## Probing the Small-x Gluon Tomography in Correlated Hard Diffractive Dijet Production in Deep Inelastic Scattering

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We investigate the close connection between the quantum phase space Wigner distribution of small-x gluons and the color dipole scattering amplitude, and we propose studying it experimentally in the hard diffractive dijet production at the planned electron-ion collider. The angular correlation between the nucleon recoiled momentum and the dijet transverse momentum probes the nontrivial correlation in the phase space Wigner distribution. This experimental study not only provides us with three-dimensional tomographic pictures of gluons inside high energy protons—it gives a unique and interesting signal for the small- $x$  dynamics with QCD evolution effects.

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Introduction.—There has been strong interest in the hadron physics community [\[1](#page-4-0)–3] in exploring the partonic structure of the nucleon, aiming particularly at a tomography picture from which we can image the partons in a threedimensional fashion. This can provide fruitful and detailed information on the subatomic structure of the baryonic building blocks of the Universe, and it can deepen our understanding of the strong interaction facts in constructing the fundamental particles. Among these tomography distributions, the so-called quantum phase space Wigner distributions [\[4,5\]](#page-4-1) of partons have been reckoned as the mother distributions of all since they ingeniously encode all quantum information of how partons are distributed inside hadrons.

The key question now is to find experimental probes to measure these distributions. The goal of this Letter is to pioneer this direction by pointing out that we can have access to the gluon Wigner distributions at a small  $x$ . The proposed new observables will stimulate further developments from both the experimental and the theoretical side for the planned electron-ion collider (EIC). In general, the parton Wigner distributions are not directly measurable in high energy scatterings. Because of the uncertainty principle, they are not positive definite, but only quasiprobabilistic. As we will demonstrate later in this Letter, one can use the diffractive dijet production (or more complicated processes), which has been a subject of study in the small- $x$ physics and the generalized parton distribution approach [6–[14\],](#page-4-2) to directly probe the Fourier transform of the gluon Wigner distribution at the EIC.

The phase space distributions [\[15\]](#page-4-3) of quarks and gluons are often used in the small-x literature, and they are believed to possibly be related to Wigner distributions [\[4\]](#page-4-1), although the exact connection was not known. We will show that the gluon Wigner distributions at a small  $x$  can be simplified and written as the Fourier transform of well-known impact parameter dependent dipole amplitudes, which helps us to build intimate connections to the small- $x$  factorization framework developed in the last few decades. Not only will this provide the motivation to pursue the gluon Wigner distributions in the future EIC, it will also prompt further studies to investigate nontrivial correlations in the small- $x$ dipole scattering amplitude. The latter has become one of the most important elements of the phenomenological studies in heavy ion collisions and deep inelastic scatterings [\[16,17\].](#page-4-4)

One of the nontrivial phenomena is the angular correlation between the traverse momentum of the produced dijet and the recoiled momentum of the nucleon, which provides vital information on the gluon Wigner distributions. It is important to emphasize that this correlation can help us test and measure the unique features of angular correlations between the impact parameter and dipole size predicted by small-x evolutions.

The rest of the Letter is organized as follows. We first introduce the gluon Wigner distributions and take the small- $x$ limit, which can be connected to the dipole scattering amplitudes. We then apply these results to demonstrate that we will be able to observe these novel correlations in the future EIC. Last, we explore the small- $x$  dynamics by invoking the analytical solution to the Balitsky-Fadin-Kuraev-Lipatov (BFKL) equation [\[18\]](#page-4-5) to show there exist nontrivial correlations in these gluon Wigner distributions. We conclude the Letter with a summary.

Gluon Wigner distributions at a small  $x$ . The parton Wigner distributions are introduced to describe the quantum phase space distributions of partons inside the nucleon. They unify the two common languages of transverse momentum dependent and the generalized parton distributions in a parton distribution framework.

<span id="page-1-3"></span>We focus on the gluon Wigner distributions. The gluon Wigner distributions are defined through the following matrix elements:

$$
xW_g^T(x, \vec{q}_\perp; \vec{b}_\perp)
$$
  
=  $\int \frac{d\xi^{-} d^2\xi_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^3 P^+} \int \frac{d^2\Delta_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^2} e^{-ixP^+\xi^{-}-iq_{\perp}\xi_{\perp}}$   
 $\times \left\langle P + \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \left| F^{+i} \left( \vec{b}_{\perp} + \frac{\xi}{2} \right) F^{+i} \left( \vec{b}_{\perp} - \frac{\xi}{2} \right) \right| P - \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \right\rangle,$   
(1)

where  $F^{\mu\nu}$  represents the field strength tensor, x and  $q_{\perp}$  the longitudinal momentum fraction and the transverse momentum for the gluon, and  $b_\perp$  the coordinate space variable. The Fourier transform of the Wigner distribution with respect to the impact parameter  $b_{\perp}$  is also referred to as the generalized transverse momentum dependent (GTMD) gluon distribution [\[19,20\]](#page-4-6). The gauge links associated with the gluon fields have been omitted in the above equation for simplicity (see the discussions below).

In Refs. [\[21,22\],](#page-4-7) it was demonstrated that TMD gluon distributions are related to small- $x$  unintegrated gluon distributions. The Weizsäcker-Williams (WW) and the dipole gluon distribution used in small-x formalism corresponds to two gauge invariant but topologically different operator definitions. In order to pursue deeper connections between Wigner distributions and small- $x$  impact parameter dependent gluon distributions, we first use the dipole gluon distribution as an example, and we will comment on the case of the WW gluon distribution later. Following the convention in Ref. [\[23\],](#page-4-8) we write the GTMD dipole gluon distribution as

<span id="page-1-0"></span>
$$
xG_{\text{DP}}(x, q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp})
$$
  
=2 $\int \frac{d\xi^{-} d^{2}\xi_{\perp} e^{-iq_{\perp}\xi_{\perp}-ixP^{+}\xi^{-}}}{(2\pi)^{3}P^{+}}$   
 $\times \left\langle P + \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \left| \text{Tr}[F^{+i}(\xi/2)U^{[-]\dagger}F^{+i}(-\xi/2)U^{[+]}] \right| P - \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \right\rangle,$   
(2)

where  $\mathcal{U}^{[\pm]}$  are the future- (past-) pointing U-shaped Wilson lines which make the operator gauge invariant. Its Fourier transform  $\int (d^2 \Delta_{\perp}/(2\pi)^2) e^{i\Delta_{\perp} b_{\perp}} x G_{\text{DP}}(x, q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp})$ can be identified as the Wigner distribution  $xW_g^T(x, q_\perp, b_\perp)$ .<br>Following a similar derivation used in Refs. [22, 24] in the Following a similar derivation used in Refs. [\[22](#page-4-9)–24] in the small- $x$  limit, which allows us to approximately write  $e^{-xP^+\xi^-} \approx 1$ , one can show that Eq. [\(2\)](#page-1-0) reduces to

$$
xG_{\text{DP}}(x, q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp})
$$
  
= 
$$
\frac{2N_c}{\alpha_s} \int \frac{d^2 R_{\perp} d^2 R'_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^4} e^{iq_{\perp} \cdot (R_{\perp} - R'_{\perp}) + i(\Delta_{\perp}/2) \cdot (R_{\perp} + R'_{\perp})} (\vec{\nabla}_{R_{\perp}} \cdot \vec{\nabla}_{R'_{\perp}})
$$
  

$$
\times \frac{1}{N_c} \langle \text{Tr}[U(R_{\perp}) U^{\dagger}(R'_{\perp})] \rangle_x, \tag{3}
$$

where we can recognize the impact parameter dependent dipole amplitude. Let us define its double Fourier transform:

$$
\frac{1}{N_c} \text{Tr} \left[ U \left( b_\perp + \frac{r_\perp}{2} \right) U^\dagger \left( b_\perp - \frac{r_\perp}{2} \right) \right]
$$
\n
$$
\equiv \int d^2 q_\perp d^2 \Delta_\perp e^{-iq_\perp \cdot r_\perp - i\Delta_\perp \cdot b_\perp} \mathcal{F}_x(q_\perp, \Delta_\perp). \tag{4}
$$

Then we can succinctly write  $xG_{DP}(x, q_\perp, \Delta_\perp) =$  $(q_{\perp}^2 - \Delta_{\perp}^2/4)(2N_c/\alpha_s)\mathcal{F}_x(q_{\perp},\Delta_{\perp})$ . Setting  $r_{\perp} = 0$  in the above expression we obtain the normalization condition for above expression, we obtain the normalization condition for  $\mathcal{F}_x(q_\perp,\Delta_\perp)$  as  $\int d^2q_\perp d^2\Delta_\perp e^{-i\Delta_\perp \cdot b_\perp} \mathcal{F}_x(q_\perp,\Delta_\perp) = 1.$ <br>Correlated hard diffractive diet production in

Correlated hard diffractive dijet production in deep inelastic scattering (DIS).—Now let us discuss diffractive dijet production in electron-ion collisions, which was studied quite recently in Ref. [\[25\]](#page-4-10), and demonstrate that it directly probes the dipole gluon GTMD in the small- $x$ limit where the quark contribution is negligible. Diffractive events imply that a color neutral exchange must occur in the t channel between the virtual photon and the target hadron over several units in rapidity. Following the same framework developed in Ref. [\[22\]](#page-4-9), by requiring that the final state quark-antiquark pair forms a color singlet state, we can write the cross section for diffractive dijet production as illustrated in Fig. [1](#page-1-1) as follows:

<span id="page-1-2"></span>
$$
\frac{d\sigma^{\gamma_{T}^{*}\tilde{A}q\tilde{q}X}}{dy_{1}d^{2}k_{1\perp}dy_{2}d^{2}k_{2\perp}}
$$
\n
$$
= 2N_{c}\alpha_{em}e_{q}^{2}\delta(x_{\gamma^{*}}-1)z(1-z)[z^{2}+(1-z)^{2}]
$$
\n
$$
\times \int d^{2}q_{\perp}d^{2}q'_{\perp}\mathcal{F}_{x}(q_{\perp},\Delta_{\perp})\mathcal{F}_{x}(q'_{\perp},\Delta_{\perp})
$$
\n
$$
\times \left[\frac{\vec{P}_{\perp}}{P_{\perp}^{2}+\epsilon_{f}^{2}}-\frac{\vec{P}_{\perp}-\vec{q}_{\perp}}{(P_{\perp}-q_{\perp})^{2}+\epsilon_{f}^{2}}\right]
$$
\n
$$
\cdot \left[\frac{\vec{P}_{\perp}}{P_{\perp}^{2}+\epsilon_{f}^{2}}-\frac{\vec{P}_{\perp}-\vec{q}'_{\perp}}{(P_{\perp}-q'_{\perp})^{2}+\epsilon_{f}^{2}}\right],
$$
\n(5)

for the transversely polarized photon. A similar cross section formula can be written for the longitudinally

<span id="page-1-1"></span>

FIG. 1. Diffractive dijet production in electron-ion collisions. Here, we assume that the incoming virtual photon has only the longitudinal momentum. The signature of the diffractive process is the rapidity gap between the produced dijet and the target hadron, which remains intact.

polarized photon. In Eq. [\(5\),](#page-1-2)  $y_{1,2}$  and  $k_{1,2\perp}$  are rapidities and transverse momenta of the final state quark and antiquark jets, respectively, defined in the center of mass frame of the incoming photon and nucleon.  $\vec{P}_{\perp} = \frac{1}{2}(\vec{k}_{2\perp} - \vec{k}_{1\perp})$  $k_{1\perp}$ ) represents the typical dijet transverse momentum and  $\Delta_{\perp}$  is the nucleon recoiled momentum. We are interested in the back-to-back kinematic region for the two final state jets where  $|P_{\perp}| \gg |\vec{k}_{1\perp} + \vec{k}_{2\perp}|$ . Suppose  $\epsilon_f^2 \equiv z(1-z)Q^2$ is not too large compared to  $P_{\perp}^2$ . Then we expect that the above  $q_{\perp}$  integrals are dominated by the region  $q_{\perp} \sim P_{\perp}$ and the cross sections are roughly proportional to  $\mathcal{F}_x^2(P_\perp, \Delta_\perp)$  for back-to-back dijet configurations. Thus,<br>the diffractive dijet production will be sensitive to the the diffractive dijet production will be sensitive to the correlations between  $\vec{P}_\perp$  and  $\Delta_\perp$ , as mentioned in Ref. [\[25\]](#page-4-10), and our analysis shows that such a measurement gives experimental access to the gluon Wigner distribution.

Of particular interest is the angular correlation of the form cos  $2(\phi_{P_1} - \phi_{\Delta_1})$ . This originates from the cos  $2\phi$ correlation in the GTMD and the Wigner distribution

$$
xG_{\text{DP}}(x, \vec{q}_{\perp}, \vec{\Delta}_{\perp}) = xG_{\text{DP}}(x, |\vec{q}_{\perp}|, |\vec{\Delta}_{\perp}|)
$$
  
+  $xG_{\text{DP}}^{\epsilon}(x, |\vec{q}_{\perp}|, |\vec{\Delta}_{\perp}|) \cos 2(\phi_{q_{\perp}} - \phi_{\Delta_{\perp}})$   
+..., (6)

$$
xW_g^T(x, \vec{q}_\perp; \vec{b}_\perp) = xW_g^T(x, |\vec{q}_\perp|, |\vec{b}_\perp|)
$$
  
+  $xW_g^{\varepsilon}(x, |\vec{q}_\perp|, |\vec{b}_\perp|) \cos 2(\phi_{q_\perp} - \phi_{b_\perp})$   
+  $\cdots$ . (7)

The first terms in the above two equations represent the azimuthally symmetric distributions, whereas the rest of the terms stand for the azimuthally asymmetric distributions. From symmetry considerations (cf. Ref. [\[20\]](#page-4-11)), one sees that only the even harmonics  $\cos 2n\phi$  are allowed. We expect that the dominant component is the elliptic  $(n = 1)$  one, as shown above, and we call it the elliptic gluon Wigner distribution or, for short, the elliptic gluon distribution. With the detector capability at the future EIC [\[3\]](#page-4-12), we will be able to identify both  $\hat{P}_\perp$  and  $\Delta_\perp$  and measure the angular correlation between them. The elliptic angular correlation  $\langle \cos 2(\phi_{P_1} - \phi_{\Delta_1}) \rangle$  in particular can be observed in this process. This is similar to the elliptic flow phenomena observed in heavy ion collisions.

It is interesting to note that the early studies of diffractive dijet production in DIS have focused on the cos  $2\phi$  angular correlation between the lepton plane and the jet plane, which has been demonstrated as an important feature of small-x calculations [7–[9\].](#page-4-13) This  $\cos 2\phi$  correlation will remain in our formalism, too. The combined analyses of both angular correlations of cos  $2(\phi_{P_\perp} - \phi_{\Delta_\perp})$  and cos  $2\phi$ will provide a unique opportunity to study the gluon tomography and test the saturation formalism. It was also pointed out in Ref. [\[10\]](#page-4-14) that the emission of an additional gluon can diminish the signal, and this could pose a challenge in the data analysis at HERA [\[26\]](#page-4-15) for events of large diffractive masses  $(M_X)$  when  $M_X^2 \gg Q^2$ . While we propose studying a different type of angular correlation at the EIC, a similar problem may arise and need to be investigated. Nevertheless, we believe that the case becomes simpler if we focus on relatively low mass diffractive events with a large  $Q^2$  and  $Q^2 \simeq M_X^2$ .

Gluon tomography induced by small-x dynamics.—In order to gain analytical insights into the distribution  $xG_{\text{DP}}(x, \vec{q}_{\perp}, \vec{\Delta}_{\perp})$  and to illustrate how the angular corre-<br>lation arises, let us evaluate it in the RFKL approximation lation arises, let us evaluate it in the BFKL approximation. Consider the dipole scattering amplitude off a dipole  $x_{\perp}$ (quark at  $\vec{x}_\perp/2$ , antiquark at  $-\vec{x}_\perp/2$ ) evolved up to rapidity  $Y = \ln 1/x$ . Define the dipole T matrix in impact parameter space as  $(1/N_c)\langle trU[b_\perp + (r_\perp/2)]U^\dagger[b_\perp - (r_\perp/2)]$ <br>1 –  $T(r, b, V)$  In the BEKI approximation and in space as  $(1/N_c)(uU[\nu] + (r_{\perp}/2)]U'[\nu] - (r_{\perp}/2)]/x -$ <br>1 –  $T(r_{\perp}, b_{\perp}, Y)$ . In the BFKL approximation and in the regime  $b_{\perp}, r_{\perp} \gg x_{\perp}, T$  is given by [\[27](#page-4-16)–29]

$$
T(r_{\perp}, b_{\perp}, Y) \approx \frac{\alpha_s^2 |\rho|}{\sqrt{\pi}} \frac{\ln \frac{16}{|\rho|}}{\left[\frac{7}{2} \bar{\alpha}_s \zeta(3) Y\right]^{3/2}} \times \exp\left(4\bar{\alpha}_s Y \ln 2 - \frac{\ln^2 \frac{16}{|\rho|}}{14\bar{\alpha}_s \zeta(3) Y}\right), \quad (8)
$$

where

$$
|\rho|^2 \equiv \frac{x_{\perp}^2 r_{\perp}^2}{(b_{\perp} + \frac{r_{\perp}}{2} - \frac{x_{\perp}^2}{2})^2 (b_{\perp} - \frac{r_{\perp}}{2} + \frac{x_{\perp}}{2})^2}
$$

$$
\approx \frac{x_{\perp}^2 r_{\perp}^2}{b_{\perp}^4 + \frac{r_{\perp}^4}{16} - \frac{b_{\perp}^2 r_{\perp}^2}{2} \cos 2\phi_{br}}.
$$
(9)

Clearly, one sees that there is a nontrivial angular correlation between  $\vec{b}_{\perp}$  and  $\vec{r}_{\perp}$ . When  $\vec{b}_{\perp}$  is parallel to  $\vec{r}_{\perp}$ , the scattering is stronger than the case when  $b_{\perp}$  is perpendicular to  $\vec{r}_{\perp}$ . This is a known phenomenon; see, for example, Ref. [\[30\]](#page-4-17). Such a correlation is expected to survive near the nonlinear saturated regime. Indeed, away from the BFKL saddle point, the saturation momentum  $Q<sub>s</sub>$  is defined by the condition  $T(r_{\perp} = 1/Q_s, b_{\perp}) = \text{const.}$  This leads to

$$
\frac{1}{|\rho|^2} \approx \frac{b_{\perp}^4 + \frac{r_{\perp}^4}{16} - \frac{b_{\perp}^2 r_{\perp}^2}{2} \cos 2\phi_{br}}{x_{\perp}^2 r_{\perp}^2} \bigg|_{r_{\perp} = 1/Q_s} \sim e^{\{[\chi(\gamma_s)]/\gamma_s\}Y}, \quad (10)
$$

where  $\chi(\gamma) \equiv (\alpha_s N_c/\pi) [2\psi(1) - \psi(\gamma) - \psi(1 - \gamma)]$  and  $\gamma \approx 0.628$  If we look for a solution in the regime  $\gamma_s \approx 0.628$ . If we look for a solution in the regime  $b_{\perp} \gg r_{\perp} \approx 1/Q_s$ , we find

$$
Q_s^2 \sim \frac{x_{\perp}^2}{b_{\perp}^4} e^{\{[\chi(\gamma_s)]/\gamma_s\}Y} + \frac{\cos 2\phi_{br}}{2b_{\perp}^2}.
$$
 (11)

This is consistent with the numerical study of the nonlinear small-x evolution (e.g., the Balitsky-Kovchegov evolution [\[31,32\]\)](#page-4-18) in Refs. [\[33,34\]](#page-5-0), where it was observed that the angular correlation exists even when  $b_{\perp}$  and  $r_{\perp}$  are of the same order. These features should be a guiding principle when building saturation models with angular correlations.

The elliptic ( $\sim$  cos 2 $\phi$ ) angular correlation can be seen also in momentum space. After averaging over the angular orientation of the target dipole  $x_{\perp}$ , we find that the Fourier transform of  $T(r_{\perp}, b_{\perp}, Y)$  with respect to  $\vec{b}_{\perp}$  and  $\vec{r}_{\perp}$  is

$$
\mathcal{T}(q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp}, Y)
$$
\n
$$
= \frac{\alpha_s^2 x_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^2 \Delta_{\perp}^3} \frac{e^{4\bar{\alpha}_s Y \ln 2}}{[\frac{7}{2} \bar{\alpha}_s \zeta(3) Y \pi]^{3/2}} \times \int_0^{\pi/2} d\theta J_0 \left( \frac{\sin \theta \Delta_{\perp} x_{\perp}}{2} \right) K_0 \left( \frac{\cos \theta \Delta_{\perp} x_{\perp}}{2} \right) \times \int_0^1 \frac{d\alpha}{\alpha^2 (1-\alpha)^2} {}_2F_1 \left( \frac{3}{2}, \frac{3}{2}, 1, -\frac{|\vec{q}_{\perp} + (1/2 - \alpha) \vec{\Delta}_{\perp}|^2}{\Delta_{\perp}^2 \alpha (1-\alpha)} \right) \tag{12}
$$

in the high energy limit. Depending on the relative size of  $q_{\perp}$  and  $\Delta_{\perp}$ ,  $\mathcal{T}(q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp}, Y)$  can have sizable angular correlations with only even harmonics. (It is not hard to show that all odd harmonics vanish.) Note that in the BFKL approximation, we have  $xG_{\text{DP}}(x, q_\perp, \Delta_\perp)$  =  $-(q_{\perp}^2 - \Delta_{\perp}^2/4)(2N_c/\alpha_s)T(q_{\perp},\Delta_{\perp},Y)$  for the case with finite momentum transfer finite momentum transfer.

In the saturation regime, one can estimate the strength of the angular correlation from numerical studies of the Balitsky-Kovchegov equation with impact parameter dependence [\[33,34\].](#page-5-0) We find that it will lead to  $\langle \cos 2(\phi_{P_1} - \phi_{\Delta_1}) \rangle$  asymmetries of a few percent in the typical EIC kinematics. More sophisticated calculations shall follow for generalizing the saturation models [\[14,35](#page-4-19)–37] to incorporate this particular angular correlation feature. We leave this for future study. Comparing the theoretical computations with the future experimental data will provide us with much more insight on the experimental signature of small- $x$  dynamics.

Summary and discussions.—To conclude, let us make some further brief comments on the consequence of this work. We will leave detailed discussion to a future publication. (i) Let us comment on the WW gluon distribution case. Following the same technique used above for the dipole gluon Wigner distribution, we generalize the WW gluon distribution at a small  $x$  as follows:

$$
xG_{WW}(x, q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp})
$$
  
=  $2 \int \frac{d\xi^{-} d^{2}\xi_{\perp} e^{-iq_{\perp}\xi_{\perp} - ixP^{+}\xi^{-}}}{(2\pi)^{3}P^{+}}$   
 $\times \left\langle P + \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \left| \text{Tr} \left[ F\left(\frac{\xi}{2}\right) \mathcal{U}^{[+]^{\dagger}} F\left(-\frac{\xi}{2}\right) \mathcal{U}^{[+]} \right] \right| P - \frac{\Delta_{\perp}}{2} \right\rangle,$   
(13)

which allows us to find

$$
xG_{WW}(x, q_{\perp}, \Delta_{\perp})
$$
  
= 
$$
\frac{2N_c}{\alpha_S} \int \frac{d^2 R_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^2} \frac{d^2 R'_{\perp}}{(2\pi)^2} e^{iq_{\perp} \cdot (R_{\perp} - R'_{\perp}) + i(\Delta_{\perp}/2) \cdot (R_{\perp} + R'_{\perp})}
$$
  

$$
\times \frac{1}{N_c} \langle \text{Tr}[i\partial_i U(R_{\perp})] U^{\dagger}(R'_{\perp}) [i\partial_i U(R'_{\perp})] U^{\dagger}(R_{\perp}) \rangle_x.
$$
  
(14)

Because of the known connection between the WW gluon distribution and color quadrupoles at a small  $x$  [\[22\]](#page-4-9), it is expected that one needs to generate a color quadrupole at the amplitude level in order to probe the WW Wigner distribution. This requires two incoming photons at once, which produce four-jet diffractive events in the final states. It seems to be very challenging to measure these types of events at EIC. Nevertheless, performing such a measurement in ultraperipheral diffractive AA collisions at the LHC where photons are much more abundant in the wave function of colliding nuclei is much more likely. (ii) It is also interesting to note that one can generalize the above derivation to obtain the linearly polarized part [38–[45\]](#page-5-1) of the WW and the dipole gluon Wigner distribution when the indices of derivatives are off diagonal, instead of diagonal as in Eqs. [\(1\)](#page-1-3) and [\(2\)](#page-1-0). The cross sections for the dijet and four-jet productions depend on both the unpolarized and the linearly polarized gluon distributions, which are related in the small-x formalism  $[41, 42]$ . In addition, when integrating over  $q_{\perp}$  in Eqs. [\(1\)](#page-1-3) and [\(2\)](#page-1-0) with off-diagonal indices, the gluon Wigner distributions will reduce to the so-called helicity flip gluon generalized parton distributions (GPDs) (also called gluon transversity), which have been extensively discussed in the collinear GPD framework [\[46](#page-5-3)–49]. The nontrivial correlations between  $q_\perp$  and  $\Delta_\perp$ play important roles in the integral in obtaining the helicity flip gluon GPDs. (iii) The extension to the quark Wigner distribution can be done accordingly. Their contributions will be dominant in the large- and moderate-x range, where the small- $x$  approximation breaks down. Therefore, the differential cross sections will be much more involved in terms of the quark Wigner distributions compared to the simple form of Eq. [\(5\).](#page-1-2) Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to pursue further studies along the direction of this Letter for the diffractive dijet production at a large or moderate  $x$ .

The parton Wigner distributions, which contain the most complete information, are the cornerstones of all parton distributions. We demonstrate that gluon Wigner distributions are closely related to the impact parameter dependent dipole and quadrupole scattering amplitudes, and we point out that they can be measured in diffractive-type events at EIC and the LHC. The correlated hard diffractive dijet production in DIS in particular is one of the golden channels for exploring the gluon Wigner distribution. The nontrivial correlation encoded in this distribution could potentially be linked to many observables in high energy hadronic and nuclear collisions. Further theoretical and phenomenological studies shall follow the direction of this Letter.

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