Unexpected features of $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$ and $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ cross sections near threshold

Rinaldo Baldini$^{a,b}$, Simone Pacetti$^{a,b}$, Adriano Zallo$^b$, and Antonino Zichichi$^{a,d,e}$

$^a$Museo Storico della Fisica e Centro Studi e Ricerche “E. Fermi”, Rome, Italy
$^b$INFN, Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy
$^d$INFN and Department of Physics, University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy
$^e$CERN, Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: baldini@centrofermi.it
        simone.pacetti@lnf.infn.it
        adriano.zallo@lnf.infn.it

Abstract: Unexpected features of the BABAR data on $e^+e^- \rightarrow B\bar{B}$ cross sections ($B$ stands for baryon) are discussed. These data have been collected, with unprecedented accuracy, by means of the initial state radiation technique, which is particularly suitable in giving good acceptance and energy resolution at threshold. A striking feature observed in the BABAR data is the non-vanishing cross section at threshold for all these processes. This is the expectation due to the Coulomb enhancement factor acting on a charged fermion pair. In the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$ it is found that Coulomb final state interactions largely dominate the cross section and the form factor is $|G_p(4M_p^2)| \sim 1$, which could be a general feature for baryons. In the case of neutral baryons an interpretation of the non-vanishing cross section at threshold is suggested, based on quark electromagnetic interaction and taking into account the asymmetry between attractive and repulsive Coulomb factors. Besides strange baryon cross sections are compared to U-spin invariance predictions.

Keywords: QCD, Parton Model, Baryon form factors
1. $\sigma(e^+e^- \to BB)$ at threshold

The significance of baryon time-like form factors (FF) has been pointed out and looked for in $p\bar{p} \to e^+e^-$ long time ago [1]. However only recently an exhaustive set of data has been achieved by $BABAR$, showing unexpected features even if in part predicted on the basis of fundamental principles. Space-like FF behaviors are also driven by basic principles as it was anticipated [2, 3], but only after thirty years experimentally recognized [4]. Therefore baryon FF’s are still a lively topical subject.

Unexpected features are pointed out in the following, concerning recent cross section measurements of

$$e^+e^- \to p\bar{p}$$

and

$$e^+e^- \to \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}, \Sigma^0\bar{\Sigma}^0, \Lambda\Sigma^0$$

in the corresponding threshold energy regions. $BABAR$ has measured these cross sections [5, 6] (Fig. 1), with unprecedented accuracy, up to an invariant mass of the $BB$ system: $W_{BB} \sim 4$ GeV, by means of the initial state radiation technique (ISR), in particular detecting the photon radiated by the incoming beams.

There are several advantages in measuring processes at threshold in this way:

- even exactly at the production energy the efficiency is quite high and, in case of charged particles collinearly produced, the detector magnetic field provides their separation;

- a very good invariant mass resolution is achieved, $\Delta W_{\gamma} \sim 1$ MeV, comparable to what is achieved in a symmetric storage ring;

- a full angular acceptance is also obtained, even at $0^\circ$ and $180^\circ$, due to the detection of the radiated photon.
In Born approximation the differential cross section for the process $e^+e^- \rightarrow B\bar{B}$ is

$$
\frac{d\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow B\bar{B})}{d\Omega} = \frac{\alpha^2 \beta C}{4W_{B\bar{B}}^2} \left[ (1+\cos^2 \theta) \left| G^B_M(W^2_{B\bar{B}}) \right|^2 + \frac{4M^2_{B\bar{B}}}{W^2_{B\bar{B}}} \sin^2 \theta \left| G^E_E(W^2_{B\bar{B}}) \right|^2 \right],
$$

(1.1)

where $\beta$ is the velocity of the outgoing baryon, $C$ is a Coulomb enhancement factor, that will be discussed in more detail in the following, $\theta$ is the scattering angle in the center of mass (c.m.) frame and, $G^B_M$ and $G^E_E$ are the magnetic and electric Sachs FF’s. At threshold it is assumed that, according to the analyticity of the Dirac and Pauli FF’s as well as the S-wave dominance, there is one FF only: $G^E_E(4M^2_{B\bar{B}}) = G^B_M(4M^2_{B\bar{B}}) \equiv G^B(4M^2_{B\bar{B}})$.

The following peculiar features have been observed, in the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$ [5]:

- as it is shown in Fig. 1a, the total cross section $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p})$ is suddenly different from zero at threshold, being $0.85 \pm 0.05$ nb (by the way it is the only endothermic...
process that has shown this peculiarity);

- data on \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) \) show a flat behavior, within the experimental errors, in an interval of about 200 MeV above the threshold and then drop abruptly;

- the angular distribution, averaged in a 100 MeV interval above the threshold, has a behavior like \( \sin^2 \theta \), i.e. dominated by the electric FF, and then a behavior like \( (1 + \cos^2 \theta) \), i.e. dominated by the magnetic FF [see Eq. (1.1) and Fig. 2].

Similar features have been observed by BABAR in the cases of \( e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}, \Sigma^0 \bar{\Sigma}^0, \Lambda\bar{\Sigma}^0 \) [6] (Fig. 1b, c, d), even if within much larger experimental errors, in particular the cross section \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}) \) is different from zero at threshold, being 0.20 ± 0.05 nb.

Of course, extremely sharp rises from zero cannot be excluded and the relationship between data and predictions, reported in the following, could be accidental.

Long time ago it has been pointed out that final state Coulomb corrections to the Born cross section have to be taken into account in the case of pointlike charged fermion pair production [8]. This Coulomb correction has been usually introduced as an enhancement factor, \( C \) in Eq. (1.2). It corresponds to the squared value of the Coulomb scattering wave function at the origin, assumed as a good approximation in the case of a long range interaction added to a short range one, the so called Sommerfeld-Schwinger-Sakharov rescattering formula [8, 9]. This factor has a very weak dependence on the fermion pair total spin, hence
it is the same for \( G_E \) and \( G_M \) and can be factorized. The Coulomb enhancement factor is

\[
C(W_{BB}) = \begin{cases} 
1 & \text{for neutral } B \\
\frac{\pi \alpha/\beta}{1 - e^{-\pi \alpha/\beta}} & \text{for charged } B 
\end{cases}, \quad \beta = \sqrt{1 - \frac{4M^2_B}{W_{BB}^2}} \tag{1.2}
\]

In Ref. [10] a similar formula is obtained, but \( \frac{1}{\beta} \rightarrow \frac{1}{\beta} - 1 \); however that does not affect the following considerations. Very near threshold the Coulomb factor is \( C(W_{BB}^2 \rightarrow 4M^2_B) \sim \pi \alpha/\beta \), so that the phase space factor \( \beta \) is cancelled and the cross section is expected to be finite and not vanishing even exactly at threshold. However, as it is shown in Fig. 3, as soon as the fermion relative velocity is no more vanishing, actually few MeV above the threshold, it is \( C \sim 1 \) and Coulomb effects can be neglected.

Besides it has been emphasized [11] that a similar, but quite bigger in amount and energy interval, threshold enhancement factor due to strong interactions is forecast in the case of heavy quark pair production by \( e^+ e^- \) annihilation. Low-\( Q^2 \) gluon exchange should introduce in the cross section a factor similar to the Coulomb correction of Eq. (1.2), with \( \frac{4}{3} \alpha_S(Q^2) \) instead of \( \alpha \).

In the case of \( e^+ e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p} \) the expected Coulomb-corrected cross section at threshold is

\[
\sigma(e^+ e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p})(4M^2_p) = \frac{\pi^2 \alpha^3}{2M^2_p} \cdot |G^p(4M^2_p)|^2 = 0.85 \cdot |G^p(4M^2_p)|^2 \text{ nb,}
\]
in striking similarity with the measured one. Therefore Coulomb interaction dominates the energy region near threshold and it is found

\[
|G^p(4M^2_p)| \sim 1.
\]

In the following this feature is suggested to be a general one for baryons. It looks as if the FF at threshold, interpreted as \( B \) and \( \overline{B} \) wave function static overlap, coincides with the baryon wave function normalization, taking into account S-wave is peculiar of fermion pairs at threshold. In the case of meson pairs total angular momentum conservation requires a P-wave, that vanishes at the origin, hence this Coulomb enhancement factor too, and the cross section has a \( \beta^3 \) behaviour near threshold. Tiny Coulomb effects in the case of meson pairs have been extensively pursued [12].

Why \( \sigma(e^+ e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) \) is so flat above the threshold has to be explained as well as the following sharp drop. As a reference, in Fig. 4 the cross sections, in the case of a pointlike proton (solid curve) and in the case of \( |G^p_{M,E}| \propto 1/W^4_{pp} \), i.e. \( \sigma(e^+ e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) \propto 1/W^4_{pp} \) (dashed curve), are shown in comparison with the \( BABAR \) data. A non-trivially structured electric and magnetic FF’s [Eq. (1.1)] have to be included to get this cross section. In particular the different behavior at threshold and the dominance of the electric FF are consistent with a sudden and important D-wave contribution. In fact, angular momentum and parity conservation allow, in addition to the S-wave, also the D-wave contribution. In Ref. [7], by means of a dispersion relation, applied to the space-like ratio \( G^p_E/G^p_M \) and to
Figure 4: BABAR cross section $e^+e^-\rightarrow p\bar{p}$ in comparison with expected behaviors in case of pointlike protons (solid line) and assuming asymptotic FF’s (dashed line).

Figure 5: S-wave (a) and D-wave (b) FF’s as obtained in Ref. [7] from a dispersive analysis based on the BABAR data on the total $e^+e^-\rightarrow p\bar{p}$ cross section and the time-like ratio $|G^p_{M,E}|/G^p_E$.

The BABAR time-like $|G^p_E/G^p_M|$ (Fig. 2), the relative phase and therefore the S- and D-wave complex FF’s, $B^p_S$ and $B^p_D$, have been extracted. In terms of $G^p_E$ and $G^p_M$ they are:

$$B^p_S = \frac{(G^p_M W_{p\pi}/M_p + G^p_E)}{3}$$

$$B^p_D = \frac{(G^p_M W_{p\pi}/2M_p - G^p_E)}{3}.$$

S-wave and D-wave opposite trends, as shown in Fig. 3, produce the observed plateau.
2. An interpretation of $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda})$ at the quark level

In the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$, being $\Lambda$ a neutral baryon, final state Coulomb effects should not be taken into account and a finite cross section at threshold is not expected. Nevertheless the $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ cross section data (Fig. 1b) show a threshold behavior quite similar to that of $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p})$ (Fig. 1a), also the ratio $|G_E^\Lambda/G_M^\Lambda|$ (not shown) has a trend similar to $|G_E^p/G_M^p|$ (Fig. 3).

Assuming that this Coulomb dominance is not a mere coincidence, one might investigate what is expected at the quark level. Valence quarks only are considered in the following. The baryon pair relative velocity is equal to the quark pair average relative velocity. The quark velocity spread inside the baryon should come mostly from the relative velocity among the different quark pairs. Hence for each pair there is a Coulomb attractive amplitude times the quark electric charge and each amplitude has a phase taking into account the displacement of the quark inside the baryon. In addition to the quark pair Coulomb interaction there are contributions from quarks belonging to different pairs. There are several suppression factors for them: relative phase, velocity spread and moreover most of them, coming from quarks having charges of the same sign, are repulsive ones. There is no symmetry between repulsive and attractive Coulomb interactions and this asymmetry might explain why there is a non-vanishing cross section at threshold even for neutral baryon pairs. In fact in the case of repulsive Coulomb interaction the Sommerfeld formula is (charges $Q_q$ and $Q_q'$ have the same sign):

$$C(W_{p\bar{p}}) = \frac{-\pi\alpha|Q_qQ_q'|/\beta}{1 - \exp(+\pi\alpha|Q_qQ_q'|/\beta)} \rightarrow 0$$

i.e. $C = 0$ at threshold. Therefore at the quark level, considering only Coulomb enhancement factors due to quark pairs, it is expected:

$$\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p})(4M_p^2) = \frac{\pi^2\alpha^3}{2M_p^2}(2Q_u^2 + Q_d^2) \cdot |G^p(4M_p^2)|^2 = 0.85 \cdot |G^p(4M_p^2)|^2 \text{ nb},$$

in the proton case, and

$$\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda})(4M_\Lambda^2) = \frac{\pi^2\alpha^3}{2M_\Lambda^2}(Q_u^2 + Q_d^2 + Q_s^2) \cdot |G^\Lambda(4M_\Lambda^2)|^2 = 0.4 \cdot |G^\Lambda(4M_\Lambda^2)| \text{ nb},$$

in the $\Lambda$ baryon case.

The expectation for $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$, at quark level as well as at hadron level, is the same, namely the total cross section is 0.85 nb (assuming $|G^p(4M_p^2)|^2 \sim 1$) to be compared to the experimental value: $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) = 0.85 \pm 0.05$ nb at threshold. In the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$ the expectation range is $(0 - 0.4)$ nb (still assuming $|G^\Lambda(4M_\Lambda^2)| \sim 1$) to be compared to the experimental value at threshold: $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}) = 0.20 \pm 0.05$ nb.

3. Other baryon form factor measurements

The cross sections $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^0\Sigma^0)$ and $\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\Sigma^0)$ have been measured by the BABAR Collaboration for the first time [6], although with large errors. At threshold,
assuming a smooth extrapolation from the first data point, it is \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^0\Sigma^0) = 0.03 \pm 0.01 \text{ nb} \) and \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\Sigma^0) = 0.047 \pm 0.023 \text{ nb} \). The expectation, according to U-spin symmetry and some additional hypotheses on the interaction Hamiltonian \([13]\), is that \( \Lambda \) and \( \Sigma^0 \) have opposite (equal in modulus) magnetic moments as well as FF’s at threshold, apart from mass corrections. Hence, on the basis of the \( \Sigma^0 \Sigma^0 \rightarrow \Lambda\Lambda \) cross section it should be \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^0\Sigma^0) \sim \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\Lambda) \cdot (M_{\Lambda}/M_{\Sigma^0})^2 \sim 0.18 \text{ nb} \), by far greater than the experimental one.

Although at least the small mass difference among neutral strange baryons implies small corrections to U-spin conservation, full U-spin invariance should hold at enough high \( Q^2 \). A milder version of the U-spin invariance \([14]\), obtained under the assumption of negligible electromagnetic transitions between U-spin triplet and singlet, like the photon, is explored in the following. Therefore, neglecting \( \Lambda \) and \( \Sigma^0 \) mass difference and extrapolating the magnetic moment relations to the FF’s at threshold, it should be:

\[
G_{\Sigma^0} = G_{\Lambda} - \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}} G_{\Lambda\Sigma^0},
\]

that is, assuming real FF’s at threshold or no relative phase

\[
\sigma_{\Sigma^0\Sigma^0} = \left[ \frac{M_{\Lambda}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda}} - \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}} \frac{M_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}} \right]^2.
\]

In terms of adimensional quantities, the previous relation can be also written as:

\[
M_{\Sigma^0} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Sigma^0\Sigma^0}} - M_{\Lambda} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda}} + \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}} \frac{M_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}} = 0.
\]

Entering the \( \text{BABAR} \) results we get the following prediction for the \( \Sigma^0\Sigma^0 \) cross section at threshold

\[
\sigma_{\Sigma^0\Sigma^0} = \left[ \frac{M_{\Lambda}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda}} - \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}} \frac{M_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}} \right]^2 = 0.03 \pm 0.03 \text{ nb}.
\]

This value, which is quite lower than the \( \sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda} \) cross section, is consistent with the measured one. Using Eq. \((3.2)\) with the \( \text{BABAR} \) data for the cross sections at threshold

\[
M_{\Sigma^0} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Sigma^0\Sigma^0}} - M_{\Lambda} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda}} + \frac{2}{\sqrt{3}} \frac{M_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}}{M_{\Sigma^0}} \sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Sigma^0}} = (-0.1 \pm 2.0) \times 10^{-4}
\]

still in agreement with the minimal U-spin invariance prediction, within the experimental error.

The asymmetry between \( \Lambda \) and \( \Sigma^0 \) FF’s with respect to the proton case can be settled assuming that a suitable combination is the one properly normalized.

The aforementioned experimental evidence, i.e. \( e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p} \) and \( e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda} \) are dominated by the Coulomb enhancement factor and remain almost constant even well above their threshold, has to be tested in the case of

\[
e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^+\Sigma^-.
\]
According to U-spin expectation it should be
\[ e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^+\Sigma^- \sim \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) \cdot (M_{p\bar{p}}/M_{\Sigma})^2 \sim 0.53 \text{ nb}. \]

This measurement has not yet been done, but it is within the BABAR or Belle capabilities by means of ISR.

\[ \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n})(\text{nb}) \]

\[ W_{\pi\pi} (\text{GeV}) \]

\textbf{Figure 6:} The \( e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n} \) total cross section as measured by the FENICE Collaboration [15].

Another important process to understand the nucleon structure is
\[ e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n}. \]

The cross section \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n}) \) has been measured only once, long time ago by the FENICE experiment at the \( e^+e^- \) storage ring ADONE [15], that found above threshold \( \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n}) \sim 1 \text{ nb} \), as shown in Fig. 6. According to the above mentioned minimal assumption on U-spin invariance it should be
\[ G_n = \frac{3}{2} G_\Lambda - \frac{1}{2} G_{\Sigma^0}, \]

hence
\[ \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n}) = \frac{1}{4} \left( 3\sqrt{\sigma_{\Lambda\Lambda}M_\Lambda} - \sqrt{\sigma_{\Sigma^0\Sigma^0}M_{\Sigma}} \right)^2 \frac{1}{M_n^2} = 0.5 \pm 0.2 \text{ nb} \quad (3.4) \]

lower than the FENICE results, but not in contradiction because of their large errors, while the naive expectation
\[ \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow n\bar{n}) = \sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}) \left( \frac{Q_d}{Q_u} \right)^2 \simeq 0.2 \text{ nb} \]

is definitely in disagreement with them.
Unfortunately it is very unlikely that \textit{Babar} or Belle will ever be able to measure this process by means of ISR. However BESIII at the \(\tau\)/charm Factory in China and in part VEPP2000 in Russia can do that in the c.m. as well as by means of ISR at lower energies.

As mentioned before full U-spin symmetry in electromagnetic interactions of members of a SU(3) flavor multiplet should hold at enough high energy, at least when strange and non-strange mass differences become negligible. In this limit it is predicted \(G^\Lambda \sim -G^{\Sigma^0}\) and \(G^\Lambda \sim 0.5\, G^n\).

In Fig. 7 data on magnetic FF’s, scaled by the fourth power of \(\tau_B = W_{\text{FB}}/2M_B\), are shown as a function of \(\tau_B\). Strange baryon FF’s are obtained under the hypothesis \(|G_B^n| = |G^\Sigma_M|\), that of the neutron assuming \(|G^n_E| = 0\), while the proton magnetic FF, more properly, is achieved by means of dispersion relations using also the proton angular distribution measurements. The data show a trend in agreement with the full U-spin symmetry predictions. By the way \(\Lambda\) data and U-spin symmetry confirm the unexpected high cross section \(\sigma(e^+e^- \to n\overline{\nu})\), with respect to \(\sigma(e^+e^- \to p\overline{\nu})\). However, data on both \(G^{\Sigma^0}\) and \(G^n\) are quite poor and much better measurements are demanded, in particular in the case of \(e^+e^- \to n\overline{\nu}\).

Various theoretical models and phenomenological descriptions make predictions on baryon time-like FF [16]. In particular the \textit{Babar} cross section, angular distributions and \(e^+e^- \to n\overline{\nu}\) cross section have been reproduced, modeling final state interactions by means of a suitable potential [17].

\textbf{Figure 7:} Comparison among \(|G^\Lambda|, |G^{\Sigma^0}|, |G^p|\) and \(|G^n|/2\) scaled by the fourth power of the c.m. energy normalized to the mass of the final states: \(\tau_B = W_{\text{FB}}/2M_B\) (\(B = \Lambda, \Sigma^0, n, p\)).
4. Conclusions

All the $e^+e^- \rightarrow B\bar{B}$ cross sections, as measured by the $BABAR$ Collaboration, do not vanish at threshold. In the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$ this behavior is explained by the $p\bar{p}$ Coulomb enhancement factor and the form factor normalization: $|G^p(4M_p^2)| \sim 1$, which could be a general feature for baryons. This cross section is remarkably flat near threshold. It turns out that S- and D-wave have opposite trends, producing this peculiar behavior. In the case of $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Lambda\bar{\Lambda}$, as well as $e^+e^- \rightarrow p\bar{p}$ the non-vanishing cross section at threshold is consistent with a valence quark Coulomb enhancement factor. The $e^+e^- \rightarrow \Sigma^0\Sigma^0$ cross section is quite smaller than the expectation mentioned above and not in agreement with full U-spin invariance. However a consistent framework concerning strange baryon FF’s is obtained just requiring the suppression of electromagnetic transitions between U-spin singlet and triplet. Neutron and $\Sigma^+$ FF’s are demanded to check this new picture of baryon FF’s.

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