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We have searched for exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production in proton-antiproton collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 1.96$  TeV, using  $532 \text{ pb}^{-1}$  of integrated luminosity taken by the Run II Collider Detector at Fermilab. The event signature requires two electromagnetic showers, each with transverse energy  $E_T > 5$  GeV and pseudorapidity  $|\eta| < 1.0$ , with no other particles detected in the event. Three candidate events are observed. We discuss the consistency of the three events with  $\gamma\gamma, \pi^0\pi^0$ , or  $\eta\eta$  production. The probability that other processes fluctuate to  $\geq 3$  events is  $1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ . An upper limit on the cross section of  $p\bar{p} \rightarrow p + \gamma\gamma + \bar{p}$  production is set at 410 fb with 95% confidence level.

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In “central exclusive production” processes, *e.g.*  $p + \bar{p} \rightarrow p + X + \bar{p}$ , the colliding hadrons emerge intact with small transverse momentum,  $p_T$  [1], while the interaction products  $X$  are emitted at small pseudorapidity,  $\eta$ , and fully specified. Thus  $p + \bar{p} \rightarrow p + \gamma\gamma + \bar{p}$  and nothing else is *exclusive*, while  $p\bar{p} \rightarrow \gamma\gamma + \text{anything}$  is *inclusive*.

The exclusive processes offer novel possibilities to deepen our understanding of QCD and to observe and study the Higgs boson [2–4]. At high center-of-mass energy,  $\sqrt{s}$ , central states  $X$  can be produced only if they are neutral and have vacuum quantum numbers, predominantly  $J^{PC} = 0^{++}$ . (Spin  $J = 1$  is allowed only for photo-

production, *e.g.*  $\gamma$ +pomeron  $\rightarrow J/\psi$ , and  $J \geq 2$  is suppressed [3].) The only fundamental particle in the standard model of particle physics with these quantum numbers is the Higgs boson [2], responsible for electroweak symmetry breaking and for generating the masses of fundamental particles.

An exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  event can be produced via  $gg \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  through a quark loop, with an additional “screening” gluon exchanged to cancel the color of the interacting gluons, and so allow the leading hadrons ( $p$  and  $\bar{p}$  in this experiment) to stay intact, as shown in Fig. 1. This process is closely related [5, 6] to exclusive Higgs production at the LHC,  $pp \rightarrow p + H + p$ , where the production mechanism of the Higgs boson is  $gg$ -fusion through a top quark loop. In both cases the final state,  $H$  or  $\gamma\gamma$ , is not strongly interacting, and thus the QCD calculation of both diagrams is similar. However, the calculation is difficult as the screening gluon has low  $Q^2$ , and other non-perturbative interactions in the same  $p\bar{p}$  collision could produce additional particles. Calculations for exclusive Higgs production have been made using a variety of models, but these predictions cover a range of over two orders of magnitude [3, 4]. Since the QCD part of the calculation is the same for  $H$  and  $\gamma\gamma$  production, and only the calculable matrix elements  $gg \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  and  $gg \rightarrow H$  are different, exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production provides an excellent test of the theoretical predictions for  $H$  production. For exclusive production of two photons, each with transverse energy [1]  $E_T^\gamma > 5$  GeV and pseudorapidity  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1$ , the only predicted cross sections [6] are 40 fb at the Tevatron, at  $\sqrt{s} = 1.96$  TeV, and 200 fb at the LHC, both with a factor of approximately three uncertainty. The same authors predict  $\sigma(p+p \rightarrow p+H+p) = 1 - 10$  fb at the LHC for a standard model Higgs with  $M_H = 120 - 140$  GeV/ $c^2$ . Exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production has not previously been observed in hadron-hadron collisions.

Processes other than  $gg \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  can produce an exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  final state. Contributions from  $q\bar{q} \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  and  $\gamma\gamma \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  are respectively  $< 5\%$  and  $< 1\%$  of  $gg \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  [6]. The dominant backgrounds to the observation of exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  events are the production of  $\pi^0\pi^0$  or  $\eta\eta$ , with each meson decaying to two photons. No theoretical calculation of exclusive  $\pi^0\pi^0$  or  $\eta\eta$  production has been published; however, both cross sections are estimated [7] to be about 25% of the diphoton process, in the kinematic range of this study.

This Letter presents the first search for exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production in hadronic interactions. We use 532 pb $^{-1}$  integrated luminosity of  $p\bar{p}$  collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 1.96$  TeV delivered to the CDF II detector at the Tevatron. The CDF II detector is a general purpose detector described elsewhere [8]; here we give a brief summary of the detector components used in this analysis. Surrounding the beam pipe is a tracking system consisting of a silicon microstrip detector, a cylindrical drift chamber (COT), and a solenoid providing a 1.4 Tesla magnetic field. The

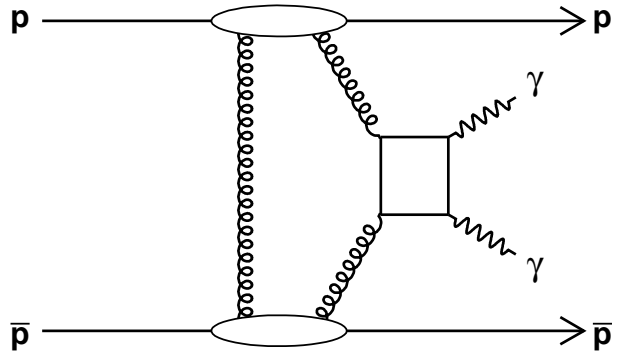


FIG. 1: The dominant diagram for central exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production in  $p\bar{p}$  collisions. The primary process is  $gg \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  through quark loops, with a screening gluon to cancel the exchanged color.

tracking system has nearly 100% efficiency for reconstructing isolated tracks with  $p_T \geq 1$  GeV/ $c$  and  $|\eta| < 1$ . It is surrounded by the central and end-plug calorimeters covering the range  $|\eta| < 3.6$ . Both calorimeters have separate electromagnetic and hadronic compartments. A proportional wire chamber (CES) [9] is embedded in the central electromagnetic calorimeter,  $|\eta| < 1.1$ , at a depth of six radiation lengths. It allows a measurement of the number and shape, in both transverse directions, of electromagnetic showers. The anode wire pitch (in  $\phi$ ) is 1.5 cm and the cathode strip pitch varies with  $\eta$  from 1.7 cm to 2.0 cm. The CES provides a means of distinguishing single photon showers from  $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  and  $\eta \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$ . The region  $3.6 < |\eta| < 5.2$  is covered by a lead-liquid scintillator calorimeter called the miniplug [10]. At higher pseudorapidities,  $5.4 < |\eta| < 7.4$ , scintillation counters, called beam shower counters (BSC), are located on each side of the CDF detector. Gas Čerenkov detectors covering  $3.7 < |\eta| < 4.7$  determine the luminosity with a 6% uncertainty by counting inelastic interactions [11].

Exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production is modeled with the EXHUME Monte Carlo generator [12], based on theoretical calculations [6, 13]. Simulated single photons, and photons from  $\pi^0$  and  $\eta$  decay, are passed through the GEANT [14]-based detector simulation [15] to determine their detection efficiencies.

The event signature requires two electromagnetic showers each with transverse energy  $E_T > 5$  GeV, with no other particles detected in the full CDF detector, which covers  $-7.4 < \eta < +7.4$ . The outgoing proton and antiproton are not detected. The event selection here follows closely that described in Ref. [16] where, using the same trigger and a similar analysis, we observed exclu-

sive  $e^+e^-$  production. The only differences are that we require no tracks, except for reconstructed photon conversions, pointing to the electromagnetic showers, and we restrict the  $|\eta|$  coverage from  $\pm 2.0$  to  $\pm 1.0$ . The trigger requires two electromagnetic clusters and no BSC counter activity in the region  $5.4 < |\eta| < 5.9$ . Both analyses required the signals from all detectors to be consistent with only noise, as determined from “bunch-crossing triggers” with no visible interaction, apart from two electromagnetic showers. The measured cross section for  $|\eta^e| < 2.0$  and  $p_T^e \geq 5$  GeV/c (for both  $e^+$  and  $e^-$ ) is  $1.6_{-0.3}^{+0.5}(\text{stat.}) \pm 0.3(\text{syst.})$  pb (16 candidates with  $1.9 \pm 0.3$  background), in agreement with the theoretical QED cross section of  $1.71 \pm 0.01$  pb. Assuming the theoretical cross section to be correct, this agreement is evidence that the efficiency of the cuts we make to define exclusive processes is well understood.

For the diphoton analysis we select events containing two electromagnetic showers, each with  $E_T > 5$  GeV and  $|\eta| < 1.0$  and with a hadronic-to-electromagnetic energy ratio  $< 0.058$ , consistent with that of a photon. We require either no tracks pointing to the showers or two adjacent tracks consistent with a photon conversion ( $\gamma \rightarrow e^+e^-$ ). The efficiency for triggering, reconstructing, and identifying a  $\gamma\gamma$  event with two photons each with  $E_T^\gamma > 5$  GeV and  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1$  is  $0.57 \pm 0.07$ . Cosmic ray events are rejected by requiring that the time of each shower is consistent with photons coming from a bunch crossing. The efficiency of signal events to pass this cut is  $0.93 \pm 0.03$ . We define “exclusivity” cuts that are designed to reject events having any additional particles in the range  $|\eta| < 7.4$  that are not associated with the  $\gamma$ -candidates; these cuts require no additional energy deposits (“particle signatures”) above noise thresholds in the calorimeters or the BSC. We do not use track or CES information in this selection. One particle can shower and cause several “signatures”. We define the exclusivity cut efficiency  $\varepsilon_{\text{exc}}$  as the probability that this exclusive requirement is not spoiled by another inelastic interaction in the same bunch crossing. It is measured, as explained in Ref. [16], as the fraction of bunch crossing triggers that pass the exclusivity cuts, which depends on the individual bunch-by-bunch luminosities. We find  $\varepsilon_{\text{exc}} = 0.086 \pm 0.001$ . The total efficiency is reduced by events which contain a photon conversion or electron bremsstrahlung which fail the exclusivity requirements, estimated to be  $0.87 \pm 0.09$  using the EXHUME simulation. The probability of the scattered  $p(\bar{p})$  depositing energy in the BSC is negligible if their  $p_T$  is less than 1.2 GeV/c.

The total efficiency for all the above event selection criteria, for the  $p\bar{p} \rightarrow p + \gamma\gamma + \bar{p}$  process, for photons each with  $E_T^\gamma > 5$  GeV and  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1$ , is  $4.0 \pm 0.7\%$ . Three events pass the selection criteria; their properties are given in Table I. The  $E_T$  values of the six electromagnetic clusters are all between 5 and 7 GeV, and the

azimuthal opening angle between the two photon candidates is  $\Delta\phi_{\gamma\gamma} \geq 2.9$  rad, so the  $\gamma\gamma$  invariant mass exceeds  $10$  GeV/c<sup>2</sup>. The difference from  $\Delta\phi_{\gamma\gamma} = \pi$  may be attributed to the outgoing  $p$  and  $\bar{p}$  transverse momenta.

Event	S	$E_T(\text{GeV})$	$(\eta, \phi)$	$N_{\text{CES}}$	$\chi_{\text{CES}}^2$	$P(\pi^\circ)$	$P(\gamma)$
A	A1	6.8	(0.44, 6.11)	1	1.0	0.14	0.26
	A2	5.9	(0.19, 2.83)	1	1.3	0.19	0.36
B	B1	5.0	(-0.07, 4.86)	1	1.4	0.21	0.39
	B2	5.4	(0.67, 1.66)	2	–	–	–
C	C1	6.0	(-0.44, 1.66)	1	13.4	0.89	0.98
	C2	5.1	(0.22, 5.05)	2	2.2	0.33	0.57

TABLE I: Properties of the calorimeter showers (S) of the three candidate events: given are the  $E_T$ , the  $\eta$  and  $\phi$  location, the total number of CES clusters inside the same CES chamber,  $N_{\text{CES}}$ , and the  $\chi_{\text{CES}}^2$  value (a shower shape variable, explained in the text). Also given are the probabilities that a  $\pi^\circ$  and a photon have a  $\chi_{\text{CES}}^2$  value smaller than that observed.

Five background sources to exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production are considered: cosmic rays, exclusive  $e^+e^-$  events where both electrons are mis-identified as photons, non-exclusive events in which additional particles do not leave a signature in the detector, “quasi-exclusive” events where one or both outgoing protons dissociate and the dissociation products are all very forward, beyond the detector coverage, and exclusive  $\pi^\circ\pi^\circ$  or  $\eta\eta$  production.

The cosmic ray background is determined to be negligible from the distribution of the arrival time of electromagnetic showers. Cosmic rays are also expected to give hits in the tracking detectors. However, a visual inspection of the event displays shows only random noise hits in the COT and the silicon detector for 5 of the 6 showers in Table I. In the sixth case, shower B2, an  $e^+e^-$ -pair from a photon conversion is seen, with the sum of the two momenta consistent with the calorimeter shower energy.

Dielectron events could be misidentified as  $\gamma\gamma$  events if both electron tracks are not reconstructed or the electrons undergo energetic bremsstrahlung. This contribution is estimated by applying a 5% electron misidentification rate to each electron in the exclusive  $e^+e^-$  sample from Ref. [16]. The 5% is the simulated probability that an electron with  $5 < p_T < 7$  GeV/c undergoes an energetic bremsstrahlung and is not reconstructed as a track. This gives a background estimate of  $0.02 \pm 0.02$  events.

Non-exclusive events, i.e. those with central particles in addition to the two photons, may appear to be exclusive if the additional particles are not detected through inefficiency. We study this by selecting events that contain two photon candidates and no tracks in the tracking detectors (other than conversion tracks), without other requirements on the central and end-plug calorimeters. Only four events in the data sample pass these

criteria: the three candidates with zero additional particle signatures, and one event with 13 signatures in the calorimeters. This background is estimated to be  $0.06 \pm 0.03$  events by using the same shape for the distribution of additional particle signatures as in exclusive  $e^+e^-$  events [16].

The proton dissociation background is small since all the dissociation products must have  $|\eta| > 7.4$  to escape detection in the BSC counters. There are also few excitation states available to the proton due to spin restrictions on the final state [13]. In Ref. [6] it was estimated that the dissociation background is not expected to exceed  $\sim 0.1\%$  of the exclusive signal sample, which corresponds to  $\leq 0.01$  events in the three-candidate sample. We take this background to be  $0.01 \pm 0.01$  events.

Backgrounds to  $\gamma\gamma$  production can arise from exclusive pair production of neutral mesons, *i.e.*  $\pi^0\pi^0$  and  $\eta\eta$ . One photon from the  $\pi^0$  or  $\eta$  decay can be undetected or, in the  $\pi^0$  case, the two photon showers can merge. Exclusive  $\pi^0\eta$  is suppressed by isospin conservation and  $\gamma + (\pi^0/\eta)$  is forbidden by C-parity conservation. Production of  $\pi^0\pi^0$  and  $\eta\eta$  cannot be unambiguously distinguished from  $\gamma\gamma$  production on an event-by-event basis. Since the cross sections are not well known, these backgrounds cannot be directly calculated; we discuss them later.

We therefore observe three exclusive  $p\bar{p} \rightarrow p + (\gamma\gamma/\pi^0\pi^0/\eta\eta) + \bar{p}$  candidate events with a background of  $0.09 \pm 0.04$  events. The probability for three or more events to be observed when  $0.09 \pm 0.04$  (assumed to be Gaussian) are expected is  $1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ . We set an upper limit on the cross section for exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production, taking into account the background and its uncertainty, the signal selection efficiency, and the integrated luminosity. A Bayesian approach is used assuming a flat prior for the cross section and a Gaussian distribution for the uncertainties. This gives a limit on the production cross section  $\sigma(p + \bar{p} \rightarrow p + \gamma\gamma + \bar{p}) < 410$  fb (for  $E_T^\gamma > 5$  GeV,  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1$ ) at 95% confidence level.

We now discuss the three candidate events as possible  $\gamma\gamma$ ,  $\pi^0\pi^0$ , or  $\eta\eta$  production. The selection efficiency, including exclusivity cuts, for a photon from an isolated  $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  is 13% lower than that of a direct photon, while the selection efficiency for an isolated  $\eta \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  is 35% lower. Relative to  $\pi^0\pi^0$  production,  $\eta\eta$  detection is further suppressed by a factor 0.15, due to the branching fraction for  $\eta \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$ . We therefore treat the potential background as being predominantly  $\pi^0\pi^0$ .

We can only distinguish between single photons, and photons from  $\pi^0$  decay, using the distribution of signals on the CES strips and wires, in the module covering  $\Delta\phi = 15^\circ$  and  $|\eta| < 1.1$ , which contains the shower. CES clusters are formed using 11 adjacent strips or wires. We may observe two separate clusters,  $N_{CES} = 2$ , from  $\pi^0$  decay. If we observe a single cluster,  $N_{CES} = 1$ , it could be from a  $\pi^0$  if the two photon showers overlap or if

one photon shower is not detected. The number of CES clusters in the three candidate events is shown in Table I. While only 12% of photons have a second CES cluster, 28% (46%) of the  $\pi^0$  ( $\eta$ ) do. From simulation the probability that one photon from  $\pi^0/\eta \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  is not detected in the CES, by ranging out or not interacting, is  $0.125 \pm 0.025$ . Single clusters from photons or  $\pi^0$  can be distinguished statistically using their shape. We use the distribution of pulse heights on the wires and strips to form a variable,  $\chi_{CES}^2$ , that compares the lateral shape with that for an electron shower. A simulated distribution of  $\chi_{CES}^2$  for photons and  $\pi^0$ 's is shown in Fig. 2; it has a longer tail for  $\pi^0$ 's than for photons but it does not allow an event-by-event separation. This simulation includes the cases where one of the photons from a  $\pi^0$  goes into an uninstrumented calorimeter region. Using the distributions in Fig. 2 the probability ( $P(\gamma), P(\pi^0)$ ) that a shower has a  $\chi_{CES}^2$  less than the observed value was calculated for the five non-conversion shower candidates. Calculated values are given in Table I.

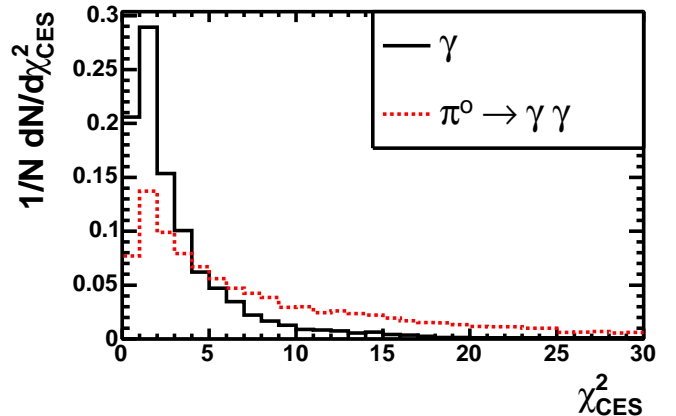


FIG. 2: The simulated distribution for  $\chi_{CES}^2$  for prompt photons (solid histogram), and  $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  decays (dashed histogram). In all cases  $E_T$  is required to be between 5 and 7 GeV.

In Event A both showers are single clusters with a small  $\chi_{CES}^2$ , more consistent with originating from photons than from  $\pi^0$ 's. In Event B shower B1 also has a very low  $\chi_{CES}^2$ , while shower B2 is a photon conversion and the  $\chi_{CES}^2$  method cannot be used. Two clusters in the CES are separated in  $\phi$ , but not in  $\eta$ , as expected for a conversion. The sum of the two track momenta is 5.40 GeV/c, and the calorimeter energy is  $5.45 \pm 0.35$  GeV, so if there were a second photon from a  $\pi^0$  or  $\eta$  it would have  $E_\gamma < 0.55$  GeV (95% C.L.), with a probability  $< 10\%$  that a  $\pi^0$  or  $\eta$  decay would have such an energy asymmetry. Also, no additional shower is observed. In Event C, one shower (C1) has a very large  $\chi_{CES}^2$  (only 2% of photon showers have a larger value), and the other shower

(C2) has  $N_{\text{CES}} = 2$ . Both favor the hypothesis that it is a  $\pi^0\pi^0$  event.

The candidates are therefore consistent with all being  $\gamma\gamma$  events but one or more may be  $\pi^0\pi^0$  or  $\eta\eta$ . Events A and B clearly favor the  $\gamma\gamma$  hypothesis and event C favors the  $\pi^0\pi^0$  hypothesis. On the assumption that two of the three candidates are  $\gamma\gamma$  events we obtain a cross section  $\sigma(p+\bar{p} \rightarrow p+\gamma\gamma+\bar{p}) = 90_{-30}^{+120}(\text{stat.}) \pm 16(\text{syst.}) \text{ fb}$  ( $E_T^\gamma > 5 \text{ GeV}$ ,  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1.0$ ), compatible with the prediction (40 fb) of Ref. [6].

In conclusion, we have observed three candidate events for exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$ ,  $\pi^0\pi^0$ , or  $\eta\eta$  production with an expected background of  $0.09 \pm 0.04$  events. The probability to observe three or more events when  $0.09 \pm 0.04$  are expected from other processes is  $1.7 \times 10^{-4}$ , corresponding to a statistical significance of  $3.7\sigma$ . Though two of the candidates are most likely to arise from  $\gamma\gamma$  production, the  $\pi^0\pi^0/\eta\eta$  hypotheses cannot be excluded. Therefore we report a 95% C.L. upper limit on the exclusive  $\gamma\gamma$  production cross section ( $E_T^\gamma > 5 \text{ GeV}$ ,  $|\eta^\gamma| < 1.0$ ) of 410 fb, approximately a factor of ten higher than the prediction [6]. This result may be used to constrain calculations of exclusive Higgs boson production at the LHC; it disfavors the highest predictions. Additional CDF data, with a lower  $E_T^\gamma$  threshold, are being analysed, and a measurement at the LHC, at low luminosity, may be possible.

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- [1] A cylindrical coordinate system is used with the  $z$ -axis along the proton beam direction;  $\theta$  is the polar angle and  $\phi$  is the azimuthal angle. We define pseudorapidity as  $\eta = -\ln \tan(\theta/2)$ , transverse momentum as  $p_T = |p| \sin \theta$ , and transverse energy as  $E_T = E \sin \theta$ .
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