the $n-p$ interaction favors a high π^+ energy. The low internal energy of the deuteron will also favor low relative velocities between the two neutrons.

The second result is the apparent absence of the π^0 peak. A separate run was made with the spectrometer centered at 70 Mev in order to place more rigid limits on the π^0 intensity. The observed counts are given in Table III. Since the H_2 spectrum shown in Fig. 7 was obtained under comparable conditions, we can directly compare the gamma-yields. This comparison is given in Table III. The intensity of the fast neutron yield (process 15) is only inferred from the intensity balance with hydrogen and does not represent direct observation.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

In a qualitative sense the results reported here confirm some of the already reasonably well-established facts concerning π -mesons. (1) The existence of the monochromatic high energy peak from hydrogen proves that the π^- meson is a boson. (2) A π^0 meson exists^{5,10}

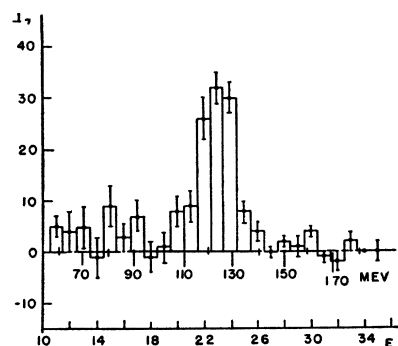


Fig. 15. Pair spectrum resulting from π^- capture in deuterium. The spectrometer center is set near 130 Mev.

²⁹ K. Crowe and H. F. York (private communication).

³⁰ Cartwright, Richman, Whitehead, and Wilcox, Phys. Rev. 78, 823 (1950); V. Z. Peterson, Phys. Rev. 79, 407 (1950).

TABLE III. Summary of relative intensities of various processes obtained as a result of π^- capture in various materials. Tabulated values are given in counts per minute. In the case of single gamma-ray processes this represents the counting rate of the spectrometer; in the case of π^0 emission it represents $\frac{1}{2}$ times the spectrometer rate. The "two fast neutrons" count does not represent direct observation but only the intensity inferred by balancing counts between hydrogen and deuterium absorption.

Particle emitted \ Absorber	H	D
π^0	0.45 ± 0.09 c/m	-0.007 ± 0.020 c/m
Single γ	0.470 ± 0.046 c/m	0.275 ± 0.034 c/m
Two fast neutrons		0.65 ± 0.11

and it disintegrates into two photons; it thus must be a spin zero particle. (3) The electrostatic self-energy or other causes make the π^- heavier than the π^0 by about 11 electron masses. (4) As long as emission of the π^0 can be in an S state only, the π^0 and π^- must be particles of identical parity properties. Considering the large kinetic energy of the π^0 emitted in process (4), this conclusion is no longer rigorous.

A quantitative result which might permit interpretation at the present time is the branching ratio between π^0 and γ -emission and the ratio between $2n$ and γ -emission in deuteron capture. By elementary notions mesons are strongly coupled to nuclei while photons are weakly coupled; therefore a branching ratio close to unity seems paradoxical, since the π^0 phase space factor $p/M_{\pi^0}c$ is as large as $\frac{1}{4}$. Processes (2) and (4) are essentially the inverse of photo meson production and of "charge exchange" scattering of π -mesons on nucleons. By a detailed balancing argument the ratio of cross section for such processes would be of the order of unity. Actually, at high energies it appears as though the photo production cross sections for mesons are well below nuclear interaction cross sections of mesons; but consideration should be given to the fact that the energies involved in the capture experiment and the inverse processes mentioned are dissimilar.

A very analogous difficulty appears in the case of the deuterium results. Process (15) is essentially the inverse of meson production in like particle collisions³⁰ and process (16) is essentially the inverse of the photo-production of π^- mesons;³¹ experimentally, the latter process has a very much smaller cross section than the production cross section in like particle collisions. Again a dependence of the matrix elements on π^- energy could remove the contradiction.

A definite result which can be deduced from the inferred presence of the fast neutron yield is the fact that the π^- is not a scalar particle. This is clear, since

the process

$$\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n \quad (19)$$

$S\text{-orbit } {}^3S \text{ } ^1S \text{ or } {}^3P$

violates either parity or angular momentum conservation for a scalar π^- . Capture from a p -state might weaken this selection rule; however, calculations by Brueckner and Watson³² indicate that the lifetime for radiation from a p -orbit is very short compared with the capture time, so that this effect can be neglected.

The absence of the π^0 peak in the case of π^- capture by deuterium is not surprising. If the π^- and π^0 are particles of equal parity, then in the process

$$\pi^- + D \rightarrow 2n + \pi^0 \quad (20)$$

$S\text{-orbit } {}^3S \text{ } {}^3P \text{ } P\text{-wave}$

both the π^0 and the two neutrons must be emitted in odd states of angular momentum as indicated, in order to obey conservations of parity and angular momentum and the exclusion principle. This effect²⁸ produces a greatly retarded yield at the small π^0 energy available.

Direct calculations of the branching ratio based on various combinations of meson character and coupling have been made by several authors.^{31, 32} The formal perturbation calculations show that the number of possibilities of meson character and coupling is greatly reduced by the results of this experiment.

It has been shown quantitatively by Brueckner, Serber, and Watson³¹ that the variability of the matrix element, predicted by the comparison of branching ratio measurements reported here with the inverse processes, is subject to experimental check by measurements of the excitation function of meson production in p - p collisions.

As a further remark it might be mentioned that there exists here, of course, no positive proof that the π^0 mesons as observed here are identical with the π^0 observed as produced by nuclear collisions^{4-8, 10} and photo-production,¹⁹ but the inference appears to be justified.

The authors have benefited greatly by the active cooperation of many members of this Laboratory. In particular the help of Dr. Herbert F. York during the first phases of the experiment has been indispensable. We are also indebted to Robert Meuser and Hugh Smith for mechanical design, to Mr. Alex Stripeika for assistance in electronics, and to the cyclotron crew under Mr. James Vale for the bombardments and assistance in the adjustments. The authors have also gained valuable information by discussions with Doctors Marshak, Serber, Wick, Brueckner, and Watson. Mr. Robert Phillips has actively participated in the execution of the experiment and has been of invaluable assistance.

³¹ Peterson, McMillan, and White, Science **110**, 579 (1949).

³² Brueckner, Serber, and Watson, Phys. Rev. **81**, 575 (1951).