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# Measurement of the $B^0 \to D^{*-} a_1^+$ Branching Fraction with Partially Reconstructed $D^*$

The *BABAR* Collaboration

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## Abstract

The $B^0 \to D^{*-} a_1^+$ branching fraction has been measured with data collected by the *BABAR* experiment in 1999 and 2000 corresponding to a total integrated luminosity of 20.6 fb$^{-1}$. Signal events have been selected using a partial reconstruction technique, in which only the $a_1^+$ and the slow pion ($\pi_s$) from the $D^{*-}$ decay are identified. A signal yield of $18400 \pm 1200$ events has been found, corresponding to a preliminary branching fraction of $(1.20 \pm 0.07(\text{stat}) \pm 0.14(\text{syst}))\%$.

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# 1 Introduction

A partial reconstruction technique has been used in the past to select large samples of reconstructed $B$ mesons with a $D^{*-}$ in the final state [1] and to measure properties of the $B^0$ meson. In this method the $\overline{D}^0$ is not reconstructed, but its four-momentum is inferred from the kinematics of the $a_1^+$, the slow pion ($\pi_s$) from $D^{*-}$ decay and the decay constraints. The measurement of the branching fraction for $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ is performed as a first step in demonstrating that the partial reconstruction method may offer a means of determining the combination of Cabibbo-Kobayashi-Maskawa [2] unitarity triangle angles $\sin(2\beta+\gamma)$ using this channel[1].

# 2 The *BABAR* detector

The *BABAR* experiment is located at the PEP-II storage ring at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. A detailed description of the detector and of the algorithms used for the track reconstruction and selection of $B\overline{B}$ events can be found in Ref. [3]. For the partial reconstruction analysis of $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ only charged tracks are used: particles with transverse momentum $p_T > 170$ MeV/c are reconstructed by matching hits in the Silicon Vertex Tracker (SVT) with track segments in the Drift Chamber (DCH). Tracks with lower $p_T$ do not penetrate a significant distance in the DCH and are reconstructed using only the information from the SVT.

Electron, muon and kaon identification is used in the analysis as a veto in the selection of pions forming the $a_1$ candidates. Electron candidates are identified by the ratio of the energy deposited in the electromagnetic calorimeter (EMC) to the track momentum ($E/p$) and by the energy loss in the DCH ($dE/dx$). Muons are primarily identified by the measured number of hadronic interaction lengths traversed from the outside radius of the DCH through the iron of the instrumented flux return (IFR). Kaons are distinguished from pions and protons on the basis of $dE/dx$ in the SVT and DCH, and the number of Cherenkov photons and the Cherenkov angle in the Detector for Internally Reflected Cherenkov radiation (DIRC).

# 3 Data sample

The data used in this analysis were collected with the *BABAR* detector in 1999 and 2000. These data correspond to an integrated luminosity of 20.6 fb$^{-1}$ recorded at the $\Upsilon(4S)$ resonance and, for background studies, 2.6 fb$^{-1}$ collected at 40 MeV below the resonance ("off-resonance" sample). Monte Carlo samples of $B\overline{B}$ and continuum events were reconstructed and analyzed using the same procedure as the data. The equivalent luminosity of the generic simulated data is approximately one fourth of the on-resonance data, while the number of signal $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ Monte Carlo (MC) events is approximately ten times the number expected in the on-resonance data.

# 4 The partial reconstruction technique

In the partial reconstruction of the decay chain $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$, followed by $D^{*-} \to \overline{D}^0\pi_s^-$, only the $a_1$ and the $\pi_s$ from $D^*$ decay are required. For this analysis the $a_1$ is reconstructed via the

[1] Since the selection of $D^{*-}a_1^+$ and $D^{*+}a_1^-$ are identical, the charge conjugate state is implied throughout the paper.

decay chain $a_1^+ \to \rho^0\pi^+$. The angle between the momentum vectors of the $B$ and the $a_1$ in the center-of-mass frame (CM) is then computed:

$$\cos\theta_{Ba_1} = \frac{M^2_{D^{*-}} - M^2_{B^0} - M^2_{a_1} + E_{CM}E_{a_1}}{2P_B|\vec{p}_{a_1}|} \tag{1}$$

where $M_x$ is the mass of particle x, $E_{a_1}$ and $\vec{p}_{a_1}$ are the measured CM energy and momentum of the $a_1$, $E_{CM}$ is the total CM energy of the beams and $P_B = \sqrt{E^2_{CM}/4 - M^2_{B^0}}$. Given $\cos\theta_{Ba_1}$ and the measured four-momenta of the $\pi_s$ and the $a_1$, the $B$ four-momentum can be calculated up to an unknown azimuthal angle $\phi$ around $\vec{p}_{a_1}$. For every value of $\phi$, the expected $\overline{D}^0$ four-momentum, $P_{\overline{D}^0}$, is determined from four-momentum conservation and the $\phi$-dependent "missing mass" is calculated, $m_{\rm miss}(\phi) \equiv \sqrt{|P_{\overline{D}^0}|^2}$. Defining $m_{min}$ and $m_{max}$ to be the minimum and maximum values of $m_{\rm miss}(\phi)$ obtained by varying $\phi$ over the allowed range, the missing mass is calculated as $m_{\rm miss} \equiv \frac{1}{2}(m_{max} + m_{min})$. For signal events, this variable peaks at the $\overline{D}^0$ mass, while for background events it has a broader distribution. For this reason, $m_{\rm miss}$ can be used to determine the fractions of signal and background events in the data sample.

# 5 Event selection

Data and Monte Carlo events are first selected with the following loose requirements:

- $R2$, the ratio of the 2nd to the 0th Fox Wolfram moments [4], less than 0.35;
- at least one $a_1$ candidate[2] such that:
  - the $a_1$ invariant mass $m_{a_1}$ is between 1.0 and 1.6 GeV/c$^2$;
  - the $a_1$ momentum $p_{a_1}$, computed in the CM frame, is between 1.85 and 2.30 GeV/c;
  - the vertex probability obtained from a vertex fit of the 3 pions is greater than 1%;
  - the invariant mass of at least one of the two possible $\pi^+\pi^-$ combinations ($m_{\pi\pi}$) is in the range [0.278, 1.122] GeV/c$^2$;
- at least one additional track (the $\pi_s$) with CM momentum $p_{\pi_s}$ between 50 and 700 MeV/c;
- for each selected $D^*a_1$ candidate, there must be at least 2 additional particles (charged or neutral).

The fraction of events selected by applying these cuts is summarized in Table 1 for signal and background MC samples and for off-resonance data.

The main source of background in this analysis is continuum $q\overline{q}$ events, where $q = u, d, s, c$. A neural network is used to optimize the separation of $B\overline{B}$ events from the continuum background, independent of any particular $B$ decay channel. The NN has three layers, with 11 input nodes, 15 hidden nodes and one output. Its definition relies on the different topologies of signal and background at the $\Upsilon(4S)$: while $B\overline{B}$ events are more "spherical", $q\overline{q}$ events are more "jet-like". The variables used to discriminate jet-like from isotropic events are $R_2$; the thrust of the event [4]; the two invariant masses squared, obtained by adding the four momenta of all particles going into

[2] By $a_1^+$ we refer to the $\pi^+\ \pi^-\ \pi^+$ final state.

each of the hemispheres divided by the plane perpendicular to the thrust axis; and the angle of the thrust axis with respect to the $e^+e^-$ direction.

The signal to background separation becomes more complicated when one or more gluons are emitted, which is more likely to happen when light quarks are produced. In this case there are multiple preferred axes, so that the event shape more closely resembles that of the signal. To discriminate further between signal and background in this case, the tracks are clustered into 3 or 4 jets using the so called "Durham" algorithm [5,6].

The event is first clustered into four jets and the following discriminating variables are added to those previously defined in order to build up the network: $\mathbf{y}_4$, the jet metric [5,6] obtained when the event is clustered in 4 jets; the QCD matrix element [7]; the cosine of the maximum angle between each pair of jets; the angle between the plane defined by the two most energetic jets and that defined by the other two jets; and the angle between the lowest and second lowest energy jet. The event is then further clustered into 3 jets and the jet metric $\mathbf{y}_3$ is also added to the list of network input variables.

The distributions of $B\overline{B}$ MC events and on-resonance data that pass the event selection criteria are shown in Fig. 1. The on-resonance distribution is shown after the subtraction of the off-resonance distribution, scaled by the ratio of the on-resonance to off-resonance luminosities and the CM energy squared. By selecting events for which the NN output ($O_{NN}$) is greater than 0.25, 66% of the continuum events are rejected. The fractions of events selected by this requirement in the various analyzed samples are shown in Table 1.

After the NN cut, further selection requirements are applied. There must be at least one $a_1\pi$ combination with net charge equal 0; the three pion invariant mass must be in the range [1.0, 1.45] GeV/c$^2$; the three pion momentum in the CM frame must be in the range [1.9, 2.25] GeV/c; at least one $\pi^+\pi^-$ combination from the three daughters of the $a_1$ must have invariant mass in the range [0.65, 0.9] GeV/c$^2$; and the vertex probability of the $3\pi$ plus the $\pi_s$ must be greater than 3%.

The fractions of events selected by these requirements are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Fractions of events in MC data that are selected by the requirements applied in the analysis.

| Cuts applied | $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ | $B^0\overline{B^0}$ (no signal) | $B^+B^-$ | $q\overline{q}$ MC |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reconstruction Efficiency | 38.3% | 14.6% | 13.9% | 6.4% |
| $O_{NN} > 0.25$ | 85.4% | 91.9% | 92.1% | 45.2% |
| $q_{a_1-\pi} = 0$ | 94.2% | 86.7% | 85.2% | 83.5% |
| $1.0 \leq m_{a_1} \leq 1.45$ GeV/$c^2$ | 81.7% | 71.8% | 71.7% | 73.6% |
| $1.9 \leq p_{a_1} \leq 2.25$ GeV/c | 94.8% | 92.4% | 92.5% | 93.3% |
| $0.65 \leq m_{\pi\pi} \leq 0.9$ GeV/$c^2$ | 76.4% | 59.1% | 60.5% | 64.3% |
| Vertex Prob $4\pi > 0.03$ | 80.0% | 74.2% | 73.9% | 76.9% |
| Total Efficiency | 14.6% | 3.4% | 3.2% | 0.82% |

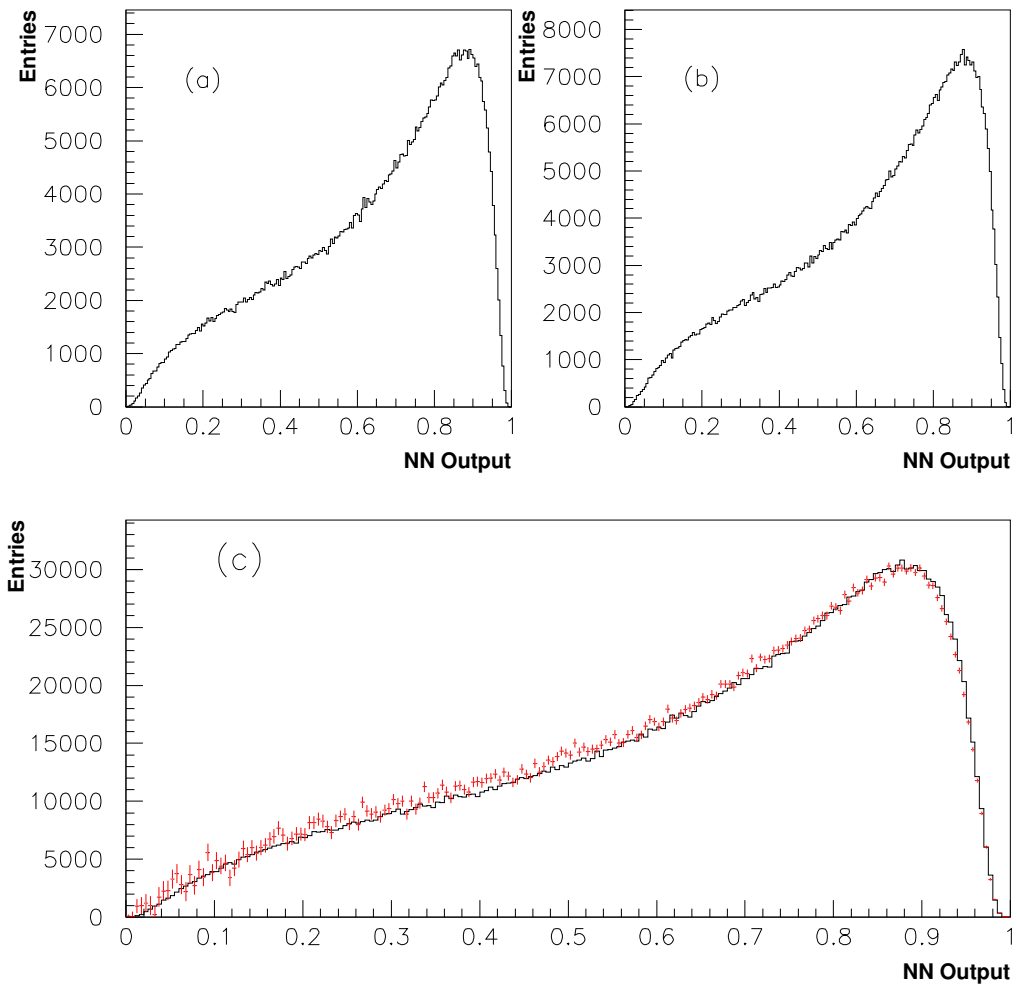


Figure 1: Distribution of the neural net output for (a) $B^0\overline{B^0}$ MC, (b) $B^+B^-$ MC and (c) on-resonance (off-resonance subtracted) data events, with superimposed distribution for all $B\overline{B}$ MC events. All events satisfy the event selection criteria.

## 6 Results

Applying all of the selection criteria, the $m_{\rm miss}$ distribution of on-resonance and off-resonance data is obtained for "right-sign"events, which are events where the $a_1$ and $\pi_s$ candidates have opposite electrical charges. The off-resonance distribution is then scaled to take into account the difference in luminosities and CM energies between the two samples and subtracted bin-by-bin from the on-resonance distribution. The resulting plot is fitted, using a minimum $\chi^2$ technique, to a linear combination of the $m_{\rm miss}$ distributions of:

1. $B\overline{B}$ Monte Carlo events, excluding correctly reconstructed signal events; and
2. correctly reconstructed signal Monte Carlo events.

In Fig. 2(a) the $m_{\rm miss}$ distribution of "right-sign" on-resonance data, off-resonance subtracted, is shown, together with the distributions of $B\overline{B}$ background MC and signal MC events. The signal yield that is obtained is $18400 \pm 1200$ events. The $B\overline{B}$ contribution to the fit is $0.995 \pm 0.015$ of the value expected, given the total number of $B\overline{B}$ events in the data and in the Monte Carlo simulation.

Given this yield, the $a_1$ branching fraction[3], the total signal efficiency of Table 1 and the fraction of events with multiple signal candidates, the following preliminary result for the $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ branching fraction is obtained:

$$\mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+) = (1.20 \pm 0.07)\%, \tag{2}$$

where the error is statistical only. The result is in very good agreement with the current best measurement of $(1.30 \pm 0.27)\%$ [8–11].

Several tests were conducted to verify that the background shapes in data and MC agree and do not give rise to a spurious signal. Charged $a_1$ candidates were combined with tracks of the same charge into "wrong-sign" combinations, and were analyzed in the same way as "right-sign" combinations. The $m_{\rm miss}$ distribution of these candidates, shown in Fig. 2(b), shows a good agreement between data and MC in the signal region ($m_{\rm miss} > 1.854$ GeV/c$^2$). The $B\overline{B}$ contribution to the fit is $0.990 \pm 0.016$ of the value expected from MC simulation.

Among events collected on-resonance, the fraction containing more than one $a_1\pi$ combination that passes all the analysis requirements in the signal region, defined by $m_{\rm miss} > 1.854$ GeV/c$^2$, is $F = (15.10 \pm 0.14)\%$. This agrees with the fraction $F_{MC} = (15.51 \pm 0.26)\%$ obtained from a weighted mix of off-resonance, $B\overline{B}$ and signal MC events. It was verified that the reconstruction efficiency in $q\overline{q}$ MC and off-resonance data are in good agreement.

## 7 Systematic errors

The selection criteria applied in the analysis are varied within a reasonable range around their chosen values. The branching fraction and its error are recalculated for each value, obtaining $N$ different measurements for $N$ different choices of the requirement [12]. The variation of the $N$ results with respect to their average, taking into account statistical correlations between them [13], is taken as a systematic error. The method of Ref. [14] is used in order to disentangle the statistical fluctuations from the systematic ones.

[3]In this analysis it is assumed that $\mathcal{B}(a_1^+ \to \rho^0\pi^+) = 0.4920$, based on isospin considerations and phase space corrections.

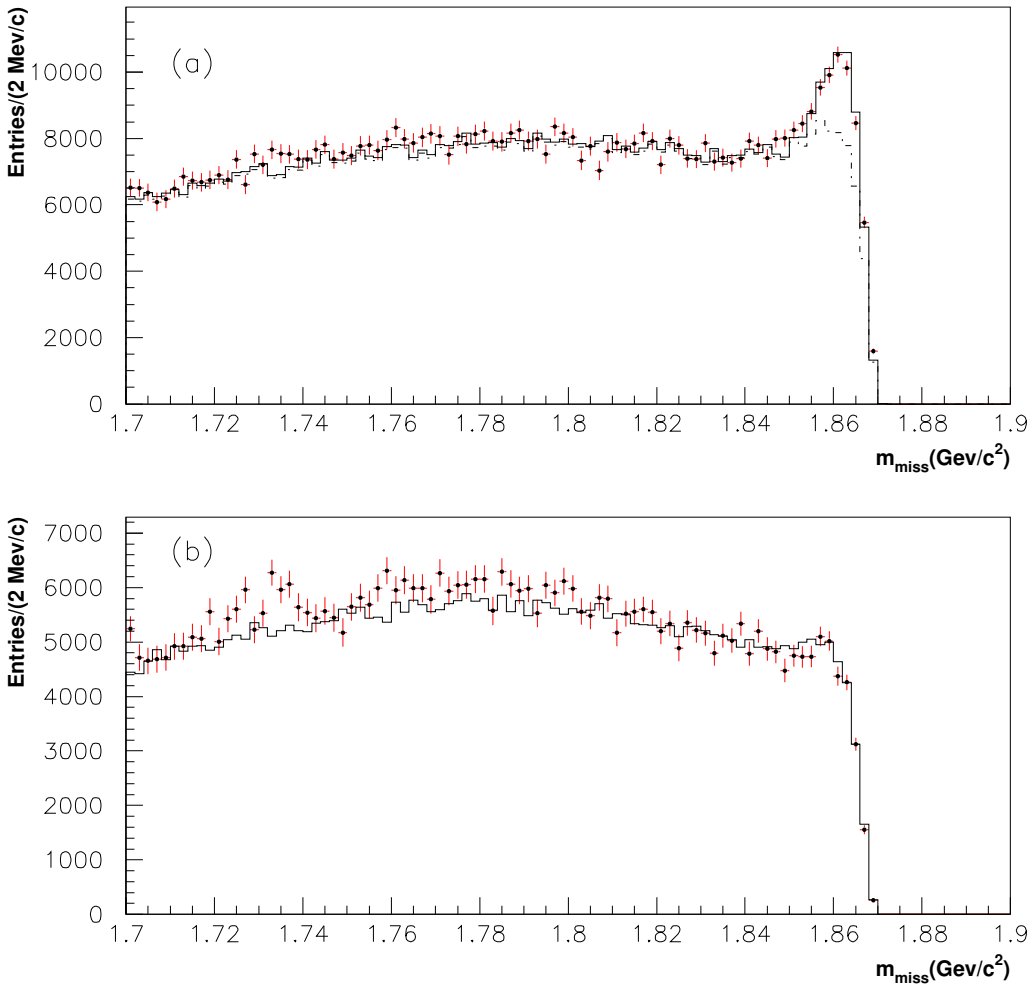


Figure 2: (a) $m_{\rm miss}$ distribution of continuum-subtracted on-resonance data events (data points), $B\overline{B}$ background MC events (dashed histogram) and $B\overline{B}$ background plus signal events (solid histogram) for "right-sign" $a_1\pi$ combinations. The histograms are the result of the fit procedure described in the text. (b) Same distributions for "wrong-sign" $a_1\pi$ combinations.

The final contributions to the error on the branching ratio due to the variation of the selection requirements are shown in Table 2. It has been verified that the systematic error obtained for each requirement does not depend on the variation studied.

Table 2: Systematic errors on $\mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+)$ due to changing the value of some of the requirements in the analysis.

| Cut applied | Range Studied | $\tilde{\chi}^2_{min}$ | N | Error (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $O_{NN} > O_{\rm min}$ | $O_{\rm min} = 0.15$ to 0.35 | 1.37 | 5 | 4.2 |
| $m_{\rm min} \leq m_{a_1} \leq m_{\rm max}$ | $m_{\rm min} = 1.0$ GeV/$c^2$ | | | |
| | $m_{\rm max} = 1.4$ to 1.5 GeV/$c^2$ | 0.99 | 5 | negl. |
| $p_{\rm min} \leq p_{a_1} \leq p_{\rm max}$ | $p_{\rm min} = 1.85$ to 1.95 GeV/$c^2$ | | | |
| | $p_{\rm max} = 2.15$ to 2.25 GeV/$c^2$ | 1.96 | 5 | 6.6 |
| Vertex Prob $3\pi > P_{\rm min}$ | $P_{\rm min} = 0.01$ to 0.15 | 1.15 | 5 | 2.4 |
| Vertex Prob $4\pi > P_{\rm min}$ | $P_{\rm min} = 0.01$ to 0.1 | 1.10 | 5 | 2.2 |
| $m_{\rm min} \leq m_\rho \leq m_{\rm max}$ | $m_{\rm min} = 0.65$ to 0.75 GeV/$c^2$ | | | |
| | $m_{\rm max} = 0.8$ to 0.9GeV/$c^2$ | 1.45 | 5 | 4.6 |
| Total error | | | | 9.6 |

A conservative systematic error of 0.35% is determined from MC due to the dependence of the $\pi_s$ reconstruction efficiency on the $\pi_s$ momentum. The systematic error due to track reconstruction efficiency is 4.2% and the uncertainty in the total number of $B$ mesons in the data sample is 1.6%.

The $B\overline{B}$ background has a component that peaks slightly under the signal region (Fig. 2). This is due mostly to signal events in which one or more of the selected tracks did not originate from the signal $B^0$. The contribution of this background is varied in the $B\overline{B}$ MC by $\pm\sqrt{(0.07/1.2)^2 + 0.104^2}$, i.e., by the relative statistical error in the central value of the branching fraction plus the total relative systematic error calculated up to this point, added in quadrature. This results in a 4.5% variation of the signal yield, which is added to the total systematic error. The total systematic error is 11.5%.

Other possible sources of systematic error have been investigated. The non-resonant decay channel $B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+$ could contribute to the quoted branching fraction. The measured branching fraction for this mode is $0.57 \pm 0.31\%$ [8, 10]. Since the central value is inconsistent with the total $\mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}\pi^+\pi^-\pi^+)$, this channel is ignored in our fit. As a result, there is a potential contribution from this channel that is included in the quoted branching fraction for $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$. The central value will shift according to the branching fraction for $B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+$ at a rate of $-3.3\% \times \mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+)/0.57\%$.

Likewise, the decay $B \to D^{**}a_1$ could affect the signal yield[4]. To study its effect, $D^{**}$ MC events are added to the generic $B\overline{B}$ sample at the level of $\mathcal{B}^{**} = \mathcal{B}(B \to D^{**}a_1) \times \mathcal{B}(D^{**} \to D^*\pi) = 0.35\%$ [15], and the fit to the missing mass distribution is repeated. This results in a reduction of the signal yield of 4.3%. Since the $\mathcal{B}(B \to D^{**}a_1)$ has not yet been measured, based on this result the branching fraction obtained in this analysis will be shifted by contributions from $B \to D^{**}a_1$ at a rate of $-4.3\% \times \mathcal{B}^{**}/0.35\%$.

[4] $D^{**}$ denotes the sum of $D_1$, $D_1^{'}$ and $D_2^*$ states.

## 8 Conclusions

With a partial reconstruction technique, $18400 \pm 1200$ $B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+$ events have been found in the *BABAR* data set of 20.6 fb$^{-1}$ on-resonance events. This corresponds to the branching fraction

$$\mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}a_1^+) = (1.20 \pm 0.07 \pm 0.14)\%, \tag{3}$$

where the first error is statistical and the second is systematic. Due to the uncertainty in the contribution of $B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+$ events in the signal sample, the central value of the quoted branching fraction will shift according to the branching fraction for $B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+$ at a rate of $-3.3\% \times \mathcal{B}(B^0 \to D^{*-}\rho^0\pi^+)/0.57\%$. Likewise, due to the unknown value of $\mathcal{B}^{**} = \mathcal{B}(B \to D^{**}a_1) \times \mathcal{B}(D^{**} \to D^*\pi)$ the central value of the branching fraction will be shifted by contributions from $B \to D^{**}a_1$ events at a rate of $-4.3\% \times \mathcal{B}^{**}/0.35\%$. The result is in good agreement with the current world average value of $(1.30 \pm 0.27)\%$ [8–11] but reduces the uncertainty by a factor of two.

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