

Study of B Meson Decays with Excited η and η' Mesons

B. Aubert,¹ M. Bona,¹ D. Boutigny,¹ Y. Karyotakis,¹ J. P. Lees,¹ V. Poireau,¹ X. Prudent,¹ V. Tisserand,¹
A. Zghiche,¹ J. Garra Tico,² E. Grauges,² L. Lopez,³ A. Palano,³ M. Pappagallo,³ G. Eigen,⁴ B. Stugu,⁴
L. Sun,⁴ G. S. Abrams,⁵ M. Battaglia,⁵ D. N. Brown,⁵ J. Button-Shafer,⁵ R. N. Cahn,⁵ Y. Groysman,⁵
R. G. Jacobsen,⁵ J. A. Kadyk,⁵ L. T. Kerth,⁵ Yu. G. Kolomensky,⁵ G. Kukartsev,⁵ D. Lopes Pegna,⁵ G. Lynch,⁵
L. M. Mir,⁵ T. J. Orimoto,⁵ I. L. Osipenkov,⁵ M. T. Ronan,^{5,*} K. Tackmann,⁵ T. Tanabe,⁵ W. A. Wenzel,⁵
P. del Amo Sanchez,⁶ C. M. Hawkes,⁶ A. T. Watson,⁶ T. Held,⁷ H. Koch,⁷ M. Pelizaeus,⁷ T. Schroeder,⁷
M. Steinke,⁷ D. Walker,⁸ D. J. Asgeirsson,⁹ T. Cuhadar-Donszelmann,⁹ B. G. Fulsom,⁹ C. Hearty,⁹ T. S. Mattison,⁹
J. A. McKenna,⁹ M. Barrett,¹⁰ A. Khan,¹⁰ M. Saleem,¹⁰ L. Teodorescu,¹⁰ V. E. Blinov,¹¹ A. D. Bukin,¹¹
V. P. Druzhinin,¹¹ V. B. Golubev,¹¹ A. P. Onuchin,¹¹ S. I. Serednyakov,¹¹ Yu. I. Skovpen,¹¹ E. P. Solodov,¹¹
K. Yu. Todyshev,¹¹ M. Bondioli,¹² S. Curry,¹² I. Eschrich,¹² D. Kirkby,¹² A. J. Lankford,¹² P. Lund,¹²
M. Mandelkern,¹² E. C. Martin,¹² D. P. Stoker,¹² S. Abachi,¹³ C. Buchanan,¹³ S. D. Foulkes,¹⁴ J. W. Gary,¹⁴
F. Liu,¹⁴ O. Long,¹⁴ B. C. Shen,¹⁴ L. Zhang,¹⁴ H. P. Paar,¹⁵ S. Rahatlou,¹⁵ V. Sharma,¹⁵ J. W. Berryhill,¹⁶
C. Campagnari,¹⁶ A. Cunha,¹⁶ B. Dahmes,¹⁶ T. M. Hong,¹⁶ D. Kovalskyi,¹⁶ J. D. Richman,¹⁶ T. W. Beck,¹⁷
A. M. Eisner,¹⁷ C. J. Flacco,¹⁷ C. A. Heusch,¹⁷ J. Kroseberg,¹⁷ W. S. Lockman,¹⁷ T. Schalk,¹⁷ B. A. Schumm,¹⁷
A. Seiden,¹⁷ M. G. Wilson,¹⁷ L. O. Winstrom,¹⁷ E. Chen,¹⁸ C. H. Cheng,¹⁸ F. Fang,¹⁸ D. G. Hitlin,¹⁸ I. Narsky,¹⁸
T. Piatenko,¹⁸ F. C. Porter,¹⁸ R. Andreassen,¹⁹ G. Mancinelli,¹⁹ B. T. Meadows,¹⁹ K. Mishra,¹⁹ M. D. Sokoloff,¹⁹
F. Blanc,²⁰ P. C. Bloom,²⁰ S. Chen,²⁰ W. T. Ford,²⁰ J. F. Hirschauer,²⁰ A. Kreisel,²⁰ M. Nagel,²⁰ U. Nauenberg,²⁰
A. Olivas,²⁰ J. G. Smith,²⁰ K. A. Ulmer,²⁰ S. R. Wagner,²⁰ J. Zhang,²⁰ A. M. Gabareen,²¹ A. Soffer,^{21,†}
W. H. Toki,²¹ R. J. Wilson,²¹ F. Winklmeier,²¹ D. D. Altenburg,²² E. Feltresi,²² A. Hauke,²² H. Jasper,²²
J. Merkel,²² A. Petzold,²² B. Spaan,²² K. Wacker,²² V. Klose,²³ M. J. Kobel,²³ H. M. Lacker,²³ W. F. Mader,²³
R. Nogowski,²³ J. Schubert,²³ K. R. Schubert,²³ R. Schwierz,²³ J. E. Sundermann,²³ A. Volk,²³ D. Bernard,²⁴
G. R. Bonneaud,²⁴ E. Latour,²⁴ V. Lombardo,²⁴ Ch. Thiebaux,²⁴ M. Verderi,²⁴ P. J. Clark,²⁵ W. Gradl,²⁵
F. Muheim,²⁵ S. Playfer,²⁵ A. I. Robertson,²⁵ J. E. Watson,²⁵ Y. Xie,²⁵ M. Andreotti,²⁶ D. Bettoni,²⁶ C. Bozzi,²⁶
R. Calabrese,²⁶ A. Cecchi,²⁶ G. Cibinetto,²⁶ P. Franchini,²⁶ E. Luppi,²⁶ M. Negrini,²⁶ A. Petrella,²⁶ L. Piemontese,²⁶
E. Prencipe,²⁶ V. Santoro,²⁶ F. Anulli,²⁷ R. Baldini-Feroli,²⁷ A. Calcaterra,²⁷ R. de Sangro,²⁷ G. Finocchiaro,²⁷
S. Pacetti,²⁷ P. Patteri,²⁷ I. M. Peruzzi,^{27,‡} M. Piccolo,²⁷ M. Rama,²⁷ A. Zallo,²⁷ A. Buzzo,²⁸ R. Contri,²⁸
M. Lo Vetere,²⁸ M. M. Macri,²⁸ M. R. Monge,²⁸ S. Passaggio,²⁸ C. Patrignani,²⁸ E. Robutti,²⁸ A. Santroni,²⁸
S. Tosi,²⁸ K. S. Chaisanguanthum,²⁹ M. Morii,²⁹ J. Wu,²⁹ R. S. Dubitzky,³⁰ J. Marks,³⁰ S. Schenk,³⁰ U. Uwer,³⁰
D. J. Bard,³¹ P. D. Dauncey,³¹ R. L. Flack,³¹ J. A. Nash,³¹ W. Panduro Vazquez,³¹ M. Tibbetts,³¹ P. K. Behera,³²
X. Chai,³² M. J. Charles,³² U. Mallik,³² V. Ziegler,³² J. Cochran,³³ H. B. Crawley,³³ L. Dong,³³ V. Eyges,³³
W. T. Meyer,³³ S. Prell,³³ E. I. Rosenberg,³³ A. E. Rubin,³³ Y. Y. Gao,³⁴ A. V. Gritsan,³⁴ Z. J. Guo,³⁴ C. K. Lae,³⁴
A. G. Denig,³⁵ M. Fritsch,³⁵ G. Schott,³⁵ N. Arnaud,³⁶ J. Béquilleux,³⁶ A. D'Orazio,³⁶ M. Davier,³⁶ G. Grosdidier,³⁶
A. Höcker,³⁶ V. Lepeltier,³⁶ F. Le Diberder,³⁶ A. M. Lutz,³⁶ S. Pruvot,³⁶ S. Rodier,³⁶ P. Roudeau,³⁶ M. H. Schune,³⁶
J. Serrano,³⁶ V. Sordini,³⁶ A. Stocchi,³⁶ W. F. Wang,³⁶ G. Wormser,³⁶ D. J. Lange,³⁷ D. M. Wright,³⁷ I. Bingham,³⁸
J. P. Burke,³⁸ C. A. Chavez,³⁸ I. J. Forster,³⁸ J. R. Fry,³⁸ E. Gabathuler,³⁸ R. Gamet,³⁸ D. E. Hutchcroft,³⁸
D. J. Payne,³⁸ K. C. Schofield,³⁸ C. Touramanis,³⁸ A. J. Bevan,³⁹ K. A. George,³⁹ F. Di Lodovico,³⁹ W. Menges,³⁹
R. Sacco,³⁹ G. Cowan,⁴⁰ H. U. Flaecher,⁴⁰ D. A. Hopkins,⁴⁰ S. Paramesvaran,⁴⁰ F. Salvatore,⁴⁰ A. C. Wren,⁴⁰
D. N. Brown,⁴¹ C. L. Davis,⁴¹ J. Allison,⁴² N. R. Barlow,⁴² R. J. Barlow,⁴² Y. M. Chia,⁴² C. L. Edgar,⁴²
G. D. Lafferty,⁴² T. J. West,⁴² J. I. Yi,⁴² J. Anderson,⁴³ C. Chen,⁴³ A. Jawahery,⁴³ D. A. Roberts,⁴³ G. Simi,⁴³
J. M. Tuggle,⁴³ G. Blaylock,⁴⁴ C. Dallapiccola,⁴⁴ S. S. Hertzbach,⁴⁴ X. Li,⁴⁴ T. B. Moore,⁴⁴ E. Salvati,⁴⁴
S. Saremi,⁴⁴ R. Cowan,⁴⁵ D. Dujmic,⁴⁵ P. H. Fisher,⁴⁵ K. Koeneke,⁴⁵ G. Sciolla,⁴⁵ S. J. Sekula,⁴⁵ M. Spitznagel,⁴⁵
F. Taylor,⁴⁵ R. K. Yamamoto,⁴⁵ M. Zhao,⁴⁵ Y. Zheng,⁴⁵ S. E. Mclachlin,^{46,*} P. M. Patel,⁴⁶ S. H. Robertson,⁴⁶
A. Lazzaro,⁴⁷ F. Palombo,⁴⁷ J. M. Bauer,⁴⁸ L. Cremaldi,⁴⁸ V. Eschenburg,⁴⁸ R. Godang,⁴⁸ R. Kroeger,⁴⁸
D. A. Sanders,⁴⁸ D. J. Summers,⁴⁸ H. W. Zhao,⁴⁸ S. Brunet,⁴⁹ D. Côté,⁴⁹ M. Simard,⁴⁹ P. Taras,⁴⁹ F. B. Viaud,⁴⁹
H. Nicholson,⁵⁰ G. De Nardo,⁵¹ F. Fabozzi,^{51,§} L. Lista,⁵¹ D. Monorchio,⁵¹ C. Sciacca,⁵¹ M. A. Baak,⁵² G. Raven,⁵²

H. L. Snoek,⁵² C. P. Jessop,⁵³ K. J. Knoepfel,⁵³ J. M. LoSecco,⁵³ G. Benelli,⁵⁴ L. A. Corwin,⁵⁴ K. Honscheid,⁵⁴ H. Kagan,⁵⁴ R. Kass,⁵⁴ J. P. Morris,⁵⁴ A. M. Rahimi,⁵⁴ J. J. Regensburger,⁵⁴ Q. K. Wong,⁵⁴ N. L. Blount,⁵⁵ J. Brau,⁵⁵ R. Frey,⁵⁵ O. Igonkina,⁵⁵ J. A. Kolb,⁵⁵ M. Lu,⁵⁵ R. Rahmat,⁵⁵ N. B. Sinev,⁵⁵ D. Strom,⁵⁵ J. Strube,⁵⁵ E. Torrence,⁵⁵ N. Gagliardi,⁵⁶ A. Gaz,⁵⁶ M. Margoni,⁵⁶ M. Morandin,⁵⁶ A. Pompili,⁵⁶ M. Posocco,⁵⁶ M. Rotondo,⁵⁶ F. Simonetto,⁵⁶ R. Stroili,⁵⁶ C. Voci,⁵⁶ E. Ben-Haim,⁵⁷ H. Briand,⁵⁷ G. Calderini,⁵⁷ J. Chauveau,⁵⁷ P. David,⁵⁷ L. Del Buono,⁵⁷ Ch. de la Vaissière,⁵⁷ O. Hamon,⁵⁷ Ph. Leruste,⁵⁷ J. Malclès,⁵⁷ J. Ocariz,⁵⁷ A. Perez,⁵⁷ J. Prendki,⁵⁷ L. Gladney,⁵⁸ M. Biasini,⁵⁹ R. Covarelli,⁵⁹ E. Manoni,⁵⁹ C. Angelini,⁶⁰ G. Batignani,⁶⁰ S. Bettarini,⁶⁰ M. Carpinelli,⁶⁰ R. Cenci,⁶⁰ A. Cervelli,⁶⁰ F. Forti,⁶⁰ M. A. Giorgi,⁶⁰ A. Lusiani,⁶⁰ G. Marchiori,⁶⁰ M. A. Mazur,⁶⁰ M. Morganti,⁶⁰ N. Neri,⁶⁰ E. Paoloni,⁶⁰ G. Rizzo,⁶⁰ J. J. Walsh,⁶⁰ M. Haire,⁶¹ J. Biesiada,⁶² P. Elmer,⁶² Y. P. Lau,⁶² C. Lu,⁶² J. Olsen,⁶² A. J. S. Smith,⁶² A. V. Telnov,⁶² E. Baracchini,⁶³ F. Bellini,⁶³ G. Cavoto,⁶³ D. del Re,⁶³ E. Di Marco,⁶³ R. Faccini,⁶³ F. Ferrarotto,⁶³ F. Ferroni,⁶³ M. Gaspero,⁶³ P. D. Jackson,⁶³ L. Li Gioi,⁶³ M. A. Mazzoni,⁶³ S. Morganti,⁶³ G. Piredda,⁶³ F. Polci,⁶³ F. Renga,⁶³ C. Voena,⁶³ M. Ebert,⁶⁴ T. Hartmann,⁶⁴ H. Schröder,⁶⁴ R. Waldi,⁶⁴ T. Adye,⁶⁵ G. Castelli,⁶⁵ B. Franek,⁶⁵ E. O. Olaiya,⁶⁵ S. Ricciardi,⁶⁵ W. Roethel,⁶⁵ F. F. Wilson,⁶⁵ S. Emery,⁶⁶ M. Escalier,⁶⁶ A. Gaidot,⁶⁶ S. F. Ganzhur,⁶⁶ G. Hamel de Monchenault,⁶⁶ W. Kozanecki,⁶⁶ G. Vasseur,⁶⁶ Ch. Yèche,⁶⁶ M. Zito,⁶⁶ X. R. Chen,⁶⁷ H. Liu,⁶⁷ W. Park,⁶⁷ M. V. Purohit,⁶⁷ J. R. Wilson,⁶⁷ M. T. Allen,⁶⁸ D. Aston,⁶⁸ R. Bartoldus,⁶⁸ P. Bechtle,⁶⁸ N. Berger,⁶⁸ R. Claus,⁶⁸ J. P. Coleman,⁶⁸ M. R. Convery,⁶⁸ J. C. Dingfelder,⁶⁸ J. Dorfan,⁶⁸ G. P. Dubois-Felsmann,⁶⁸ W. Dunwoodie,⁶⁸ R. C. Field,⁶⁸ T. Glanzman,⁶⁸ S. J. Gowdy,⁶⁸ M. T. Graham,⁶⁸ P. Grenier,⁶⁸ C. Hast,⁶⁸ T. Hryn'ova,⁶⁸ W. R. Innes,⁶⁸ J. Kaminski,⁶⁸ M. H. Kelsey,⁶⁸ H. Kim,⁶⁸ P. Kim,⁶⁸ M. L. Kocian,⁶⁸ D. W. G. S. Leith,⁶⁸ S. Li,⁶⁸ S. Luitz,⁶⁸ V. Luth,⁶⁸ H. L. Lynch,⁶⁸ D. B. MacFarlane,⁶⁸ H. Marsiske,⁶⁸ R. Messner,⁶⁸ D. R. Muller,⁶⁸ C. P. O'Grady,⁶⁸ I. Ofte,⁶⁸ A. Perazzo,⁶⁸ M. Perl,⁶⁸ T. Pulliam,⁶⁸ B. N. Ratcliff,⁶⁸ A. Roodman,⁶⁸ A. A. Salnikov,⁶⁸ R. H. Schindler,⁶⁸ J. Schwiening,⁶⁸ A. Snyder,⁶⁸ J. Stelzer,⁶⁸ D. Su,⁶⁸ M. K. Sullivan,⁶⁸ K. Suzuki,⁶⁸ S. K. Swain,⁶⁸ J. M. Thompson,⁶⁸ J. Va'vra,⁶⁸ N. van Bakel,⁶⁸ A. P. Wagner,⁶⁸ M. Weaver,⁶⁸ W. J. Wisniewski,⁶⁸ M. Wittgen,⁶⁸ D. H. Wright,⁶⁸ A. K. Yarritu,⁶⁸ K. Yi,⁶⁸ C. C. Young,⁶⁸ P. R. Burchat,⁶⁹ A. J. Edwards,⁶⁹ S. A. Majewski,⁶⁹ B. A. Petersen,⁶⁹ L. Wilden,⁶⁹ S. Ahmed,⁷⁰ M. S. Alam,⁷⁰ R. Bula,⁷⁰ J. A. Ernst,⁷⁰ V. Jain,⁷⁰ B. Pan,⁷⁰ M. A. Saeed,⁷⁰ F. R. Wappler,⁷⁰ S. B. Zain,⁷⁰ M. Krishnamurthy,⁷¹ S. M. Spanier,⁷¹ R. Eckmann,⁷² J. L. Ritchie,⁷² A. M. Ruland,⁷² C. J. Schilling,⁷² R. F. Schwitters,⁷² J. M. Izen,⁷³ X. C. Lou,⁷³ S. Ye,⁷³ F. Bianchi,⁷⁴ F. Gallo,⁷⁴ D. Gamba,⁷⁴ M. Pelliccioni,⁷⁴ M. Bomben,⁷⁵ L. Bosisio,⁷⁵ C. Cartaro,⁷⁵ F. Cossutti,⁷⁵ G. Della Ricca,⁷⁵ L. Lancieri,⁷⁵ L. Vitale,⁷⁵ V. Azzolini,⁷⁶ N. Lopez-March,⁷⁶ F. Martinez-Vidal,⁷⁶ ¶ D. A. Milanes,⁷⁶ A. Oyanguren,⁷⁶ J. Albert,⁷⁷ Sw. Banerjee,⁷⁷ B. Bhuyan,⁷⁷ K. Hamano,⁷⁷ R. Kowalewski,⁷⁷ I. M. Nugent,⁷⁷ J. M. Roney,⁷⁷ R. J. Sobie,⁷⁷ P. F. Harrison,⁷⁸ J. Ilic,⁷⁸ T. E. Latham,⁷⁸ G. B. Mohanty,⁷⁸ H. R. Band,⁷⁹ X. Chen,⁷⁹ S. Dasu,⁷⁹ K. T. Flood,⁷⁹ J. J. Hollar,⁷⁹ P. E. Kutter,⁷⁹ Y. Pan,⁷⁹ M. Pierini,⁷⁹ R. Prepost,⁷⁹ S. L. Wu,⁷⁹ and H. Neal⁸⁰

(The BABAR Collaboration)

¹Laboratoire de Physique des Particules, IN2P3/CNRS et Université de Savoie, F-74941 Annecy-Le-Vieux, France

²Universitat de Barcelona, Facultat de Física, Departament ECM, E-08028 Barcelona, Spain

³Università di Bari, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-70126 Bari, Italy

⁴University of Bergen, Institute of Physics, N-5007 Bergen, Norway

⁵Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and University of California, Berkeley, California 94720, USA

⁶University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom

⁷Ruhr Universität Bochum, Institut für Experimentalphysik 1, D-44780 Bochum, Germany

⁸University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1TL, United Kingdom

⁹University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1Z1

¹⁰Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH, United Kingdom

¹¹Budker Institute of Nuclear Physics, Novosibirsk 630090, Russia

¹²University of California at Irvine, Irvine, California 92697, USA

¹³University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California 90024, USA

¹⁴University of California at Riverside, Riverside, California 92521, USA

¹⁵University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, California 92093, USA

¹⁶University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California 93106, USA

¹⁷University of California at Santa Cruz, Institute for Particle Physics, Santa Cruz, California 95064, USA

¹⁸California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California 91125, USA

¹⁹University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221, USA

²⁰University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309, USA

²¹Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523, USA

²²Universität Dortmund, Institut für Physik, D-44221 Dortmund, Germany

- ²³Technische Universität Dresden, Institut für Kern- und Teilchenphysik, D-01062 Dresden, Germany
- ²⁴Laboratoire Leprince-Ringuet, CNRS/IN2P3, Ecole Polytechnique, F-91128 Palaiseau, France
- ²⁵University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH9 3JZ, United Kingdom
- ²⁶Università di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-44100 Ferrara, Italy
- ²⁷Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati dell'INFN, I-00044 Frascati, Italy
- ²⁸Università di Genova, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-16146 Genova, Italy
- ²⁹Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA
- ³⁰Universität Heidelberg, Physikalisches Institut, Philosophenweg 12, D-69120 Heidelberg, Germany
- ³¹Imperial College London, London, SW7 2AZ, United Kingdom
- ³²University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242, USA
- ³³Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011-3160, USA
- ³⁴Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, USA
- ³⁵Universität Karlsruhe, Institut für Experimentelle Kernphysik, D-76021 Karlsruhe, Germany
- ³⁶Laboratoire de l'Accélérateur Linéaire, IN2P3/CNRS et Université Paris-Sud 11, Centre Scientifique d'Orsay, B. P. 34, F-91898 ORSAY Cedex, France
- ³⁷Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, California 94550, USA
- ³⁸University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 7ZE, United Kingdom
- ³⁹Queen Mary, University of London, E1 4NS, United Kingdom
- ⁴⁰University of London, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, United Kingdom
- ⁴¹University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky 40292, USA
- ⁴²University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom
- ⁴³University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, USA
- ⁴⁴University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003, USA
- ⁴⁵Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Laboratory for Nuclear Science, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, USA
- ⁴⁶McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3A 2T8
- ⁴⁷Università di Milano, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-20133 Milano, Italy
- ⁴⁸University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi 38677, USA
- ⁴⁹Université de Montréal, Physique des Particules, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3C 3J7
- ⁵⁰Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075, USA
- ⁵¹Università di Napoli Federico II, Dipartimento di Scienze Fisiche and INFN, I-80126, Napoli, Italy
- ⁵²NIKHEF, National Institute for Nuclear Physics and High Energy Physics, NL-1009 DB Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- ⁵³University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, USA
- ⁵⁴Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA
- ⁵⁵University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403, USA
- ⁵⁶Università di Padova, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-35131 Padova, Italy
- ⁵⁷Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, IN2P3/CNRS, Université Pierre et Marie Curie-Paris6, Université Denis Diderot-Paris7, F-75252 Paris, France
- ⁵⁸University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104, USA
- ⁵⁹Università di Perugia, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-06100 Perugia, Italy
- ⁶⁰Università di Pisa, Dipartimento di Fisica, Scuola Normale Superiore and INFN, I-56127 Pisa, Italy
- ⁶¹Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas 77446, USA
- ⁶²Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544, USA
- ⁶³Università di Roma La Sapienza, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-00185 Roma, Italy
- ⁶⁴Universität Rostock, D-18051 Rostock, Germany
- ⁶⁵Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0QX, United Kingdom
- ⁶⁶DSM/Dapnia, CEA/Saclay, F-91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- ⁶⁷University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina 29208, USA
- ⁶⁸Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, Stanford, California 94309, USA
- ⁶⁹Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305-4060, USA
- ⁷⁰State University of New York, Albany, New York 12222, USA
- ⁷¹University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996, USA
- ⁷²University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712, USA
- ⁷³University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, Texas 75083, USA
- ⁷⁴Università di Torino, Dipartimento di Fisica Sperimentale and INFN, I-10125 Torino, Italy
- ⁷⁵Università di Trieste, Dipartimento di Fisica and INFN, I-34127 Trieste, Italy
- ⁷⁶IFIC, Universitat de Valencia-CSIC, E-46071 Valencia, Spain
- ⁷⁷University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 3P6
- ⁷⁸Department of Physics, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, United Kingdom
- ⁷⁹University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, USA
- ⁸⁰Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut 06511, USA

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Using 383 million $B\bar{B}$ pairs from the *BABAR* data sample, we report results for branching fractions of six charged B -meson decay modes, where a charged kaon recoils against a charmless resonance decaying to $K\bar{K}^*$ or $\eta\pi\pi$ final states with mass in the range $(1.2 - 1.8) \text{ GeV}/c^2$. We observe a significant enhancement at the low $K\bar{K}^*$ invariant mass which is interpreted as $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1475)K^+$, find evidence for the decay $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1295)K^+$, and place upper limits on the decays $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1405)K^+$, $B^+ \rightarrow f_1(1285)K^+$, $B^+ \rightarrow f_1(1420)K^+$, and $B^+ \rightarrow \phi(1680)K^+$.

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Charmless hadronic B -meson decays have been of particular interest due to their sensitivity to weak interaction dynamics. The first observed gluonic-penguin-dominated decays, such as $B \rightarrow \eta'K$ and $B \rightarrow \pi K$ [1], allowed the study of CP violation in these decays with potential sensitivity to new physics [2, 3]. The relatively large $B \rightarrow \eta'K$ decay rate was also a topic of debate. However, little is known about the B meson decays to excited states of the η and η' mesons. There are three candidates for the first excited states $\eta(1295)$, $\eta(1405)$, and $\eta(1475)$ [4], and there is a possibility that they might include a gluonium admixture [5]. This part of the pseudoscalar meson spectrum remains uncertain after a few decades of studies [5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11]. A search for B -meson decays to these pseudoscalar states is the focus of this Letter.

The η and η' candidates and their excited counterparts, which we call generically η_X in this paper, have the quantum numbers $J^P = 0^-$ and decay strongly to at least three pseudoscalar mesons. Thus we look for the $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}\pi$ and $\eta\pi\pi$ final states. In the former case, the resonant structure $K\bar{K}^* + \bar{K}K^*$ is of particular interest and we refer to it as $K\bar{K}^*$. Previously, the $K^*K^+K^-$ final state has been studied by *BABAR* inclusively [12]. The $J^P = 1^+$ mesons $f_1(1285)$ and $f_1(1420)$ and $J^P = 1^-$ meson $\phi(1680)$ also appear in the mass range $(1.2 - 1.8) \text{ GeV}/c^2$ in these final states. These resonances are considered in our search for the decays $B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+$ and referred to by the generic nomenclature η_X as well. Hermitian conjugation is implied throughout this paper unless stated otherwise.

The $B \rightarrow \eta_X K$ decay mechanism is expected to be dominated by the $b \rightarrow s$ gluonic-loop penguin diagram, similar to the $B \rightarrow \eta'K$ decay. The expected branching fractions differ significantly depending on the η_X state [4], following a pattern that early naive factorization models were unable to predict [13]. The first attempt at unraveling the pattern in the branching fractions of B -meson decays with η and η' [14] suggested including the interference within the quark flavor octet among other possible scenarios, but the predictions did not match the experimental data. More recent calculations find a larger predicted rate for $B \rightarrow \eta'K$, in agreement with data, with inclusion of higher-order corrections [15] or ‘‘charming-penguin’’ contributions [16]; large theoretical uncertainties persist, partly due to insufficient experimental data. An admixture of a bound two-gluon state, gluonium, in

η_X could also explain the enhancement of the branching fractions.

Although the $\eta(1295)$, $\eta(1405)$, and $\eta(1475)$ states are considered well-established [4], their nature is still unknown. Partial wave analyses of the $K\bar{K}\pi$ and $\eta\pi\pi$ spectra from past experiments, such as studies in Refs. [7, 8, 9, 10], conclude that the meson spectrum in the $(1.2 - 1.8) \text{ GeV}/c^2$ range is described by a linear combination of the resonant states and a nonresonant phase-space contribution. The analyses in Refs. [7, 8] found that mass spectrum description without interference between the resonant and nonresonant contributions is preferred. Therefore, in our analysis we adopt the model of three spin-zero resonances $\eta(1295)$, $\eta(1405)$, $\eta(1475)$, three spin-one resonances $f_1(1285)$, $f_1(1420)$, $\phi(1680)$, and a phase-space nonresonant contribution without interference with the above states. Only four resonances are considered in each final state, $K\bar{K}^*$ or $\eta\pi\pi$, according to their dominant decay modes as discussed below.

We use a sample of (383 ± 4) million $\Upsilon(4S) \rightarrow B\bar{B}$ events collected with the *BABAR* detector [17] at the PEP-II e^+e^- asymmetric-energy storage rings with the e^+e^- center-of-mass energy $\sqrt{s} = 10.58 \text{ GeV}/c^2$. Momenta of charged particles are measured in a tracking system consisting of a silicon vertex tracker with five double-sided layers and a 40-layer drift chamber, both within the 1.5-T magnetic field of a solenoid. Identification of charged particles is provided by measurements of the energy loss in the tracking devices and by a ring-imaging Cherenkov detector. Photons are detected by a CsI(Tl) electromagnetic calorimeter.

We search for $B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+$ where η_X decays to $K\bar{K}^*$ and $\eta\pi^+\pi^-$. We reconstruct $K\bar{K}^* \rightarrow \bar{K}^0 K^\pm \pi^\mp$, $(\bar{K}^0)^0 \rightarrow K_s^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-$, and $\eta \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$. Isospin symmetry implies that the final states $K^0 K^-\pi^+ + \bar{K}^0 K^+\pi^-$ and $\eta\pi^+\pi^-$ constitute two thirds of $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*$ and $\eta_X \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi$, respectively.

We identify B meson candidates using two kinematic variables: $m_{\text{ES}} = \sqrt{s/4 - \mathbf{p}_B^2}$ and $\Delta E = \sqrt{s}/2 - E_B$, where (E_B, \mathbf{p}_B) is the four-momentum of the B candidate in the e^+e^- center of mass frame. We require $m_{\text{ES}} > 5.25 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ and $|\Delta E| < 0.1 \text{ GeV}$. The requirements on the invariant masses are $1.35 < m_{K\bar{K}^*} < 1.8 \text{ GeV}/c^2$, $1.2 < m_{\eta\pi\pi} < 1.5 \text{ GeV}/c^2$, $|m_{\pi\pi} - m_{K^0}| < 12 \text{ MeV}/c^2$, and $510 < m_{\gamma\gamma} < 570 \text{ MeV}/c^2$. The η_X invariant mass range is chosen to include the broad spectrum of states without extending it above the charm background pro-

duction threshold.

We require the photon energies be at least 100 MeV. For the K_s^0 candidates, we require the cosine of the angle between the flight direction from the interaction point and the momentum direction to be greater than 0.995, and the measured proper decay time to be greater than 5 times its uncertainty. In the $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^* + \bar{K}K^* \rightarrow K\bar{K}\pi$ decay channel, we require the $\bar{K}\pi$ or $K\pi$ invariant mass to satisfy $0.85 < m_{K\pi} < 0.95 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ for either $K^\pm\pi^\mp$ or $(\bar{K}^0\pi^\mp)$ combinations.

We use the angle θ_T between the B -candidate thrust axis and that of the rest of the event, and a Fisher discriminant \mathcal{F}_L to reject the dominant $e^+e^- \rightarrow$ quark-antiquark background. Both variables are calculated in the e^+e^- center-of-mass frame. The discriminant combines the polar angles of the B -candidate momentum vector and its thrust axis with respect to the beam axis, and two moments of the energy flow around the B -candidate thrust axis [18].

We suppress the background from B -decays into states with D or $c\bar{c}$ mesons by applying vetos on the invariant masses of their decay products. The remaining background (less than 10%) comes from random combinations of tracks from B decays, and from $B^+ \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*K^+$. When more than one candidate is reconstructed, we select the one with the lowest combined χ^2 of the charged-track vertex fit and of the invariant mass of the K_s^0 or η candidate relative to the PDG values [4].

We define the helicity angle $\theta_{\mathcal{H}}$ as the angle between the direction of the B meson and the normal vector to the η_X three-body decay plane in the η_X rest frame. The ideal distribution is uniform, \mathcal{H}^2 , or $(1 - \mathcal{H}^2)$ for η_X with $J^P = 0^-, 1^-,$ or 1^+ , respectively, where $\mathcal{H} = \cos\theta_{\mathcal{H}}$. The observed angular distribution can be parameterized as a product of the ideal angular distribution for a given spin and parity multiplied by an empirical acceptance function parameterized as a polynomial $P(|\mathcal{H}|)$.

We use an unbinned, extended maximum-likelihood fit to extract the event yields n_j and the parameters ζ of the probability density functions (PDF) \mathcal{P}_j . The index j represents six event categories used in our data model: the $B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+$ signal (four categories in each of the two η_X decay channels as shown in Table I), combinatorial background (mostly $e^+e^- \rightarrow q\bar{q}$ production with a few percent admixture of misreconstructed B -meson decays), and a possible background from $B \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*K$ (in the $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*$ channel) or other B backgrounds (in the $\eta_X \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi$ channel). The likelihood \mathcal{L}_i for each candidate i is defined as $\mathcal{L}_i = \sum_j n_j \mathcal{P}_j(\mathbf{x}_i, \zeta)$, where the PDF is formed from the observables $\mathbf{x} = \{m_{\text{ES}}, \Delta E, \mathcal{F}_L, \mathcal{H}, m\}$. Here m is the invariant mass of the η_X candidate.

We use a relativistic spin- J Breit-Wigner amplitude parameterization for the invariant mass of an η_X resonance with the nominal mass and width parameters quoted in Table I. We model the decay kinematics as

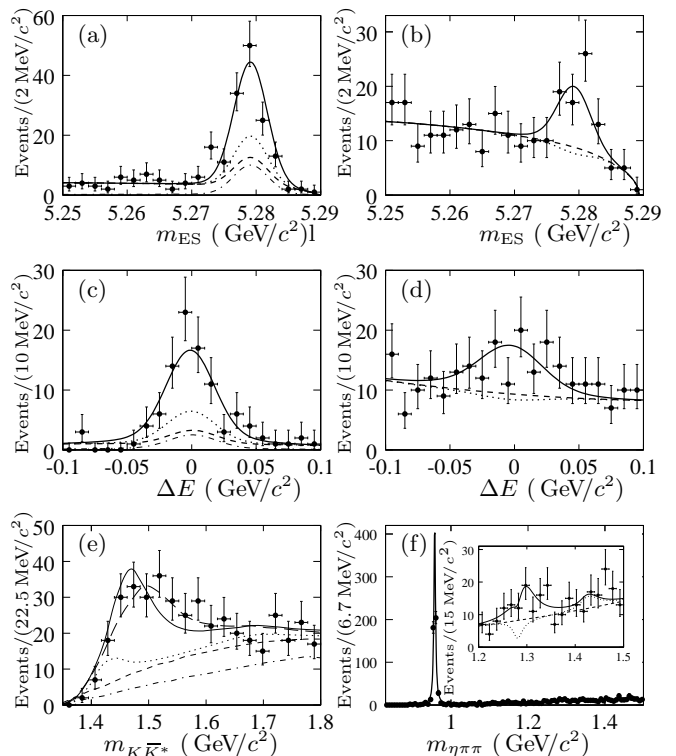


FIG. 1: Projections for $B^+ \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*K^+$ (left column) and $B^+ \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi K^+$ (right column) of (a,b) m_{ES} , (c,d) ΔE , (e,f) m with a requirement applied on the signal-to-background probability ratio calculated with all variables except the one being plotted. The extended mass region in (f) includes the η' resonance as a crosscheck. The nominal region is shown in the inset. The solid (dashed) lines show the signal-plus-background (background) PDF projections. The dotted line shows the total PDF projection excluding the $\eta(1475)K^+$ (left) or $\eta(1295)K^+$ (right) final states. The dash-dotted lines indicate the nonresonant component. The long-dashed line in (e) represents the cross-check with the $\eta(1475)$ resonance mass (m_0) and width (Γ) parameters unconstrained, both resulting in larger values.

$\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^* \rightarrow K\bar{K}\pi$ and $\eta_X \rightarrow a_0(980)\pi \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi$. For the $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*$ mode, the η_X invariant mass parameterization is corrected for phase space of the $B^+ \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*K^+$ decay and averaged over the $\bar{K}^* \rightarrow \bar{K}\pi$ invariant mass values. We ignore the interference between the overlapping resonances because it averages to zero for resonances with different quantum numbers or because these resonances have different final states, such as $\eta(1405)$ and $\eta(1475)$. The former decays mainly to $a_0(980)\pi$ (or direct $K\bar{K}\pi$) and the latter mainly to $K\bar{K}^*$ [4]. We also ignore the interference between the resonant and nonresonant decays based on indications from previous studies of η_X decays [7, 8] and due to potentially different three-body structure. This interference effect would only increase the significance estimate because the hypothesis of zero yield is not affected and the likelihood of the nominal fit could only improve. The significance is defined as the square root of the change in $2\ln\mathcal{L}$ when the yield is

TABLE I: Summary of results for the $B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+$ process studied with six B -decay modes and eight decay channels with the signal resonance and nonresonant model discussed in text, where $\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^* \rightarrow K_S^0 K^\pm \pi^\mp$ in the upper part and $\eta_X \rightarrow \eta\pi^+\pi^-$ in the lower part. The mass m_0 and width Γ of six η_X states are quoted [4] with errors in parentheses. The number of signal events n_{sig} with significance of the observed signal in parentheses, the product of the branching fractions \mathcal{B} and the corresponding daughter branching fractions, the $B^+ \rightarrow f_1(1285)K^+$ branching fraction, the corresponding 90% C.L. upper limits, and selection efficiencies ϵ obtained from MC simulation are shown. The systematic uncertainties are quoted last.

$\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*$	$\eta(1475)$	$\phi(1680)$	$\eta(1405)$	$f_1(1420)$
m_0/Γ [4], MeV	1476(4)/87(9)	1680(20)/150(50)	1409.8(2.5)/51.1(3.4)	1426.3(0.9)/54.9(2.6)
n_{sig}	155_{-19}^{+21+11} (7.5 σ)	$17_{-9}^{+6} \pm 7$	$-12_{-5}^{+8} \pm 1$	$36_{-14}^{+13} \pm 7$
90% C.L.	< 192	< 39	< 12	< 56
$\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+) \mathcal{B}(\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*)$	$(13.8_{-1.7-0.6}^{+1.8+1.0}) 10^{-6}$	$(1.5_{-0.8-0.6}^{+0.5+0.7}) 10^{-6}$	$(-1.2_{-0.5}^{+0.9} \pm 0.1) 10^{-6}$	$(2.7_{-1.0}^{+0.9} \pm 0.5) 10^{-6}$
90% C.L.	< 17×10^{-6}	< 3.4×10^{-6}	< 1.2×10^{-6}	< 4.1×10^{-6}
ϵ (%)	8.8 ± 0.1	9.0 ± 0.2	8.4 ± 0.3	10.7 ± 0.3
$\eta_X \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi$	$\eta(1295)$	$f_1(1285)$	$\eta(1405)$	$f_1(1420)$
m_0/Γ [4], MeV	1294(4)/55(5)	1281.8(0.6)/24.2(1.1)		
n_{sig}	$131_{-33}^{+35} \pm 10$ (3.5 σ)	$-30_{-19}^{+21} \pm 14$	$-14_{-33}^{+36} \pm 6$	$49_{-34}^{+35} \pm 11$
90% C.L.	< 179	< 30	< 54	< 99
$\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+) \mathcal{B}(\eta_X \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi)$	$(2.9_{-0.7}^{+0.8} \pm 0.2) 10^{-6}$	$(-0.8_{-0.5}^{+0.6} \pm 0.4) 10^{-6}$	$(-0.3_{-0.8}^{+0.9} \pm 0.1) 10^{-6}$	$(1.4 \pm 1.0 \pm 0.3) 10^{-6}$
90% C.L.	< 4.0×10^{-6}	< 0.8×10^{-6}	< 1.3×10^{-6}	< 2.9×10^{-6}
$\mathcal{B}(B \rightarrow f_1(1285)K^+)$	—	$(-1.5_{-1.0}^{+1.1} \pm 1.2) 10^{-6}$	—	—
90% C.L.	—	< 2.0×10^{-6}	—	—
ϵ (%)	17.6 ± 0.3	14.1 ± 0.9	16.5 ± 1.2	13.5 ± 0.6

constrained to zero in the likelihood \mathcal{L} .

The signal PDF for a given candidate i is the product of the PDFs for each of the discriminating variables. The combinatorial background PDF is the product of the PDFs for independent variables. The signal and background PDFs are illustrated in Fig. 1. We use a sum of Gaussian functions for the parameterization of the signal PDFs for ΔE , m_{ES} , and \mathcal{F}_L . For the combinatorial background, we use polynomials, except for m_{ES} and \mathcal{F}_L distributions, which are parameterized by an empirical phase-space function and by Gaussian functions, respectively. The nonresonant $B \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*K$ background is parameterized the same as signal, except for the quantity m , which is described by a phase function.

The PDF parameters (ζ) of the combinatorial background are left free to vary in the fit, except for the parameters that describe \mathcal{F}_L and the m_{ES} endpoint, which are fixed to the values extracted from the data sideband region ($m_{\text{ES}} < 5.27 \text{ GeV}/c^2$ or $|\Delta E| > 0.07 \text{ GeV}$). The PDF parameters for other event categories are taken from Monte Carlo (MC) simulation [19] and adjusted with $B \rightarrow \bar{D}\pi$ calibration data samples. We allow the yields to become negative as long as the total likelihood function remains positive in the allowed ranges of the observables. We study the goodness-of-fit using MC simulation.

In Table I we present the results of the fit. We observe (a) large charmless contribution in the decays $B^+ \rightarrow (K\bar{K}^*)K^+$ and $B^+ \rightarrow (\eta\pi^+\pi^-)K^+$ with a significant enhancement at the low $K\bar{K}^*$ invariant mass,

which is interpreted as $\eta(1475) \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*$ from the decay $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1475)K^+$. We also see evidence for a nonzero $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1295)K^+$ yield in the $\eta(1295) \rightarrow \eta\pi\pi$ channel with significances of more than 7.5 and 3.5 standard deviations, respectively, including systematic uncertainties. The significance is calculated within the model of resonant and nonresonant signal contributions discussed above and in earlier work [4, 7, 8]. We quote 90% confidence level (C.L.) upper limits, taken to be the values below which lies 90% of the total of the likelihood integral in the positive branching fraction or yield region.

We repeat the fit by varying the fixed parameters in ζ within their uncertainties to obtain the associated systematic uncertainties. The biases from the presence of fake combinations or other imperfections in the signal PDF model are estimated with MC simulation. Additional systematic uncertainties originate from other potential B backgrounds, which we estimate can contribute at most a few events to the signal component. The systematic uncertainties in selection efficiencies are dominated by those in particle identification, track finding, and K_S^0 and η selection. Other systematic effects arise from event-selection criteria, and the estimation of the number of B mesons.

The states $\eta(1475)$, $\phi(1680)$, and $f_1(1420)$ are expected to decay into the $K\bar{K}\pi$ final state through $K\bar{K}^*$ [4]. We cross-check the $K\bar{K}^*$ dominance by removing the $\bar{K}\pi$ mass requirement and find consistent results. With the present dataset we are unable to resolve intermediate

states in the $\eta\pi\pi$ modes, such as $\rho^0(770)$ and $a_0^\pm(980)$ resonances.

In the projection plots in Fig. 1, for illustration purposes, the signal fraction is enhanced with a requirement on the signal-to-background probability ratio, calculated with the plotted variable excluded. The m projection plot in Fig. 1 (e) implies a possible difference of the signal resonance parameters from the assumed values. We repeat the fit with the $\eta(1475)$ resonance parameters m_0 and Γ unconstrained while constraining other fit parameters to the values from the nominal fit. We find the m_0 and Γ central values to be larger, but still consistent with the nominal values within statistical uncertainties (1482 ± 10 MeV and 108 ± 20 MeV, respectively). We also repeat the fit with the m range extended up to 2.5 GeV/ c^2 and find good extrapolation of the fit results in the full range, apart from the narrow charm production contribution just above the 1.8 GeV/ c^2 threshold.

In summary, we have measured product branching fractions $\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow \eta_X K^+) \times \mathcal{B}(\eta_X \rightarrow K\bar{K}^*, \eta\pi\pi)$ for six B -decay modes that have not been studied previously, where η_X stands for either $\eta(1295)$, $\eta(1405)$, $\eta(1475)$, $f_1(1285)$, $f_1(1420)$, or $\phi(1680)$. We observe a significant enhancement at the low $K\bar{K}^*$ invariant mass which is interpreted as $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1475)K^+$ and find evidence for the decay $B^+ \rightarrow \eta(1295)K^+$. These decays could be used to either test weak dynamics in the predominant $b \rightarrow s$ gluonic-loop penguin transition or study the η_X composition, including potential gluonium admixture.

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[†] Now at Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 69978, Israel

[‡] Also with Università di Perugia, Dipartimento di Fisica, Perugia, Italy

[§] Also with Università della Basilicata, Potenza, Italy

[¶] Also with Universitat de Barcelona, Facultat de Física, Departament ECM, E-08028 Barcelona, Spain

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