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Search for New Phenomena in Dijet Angular Distributions in Proton-Proton Collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV Measured with the ATLAS Detector

G. Aad et al.*
(ATLAS Collaboration)
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A search for new phenomena in LHC proton-proton collisions at a center-of-mass energy of $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV was performed with the ATLAS detector using an integrated luminosity of 17.3 fb$^{-1}$. The angular distributions are studied in events with at least two jets; the highest dijet mass observed is 5.5 TeV. All angular distributions are consistent with the predictions of the standard model. In a benchmark model of quark contact interactions, a compositeness scale below 8.1 TeV in a destructive interference scenario and 12.0 TeV in a constructive interference scenario is excluded at 95% C.L.; median expected limits are 8.9 TeV for the destructive interference scenario and 14.1 TeV for the constructive interference scenario.

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The search for an internal structure of fermions and new forces that might govern that structure is a major goal of modern particle physics. The most powerful probes are scattering experiments with large momentum transfer. Collisions of protons at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) resulting in two energetic jets of particles (dijets) provide the largest momenta transfer currently available, and therefore the deepest probe.

The angular distribution of jets relative to the beam axis in events with high dijet invariant mass ($m_{jj}$) provides stringent tests of perturbative quantum chromodynamics (QCD) as well as theories of new phenomena. QCD calculations predict that dijet production, dominated by $t$-channel gluon exchange in the kinematic region of proton-proton ($pp$) collisions at the LHC, features steeply falling $m_{jj}$ distributions and angular distributions peaked at $|\cos(\theta^*)| = 1$, where $\theta^*$ is the polar scattering angle in the two-parton center-of-mass frame. New phenomena, such as strong gravity [1,2] or new interactions [3–6] typically predict angular distributions which are more isotropic.

Previous studies of dijet angular distributions, at the CERN SPS [7,8], the FNAL Tevatron [9,10], the CERN LHC at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV [11–16], and by the CMS Collaboration at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV [17], have reported results consistent with the standard model (SM). This Letter reports on studies of dijet angular distributions in $pp$ collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV in data with an integrated luminosity of 17.3 fb$^{-1}$ collected with the ATLAS detector in 2012.

A detailed description of the ATLAS detector is published elsewhere [18]. The detector is instrumented over almost the entire solid angle around the $pp$ collision point, with layers of tracking detectors, calorimeters, and muon detectors.

The jets are measured using a calorimeter system composed of different detector types covering different regions in $\eta$ [19] and depth. The electromagnetic calorimeter is composed of liquid-argon sampling calorimeters, using lead as an absorber, and is split into a barrel ($|\eta| < 1.475$) and two end caps ($1.375 < |\eta| < 3.2$). The hadronic calorimeter is divided into a barrel and two extended barrels ($|\eta| < 1.75$), and two endcaps ($1.5 < |\eta| < 3.2$). The barrel and extended barrels are sampling calorimeters with steel as absorber and scintillator tiles as the active medium, while the hadronic end caps are liquid-argon calorimeters with copper as the absorber. In the very forward regions ($3.1 < |\eta| < 4.9$) there are liquid argon calorimeters with copper and tungsten absorbers.

The data are selected using a trigger that requires a single high-$p_T$ [19] jet above one of eight thresholds, ranging from 25 to 220 GeV. Because of the high rate of jets at lower $p_T$, only a fraction of the events from the lower seven thresholds are stored.

Individual jets are reconstructed using the anti-$k_t$ jet clustering algorithm [20,21] with radius parameter $R = 0.6$. The inputs to this algorithm are clusters [22] of calorimeter cells with energy depositions significantly above the noise. Jet four-momenta are constructed by the vectorial addition of clusters of cells, treating each cluster as a four-momentum with zero mass. The jet four-momenta are then corrected to the jet energy scale [23] as a function of $\eta$ and $p_T$ for various effects, the largest of which are the hadronic shower response, detector material distribution, and pileup events [24]. This is done using a calibration scheme based on samples of simulated events and validated with test-beam [25] and collision data [22] studies.
The rapidity of a jet is defined as \( y = \frac{1}{2}\ln\left(\frac{E + p_x}{E - p_x}\right) \), where \( E \) is the jet energy and \( p_x \) is the momentum component along the beam axis [19]. The scattering angle between two jets can be expressed using the variable \( \chi = e^{y_1 - y_2} = e^{2\gamma} \), where \( y_1 \) and \( y_2 \) are the rapidities of the two jets, and \( \gamma = \frac{1}{2}(y_1 - y_2) \). The rapidity boost of the dijet system with respect to the center of mass of the colliding protons is calculated as \( \gamma_B = \frac{1}{2}(y_1 + y_2) \).

For each trigger, the event is required to have a jet with \( p_T \) sufficient to achieve a trigger efficiency greater than 99.5%. For the lowest (highest) threshold trigger, this corresponds to \( p_T > p_T^{\text{min}} = 47(333) \text{ GeV} \). Events are required to have at least two jets, each with \( p_T > 50 \text{ GeV} \); the dijet system, defined as the two jets with largest \( p_T \), is required to have \( |\gamma| < 1.7, |\gamma_B| < 1.1 \), and \( m_{jj} > 600 \text{ GeV} \) (where the \( m_{jj} \) requirement avoids the kinematic bias in the angular distributions introduced by the minimum \( p_T \) requirement).

The detector covers the angular range \( |\gamma| < 1.7 \), corresponding to \( \chi < 30 \). This interval is divided into 11 bins, with boundaries at \( \chi_n = e^{0.3n\pi} \) for \( n = 0 \) to 10, approximating the segmentation of the calorimeter in \( \Delta\eta \). The data are further binned coarsely in \( m_{jj} \) with the expectation that low-\( m_{jj} \) bins are dominated by QCD processes and that signals associated with new physics would be found in higher dijet invariant mass bins. The bin edges are chosen to optimize the expected sensitivity to the model of contact interactions. The highest dijet mass observed is 5.5 TeV.

The SM predictions are estimated using the PYTHIA8 [26] v8.160 event generator with the AU2 [27] underlying-event tune and the CT10 [28] parton distribution functions (PDF). The simulated events are propagated through a detector simulation [29] that uses the GEANT4 [30] simulation package. Pileup conditions vary as a function of the instantaneous luminosity and are taken into account by overlaying simulated minimum-bias events generated with PYTHIA8 onto the hard-scattering process such that the observed distribution of the average number of interactions per bunch crossing is reproduced. The same reconstruction and event selection are applied to the simulated events and the data.

The PYTHIA8 calculations are primarily to leading order (LO) in QCD with simulation of higher-order contributions included in the shower modeling. Events generated by PYTHIA8 are reweighted using a correction factor calculated based on the ratio of the next-to-leading-order (NLO) cross-section calculation from NLOJET++ [31–33] v4.1.2 to the LO+shower calculation from PYTHIA8:

\[
K(\chi, m_{jj}) = \frac{\sigma_{\text{NLO}}(\chi, m_{jj})^{\text{NLOJET++}}}{\sigma_{\text{LO+shower}}(\chi, m_{jj})^{\text{PYTHIA8}}}
\]

The \( K \) factors decrease with \( \chi \) and thus modify the shape of the angular distributions; the impact ranges from a few percent at low \( m_{jj} \) to approximately 15% for the highest \( m_{jj} \) region. Additional processes accounting for electroweak (EW) effects not included in PYTHIA8 (virtual weak boson exchange and Sudakov-type logarithms) are included as EW corrections [34]. The effect is most pronounced at high \( m_{jj} \) and low \( \chi \), and the correction factors range from unity at low \( m_{jj} \) to 0.98–1.12 in the highest \( m_{jj} \) region. The EW corrections and the NLO \( K \) factors are applied as a function of \( \chi \) and \( m_{jj} \) to the PYTHIA8 prediction.

Figure 1 shows the distributions of the data as a function of \( \chi \). The distribution in each \( m_{jj} \) region is normalized to unity, as the sensitivity to new phenomena is due to the angular distribution rather than normalization. The predicted SM distributions are also shown in Fig. 1 and describe the data well. The EW corrections substantially improve the agreement of the SM prediction with data at high \( m_{jj} \), as can be appreciated from the comparison of the

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Data} & \quad \text{SM prediction} \\
\text{Theoretical uncert.} & \quad \text{SM, no EW correction} \\
\text{CI, } \Lambda = 8 \text{ TeV}, \eta_L = +1 & \quad \text{CI, } \Lambda = 12 \text{ TeV}, \eta_L = -1
\end{align*}
\]

FIG. 1 (color online). Distributions of the dijet angular variable \( \chi \) for several regions of dijet invariant mass \( m_{jj} \). Shown are the data (dots), SM predictions (solid lines) with uncertainties, and predictions for a benchmark theory of new contact interactions with a left-chiral color-singlet coupling with constructive (dotted, \( \eta_{LL} = -1 \) and \( \Lambda = 12 \text{ TeV} \)) or destructive (dashed, \( \eta_{LL} = +1 \) and \( \Lambda = 8 \text{ TeV} \)) interference with the SM processes. Also shown is the impact of the electroweak (EW) corrections described in the text. The error bars on data represent the experimental and statistical uncertainties added in quadrature, with a tick representing experimental uncertainties only. The theoretical uncertainties are displayed as a shaded band around the SM prediction.
predictions with and without these corrections shown in Fig. 1.

Models of quark compositeness are probed by searching for evidence of new interactions between quarks at a large characteristic energy scale, \( \Lambda \). At energies below this scale, the details of the new interaction and potential mediating particles can be integrated out to form a four-fermion contact interaction model \([5,6]\) described by an effective field theory:

\[
L_{qq} = \frac{2\pi}{\Lambda^2} [\eta_{LL}(\bar{q}_L\gamma_\mu q_L)(\bar{q}_L\gamma^\mu q_L) \\
+ \eta_{RR}(\bar{q}_R\gamma_\mu q_R)(\bar{q}_R\gamma^\mu q_R) \\
+ 2\eta_{RL}(\bar{q}_R\gamma_\mu q_R)(\bar{q}_L\gamma^\mu q_L)],
\]

where the quark fields have \( L \) and \( R \) chiral projections and the coefficients \( \eta_{LL}, \eta_{RR}, \) and \( \eta_{RL} \) turn on and off various interactions.

In this Letter, a contact interaction (CI) model with a left-chiral color-singlet gauge \((\eta_{LL} = \pm 1)\) is used as a benchmark model, as many other models of new phenomena have similar predictions for the dijet scattering angle \( \chi \) at large \( m_{jj} \). Interference of the signal model with the SM process \( q\bar{q} \to q\bar{q} \) is also included.

Event samples were simulated with both QCD and contact interactions, taking interference into account and using the same event generator, underlying-event tune, and PDF as for the SM simulations. Events were generated for both constructive and destructive interference with \( \Lambda = 7 \) TeV and \( \Lambda = 10 \) TeV. The \( \Lambda = 7 \) TeV sample is then used for extrapolation to other values of \( \Lambda \), using the fact that the interference term is proportional to \( 1/\Lambda^2 \) and the pure CI cross section is proportional to \( 1/\Lambda^4 \). This procedure is validated with the \( \Lambda = 10 \) TeV sample. As with the QCD prediction, a \( K \)-factor correction is computed to correct the \( \text{PYTHIA} \) LO + shower prediction to a NLO calculation. Calculations at NLO are provided by \( \text{CUET} \) [35] v1.0.

Uncertainties in the SM and signal predictions include theoretical uncertainties and experimental uncertainties on the measured angular distributions. Theoretical uncertainties in the SM and signal predictions are due to the choice of PDF, renormalization and factorization scales, choice of event generator, as well as statistical uncertainties due to limited simulation sample sizes. The impact of the uncertainty in the PDF is estimated using \( \text{NLOJET}++ \) with three different PDFs: CT10, MSTW2008 [36], and NNPDF23 [37]. These uncertainties are negligible (< 1%), as the choice of PDF largely impacts the total cross section rather than the angular distributions. The uncertainty due to the choice of renormalization and factorization scales were estimated by varying those independently up and down by a factor two in \( \text{NLOJET}++ \). The resulting uncertainty varies with \( m_{jj} \) and \( \chi \), rising to 4% at the smallest \( \chi \) values at high \( m_{jj} \). The uncertainty due to the choice of generator is estimated by comparing the predictions from the NLO generator \( \text{POWHEG} \) [38] v1.0 with those of \( \text{PYTHIA8} \) with \( K \) factors applied. The largest uncertainty due to choice of generator is at the lowest \( m_{jj} \) values, where it approaches 20%, while for the highest \( m_{jj} \) values and smallest \( \chi \), it ranges from 10% to 14%. The uncertainty due to the choice of the showering model is estimated through comparison of \( \text{POWHEG} \) samples showered and hadronized with \( \text{PYTHIA8} \) v8.175 to \( \text{HERWIG} \) [39] v6.520.2 samples using \( \text{JIMMY} \) [40,41] v4.31. The largest value of this uncertainty is less than 1% at the highest \( m_{jj} \) values and smallest values of \( \chi \). Finally the statistical uncertainties on the \( K \) factors due to limited simulation sample size are small and set to 1%.

The experimental uncertainty is dominated by the \( \eta \) dependence of the jet energy scale calibration. This uncertainty varies from approximately 15% at small values of \( \chi \) for the highest \( m_{jj} \) values, to a few percent at lower \( m_{jj} \) values and higher \( \chi \) values. The uncertainty in the beam energy is found to introduce a negligible contribution. The total uncertainty at the lowest \( \chi \), highest \( m_{jj} \) amounts to 20%, decreasing to a few percent at high \( \chi \). The total theoretical and experimental uncertainties are shown in Fig. 1.

The \( p \) value for the SM hypothesis is (0.25) 0.30 for the (second) highest \( m_{jj} \) bin. In the absence of significant deviations from the SM prediction, upper bounds on CI contributions are calculated using a one-sided profile likelihood ratio and the CL_{S} technique [42,43], evaluated using the asymptotic approximation [44] on events with \( m_{jj} > 3.2 \) TeV; the validity of asymptotic approximation was confirmed using toy simulations. These bounds exclude a compositeness scale below \( 8.1 \) TeV in a destructive interference scenario and below \( 12.0 \) TeV in a constructive interference scenario. The median expected limits are \( 8.9 \) (14.1) TeV for the destructive (constructive) interference scenario.

In summary, dijet angular distributions have been measured by the ATLAS experiment in 17.3 fb\(^{-1}\) of 8 TeV \( pp \) collisions at the LHC. Over a wide angular range and dijet invariant mass spectrum, the data are well described by QCD predictions at NLO. A model of quark compositeness is used as a benchmark for theories of new phenomena that include new forces and mediating particles; such theories predict deviations at small values of \( \chi \). A compositeness scale below \( 8.1 \) (12.0) TeV in a destructive (constructive) interference scenario is excluded at 95% confidence level, similar to results from the CMS Collaboration [17] and representing a significant enhancement in sensitivity relative to the previous limit (at 7.6 TeV for destructive interference) from the ATLAS Collaboration [11].

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[19] The ATLAS Collaboration uses a right-handed coordinate system with its origin at the nominal interaction point (IP) in the center of the detector and the z axis along the beam pipe. The x axis points from the IP to the center of the LHC ring, and the y axis points upward. Cylindrical coordinates (r, φ) are used in the transverse plane, φ being the azimuthal angle around the beam pipe. The pseudorapidity is defined in terms of the polar angle θ as $\eta = -\ln(\tan(\theta/2))$. The transverse energy and transverse momentum are defined by $E_T = E \sin \theta$ and $p_T = |p| \sin \theta$, respectively.
Department of Physics, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
Department of Physics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
School of Physics, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
Department of Physics, Stockholm University, Sweden
The Oskar Klein Centre, Stockholm, Sweden
Physics Department, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
Departments of Physics & Astronomy and Chemistry, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, USA
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom
School of Physics, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
Department of Physics, Technion: Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel
Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel
Department of Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
International Center for Elementary Particle Physics and Department of Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
Graduate School of Science and Technology, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Physics, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
TRIUMF, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Department of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan
Department of Physics and Astronomy, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, USA
Centro de Investigaciones, Universidad Antonio Narino, Bogota, Colombia
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California Irvine, Irvine, California, USA
INFN Gruppo Collegato di Udine, Sezione di Trieste, Udine, Italy
ICTP, Trieste, Italy
Department of Chimica, Fisica e Ambiente, Università di Udine, Udine, Italy
Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, USA
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden
Instituto de Física Corpuscular (IFIC) and Departamento de Física Atómica, Molecular y Nuclear and Departamento de Ingeniería Electrónica and Instituto de Microelecronicà de Barcelona (IMB-CNMI), University of Valencia and CSIC, Valencia, Spain
Department of Physics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
Department of Physics, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom
Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
Department of Particle Physics, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel
Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA
Fakultät für Physik und Astronomie, Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg, Germany
Fachbereich C Physik, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany
Department of Physics, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia
Centre de Calcul de l’Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules (IN2P3), Villeurbanne, France

aDeceased.
bAlso at Department of Physics, King’s College London, London, United Kingdom.
cAlso at Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan.
dAlso at Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, Russia.
eAlso at TRIUMF, Vancouver BC, Canada.
fAlso at Department of Physics, California State University, Fresno CA, USA.
gAlso at Department of Physics, University of Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland.
hAlso at Departamento de Física e Astronomia, Faculdade de Ciencias, Universidade do Porto, Portugal.
iAlso at Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia.
jAlso at CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France.
kAlso at Università di Napoli Parthenope, Napoli, Italy.
lAlso at Institute of Particle Physics (IPP), Canada.
mAlso at Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom.
nAlso at Department of Physics, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, St. Petersburg, Russia.
oAlso at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston LA, USA.
pAlso at Institucio Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avancats, ICREA, Barcelona, Spain.
qAlso at Department of Physics, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan.
rAlso at Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX, USA.
Also at Institute of Theoretical Physics, Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

Also at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland.

Also at Georgian Technical University (GTU), Tbilisi, Georgia.

Also at Ochadai Academic Production, Ochanomizu University, Tokyo, Japan.

Also at Manhattan College, New York NY, USA.

Also at Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at LAL, Université Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France.

Also at Academia Sinica Grid Computing, Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at School of Physics, Shandong University, Shandong, China.

Also at Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology State University, Dolgoprudny, Russia.

Also at Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland.

Also at International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy.

Also at Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC, USA.

Also at School of Physics and Engineering, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China.

Also at Faculty of Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.

Also at National Research Nuclear University MEPhI, Moscow, Russia.

Also at Department of Physics, Stanford University, Stanford CA, USA.

Also at Institute for Particle and Nuclear Physics, Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary.

Also at Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, USA.

Also at Discipline of Physics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

Also at University of Malaya, Department of Physics, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.