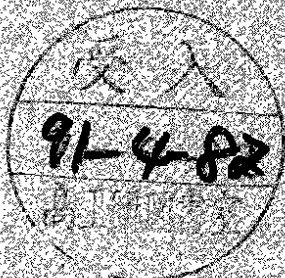
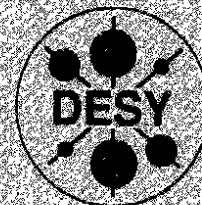


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at Hadron Colliders**

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## Characteristics of leptonic signals for $Z$ boson pairs at hadron colliders

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We study the production of  $Z$  boson pairs at hadron colliders followed by their subsequent decay into muons or electrons. We take into account the processes  $q\bar{q} \rightarrow ZZ$  and  $gg \rightarrow ZZ$ . The calculation incorporates all effects of the polarization of the  $Z$  bosons. Particular emphasis is put on the Higgs-signal where we study the angular distribution of the decay leptons, in order to determine the longitudinal polarisation fraction of the  $Z$  bosons. We also study the correlation of the decay planes of the leptons from the two  $Z$  bosons. This correlation may be significant for light Higgs bosons.

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# 1 Introduction

Although the standard  $SU(2)_L \times U(1)_Y$  electroweak gauge theory successfully explains all current data, certain parts of the theory have not been tested experimentally. The most important part of these is the mechanism of spontaneous symmetry breaking. Since in the standard model spontaneous symmetry breaking is due to the Higgs sector, the search for a Higgs particle is one of the main tasks for future colliders.

At present LEP100 gives a lower limit of about 41 GeV [1] for the Higgs boson mass. This limit can be improved to about 80 GeV at LEP200 [2]. For larger values of  $m_H$  one has to consider high energy hadron colliders such as the LHC ( pp collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 16$  TeV ) or the SSC ( pp collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 40$  TeV ). With the present lower limit on  $m_t > 89$  GeV [3] a Higgs lying below the  $WW$  threshold will mainly decay into a  $b\bar{b}$  pair. In this case there is an overwhelming direct QCD background, which dominates the signal. In this mass region the Higgs is therefore very difficult to find, even though one could try to use some rare decays as a signal. Rare decays already considered in the literature include, for example,  $H \rightarrow \tau^+\tau^-$  [4-7],  $H \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$  [4-11],  $H \rightarrow Z\gamma$  [6,7,12],  $H \rightarrow ZZ^*$  [6,7,13,14] or  $H \rightarrow WW^*$  [6,13-15]. All of these signals are rather difficult to see [7]. The situation is much better for heavy Higgs bosons ( $m_H > 2m_W$ ). For such a Higgs the main decay products are vector boson pairs,  $W^+W^-$  or  $ZZ$  [16]. A clear signal for the Higgs then consists of a peak in the invariant mass spectrum of the produced vector bosons. The double leptonic decay of the  $Z$  boson,  $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow l^+l^-l^+l^-$ , leads to a particularly clean signal [17].

For a heavy top quark the largest production cross section for a Higgs boson is the gluon fusion process [18-20], except for the very largest Higgs masses ( $m_H \gtrsim 600$  GeV), where vector boson fusion [21-23] becomes important. In this paper we will only be concerned with the gluon fusion process. For the top mass we take  $m_t = 150$  GeV throughout the paper. The main background to detecting a heavy Higgs in the  $ZZ$  decay mode at hadron machines is the continuum production of  $Z$  boson pairs. The sources of continuum vector boson pairs are  $q\bar{q}$  annihilation [24], gluon fusion [19,20] and vector boson fusion. As for the Higgs signal we ignore vector boson fusion here.

Higgs production through gluon-gluon fusion and its corresponding background, taking into account both  $q\bar{q}$  annihilation and gluon fusion, have been studied before in [19,20]. It is the purpose of this paper to extend these studies by incorporating the decay of the  $Z$  bosons into leptons. All polarization effects of the  $Z$  bosons are kept. We therefore can make an analysis of angular distributions of the decay leptons. There are two distributions that we study. One is the distribution of the cosine of the polar angle,  $\cos\theta$ , of the decay leptons relative to the  $Z$  boson. Because the Higgs decays mainly into longitudinally polarized vector bosons the cross section  $d\sigma/d\cos\theta$  should show a peaking near zero [23,25,26]. The other is the distribution of the angle  $\phi$  between the decay planes of the two  $Z$  bosons. This distribution depends on the details of the Higgs production and decay mechanism. Within

the standard model a behaviour roughly like  $1 + a \cos(2\phi)$  is expected [23,26,27], where the coefficient  $a$  can be sizeable for relatively small Higgs masses. For these distributions it is important to see what the effects of the lepton cuts are, because these cuts themselves can generate correlations among the outgoing leptons.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we discuss the general characteristics of the signal and the background at the LHC and the SSC. In section 3 the  $\cos \theta$  distribution and the decay plane correlation are discussed.

## 2 Cross sections

In this section we discuss the cross sections for  $Z$  boson pair production at the LHC and the SSC. We keep both the production by initial quarks as well as by incoming gluons. For the gluonic production of  $Z$  bosons we use the results of [20]. We remark that the amplitudes containing longitudinal polarizations in this paper should be multiplied by a factor  $-1$ . This change has no effect on integrated total cross sections, but does influence angular correlations. The decay of the  $Z$  bosons into leptons has been incorporated using the density matrix formalism. Furthermore, the propagators of the  $Z$  bosons have been treated in the narrow width approximation.

For the incoming partons we use the Duke and Owens structure functions [28] with  $\Lambda = 0.2$  GeV evolved to a scale  $Q^2 = \hat{s}/4$  and  $\alpha_s = 12\pi/(23 \log(Q^2/\Lambda^2))$ . For the top quark mass we take everywhere  $m_t = 150$  GeV. The various cross sections are obtained by means of a Monte Carlo integration over phase space and structure functions. In this integration cuts are imposed on the outgoing leptons. In order to crudely simulate a detector acceptance we take a rapidity cut of  $|y_l| < 3$  and demand a transverse momentum  $p_{Tl} > 20$  GeV for each lepton. The results we show are always for four outgoing muons and should be multiplied by a factor four if one wants to consider also outgoing electrons.

The total cross sections for two  $Z$  bosons decaying into muons with the above cuts are given in table 1 for a number of Higgs masses. We see that a sizeable number of events will be present both at the LHC and the SSC. In order to determine the mass of the Higgs boson the invariant mass spectrum of the  $Z$  boson pairs is needed. This is given in figs. 1 and 2 for the LHC and the SSC. The effect of the broadening of the Higgs peak for an increasing Higgs mass is clearly seen in these figures.

Another way to look for the Higgs is the study of the  $p_T$  spectrum of the outgoing  $Z$  bosons. Since the background is peaked at low transverse momentum, while the Higgs boson decays isotropically in its centre of mass frame, one expects a Jacobian peak above the background at

$$p_{TZ} = \frac{m_H}{2} \sqrt{1 - \frac{4m_Z^2}{m_H^2}} \quad (2.1)$$

This peak is indeed seen in figs. 3 and 4. The effect is more pronounced for heavier Higgs bosons. This suggests that one can improve the Higgs signal by

imposing a cut on the outgoing  $Z$  bosons of

$$p_{TZ} > \frac{m_{ZZ}}{4} \sqrt{1 - \frac{4m_Z^2}{m_{ZZ}^2}} \quad (2.2)$$

This formula is a refinement of a previous suggestion  $p_{TZ} > m_{ZZ}/4$ , taking threshold effects into account. The effect of this cut can be seen in table 2, where we give the signal and background for a number of Higgs masses. The signal is defined by the total number of events in an invariant mass range  $|m_{ZZ} - m_H| < \max(\Gamma_H, 10 \text{ GeV})$ . The background is defined as the number of events in the same range, but for  $m_H = \infty$ . We see that this cut improves somewhat the signal to background ratio, in particular for large Higgs masses.

### 3 Angular distributions

To obtain additional information on the Higgs we have also studied the angular distributions of the leptons. As far as we know it is the first time that both the  $q\bar{q}$  and  $gg$  backgrounds have been considered in such a study. In the following we will restrict the invariant mass of the  $Z$  boson pair to the range  $|m_{ZZ} - m_H| < \max(\Gamma_H, 10 \text{ GeV})$ .

The processes we are looking at are all of the type

$$X \rightarrow Z_1 Z_2 \rightarrow l_1 \bar{l}_1 l_2 \bar{l}_2 \quad (3.1)$$

where  $X$  is either the Higgs or one of the background processes. The decay angles  $\theta_i$  and  $\phi_i$  are defined as follows. Choose in the restframe of  $X$  the  $z$ -axis along the direction of motion of the vector boson  $Z_1$ . Now boost along the  $z$ -direction into the restframe of  $Z_1$ . In this frame the angles  $\theta_1$  and  $\phi_1$  are the polar and azimuthal angles of the lepton  $l_1$ . Repeating the above procedure for the other  $Z$  boson the angles  $\theta_2$  and  $\phi_2$  are found. The angles of interest are  $\theta = \theta_1 = \theta_2$  ( the  $\theta_1$  and  $\theta_2$  distributions are identical ) and  $\phi = \phi_1 + \phi_2$ . The last one,  $\phi$ , is the angle between the decay planes of the two  $Z$  bosons in the restframe of  $X$ .

The decay products of a heavy Higgs particle are predominantly longitudinally polarized  $Z$  bosons. Therefore, the angular distribution of the leptons in the  $Z$  rest frame is of the form,

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\cos\theta} \sim \sin^2\theta \quad (3.2)$$

The background  $Z$  bosons, however, are mainly transversely polarized. This gives rise to the following  $\cos(\theta)$  distribution

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\cos\theta} \sim 1 + \cos^2\theta \quad (3.3)$$

One can therefore use this distribution in order to confirm that the signal is indeed the Standard Model Higgs. Explicit distributions are given in figs. 5 and 6.

For this distribution we have not applied the  $p_{TZ}$  cut of formula (2.2). One notices that for a relatively light Higgs the correlation is not very strong. This is because the coupling of the longitudinal vector bosons is proportional with the Higgs mass. Naively one therefore expects the correlation to grow with the Higgs mass. In the figures one sees however, that the effect is stronger for  $m_H = 400$  GeV than for  $m_H = 600$  GeV. The reason for this is that the signal to background ratio is worse for the heavier Higgs.

To show that the Higgs signal is responsible for the particular form of the  $\cos(\theta)$ -distribution, we have plotted in fig. 7 the same distribution for the background only ( $m_H = \infty$ ) at the LHC energy. Here one recognizes the  $1 + \cos^2(\theta)$  form, which corresponds to transversely polarized  $Z$  bosons, although it is somewhat distorted due to the lepton cuts.

We also made a comparison of the  $q\bar{q}$ -background distribution with the literature and find reasonable agreement with [17], which appears to differ from [29].

Before presenting the Monte Carlo results for the decay plane correlations, we will first give some analytical expressions for this distribution. If no cuts are imposed on the final state leptons the  $\phi$  distribution can be calculated rather straightforwardly using the density matrix formalism [27]. Using the parametrization for the polarization vectors given in eq. (3.2) of ref. [20], one finds

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\hat{\sigma}}{d\phi} = N \left\{ \frac{64}{9}(c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 \sum_{a,b} \rho_{ab}^{ab} \right. \\ + 4\pi^2 c_V^2 c_A^2 \cos \phi \operatorname{Re}(-\rho_{00}^{++} - \rho_{--}^{00} + \rho_{0-}^{+0} + \rho_{-0}^{0+}) \\ - 4\pi^2 c_V^2 c_A^2 \sin \phi \operatorname{Im}(-\rho_{00}^{++} - \rho_{--}^{00} + \rho_{0-}^{+0} + \rho_{-0}^{0+}) \\ + \frac{32}{9}(c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 \cos(2\phi) \operatorname{Re}(\rho_{--}^{++}) \\ \left. - \frac{32}{9}(c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 \sin(2\phi) \operatorname{Im}(\rho_{--}^{++}) \right\} \end{aligned} \quad (3.4)$$

where  $N$  is a process dependent normalization factor and  $c_V$  and  $c_A$  are the vector and axial couplings of the leptons to the  $Z$  boson. They are given by

$$\begin{aligned} c_V^2 &= \frac{\pi\alpha}{4 \sin^2 \theta_W \cos^2 \theta_W} (1 - 4 \sin^2 \theta_W)^2 \\ c_A^2 &= \frac{\pi\alpha}{4 \sin^2 \theta_W \cos^2 \theta_W} \end{aligned} \quad (3.5)$$

The density matrix  $\rho$  is defined by

$$\rho_{cd}^{ab} = \sum_X M(X \rightarrow Z_1^a Z_2^b) M^\dagger(X \rightarrow Z_1^c Z_2^d) \quad (3.6)$$

here  $M(X \rightarrow Z_1^a Z_2^b)$  is the amplitude for producing a  $Z$  boson pair with helicities  $a$  and  $b$ . Because for the processes we are studying we have to identify angles  $\phi$

and  $-\phi$ , all information about the coefficients of the sine parts in eq. (3.4) is lost. Furthermore, if one cannot distinguish leptons from anti-leptons also the angles  $\pi \pm \phi$  are equivalent to  $\phi$ , which implies that only the coefficient of the  $\cos(2\phi)$  term can be determined. However, as the coefficient of the  $\cos \phi$  is rather suppressed compared to that of the  $\cos(2\phi)$  due to the smallness of the vector coupling  $c_V$ , it is unlikely that the  $\cos \phi$  part can be measured even if one can distinguish particles from anti-particles.

In case of the Standard Model Higgs signal and the  $q\bar{q}$  background we have calculated explicitly the decay plane correlations. For the Higgs signal one finds [26,27]

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\hat{\sigma}}{d\phi} = & \frac{1}{1024} \frac{1}{(4\pi)^4} \frac{\alpha^2 \alpha_s^2}{\sin^4 \theta_W \cos^4 \theta_W} \frac{1}{s} \sqrt{1 - \frac{4m_Z^2}{s}} \\ & \frac{m_Z^2}{\Gamma_Z^2} \frac{m_q^4}{(s - m_H^2)^2 + m_H^2 \Gamma_H^2} |1 + (1 - \lambda)F(\lambda)|^2 \\ & \left\{ \frac{64}{9} (c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 \frac{(s - 2m_Z^2)^2 + 8m_Z^4}{4m_Z^4} + 4\pi^2 c_A^2 c_V^2 \frac{s - 2m_Z^2}{m_Z^2} \cos \phi \right. \\ & \left. + \frac{32}{9} (c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 \cos(2\phi) \right\} \end{aligned} \quad (3.7)$$

with  $\lambda = 4m_q^2/s$  and

$$F(\lambda) = \begin{cases} \left\{ \arcsin \left( \sqrt{\frac{1}{\lambda}} \right) \right\}^2 & \text{if } \lambda > 1 \\ -\frac{1}{4} \left\{ \log \left( \frac{1 - \sqrt{1 - \lambda}}{1 + \sqrt{1 - \lambda}} \right) + i\pi \right\}^2 & \text{if } 0 \leq \lambda \leq 1 \end{cases} \quad (3.8)$$

For the  $q\bar{q}$  background we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d\hat{\sigma}}{d\phi} = & \frac{1}{1536} \frac{1}{(4\pi)^4} (g_L^4 + g_R^4) \frac{1}{s} \sqrt{1 - \frac{4m_Z^2}{s}} \frac{m_Z^2}{\Gamma_Z^2} \int_{-1}^1 d \cos \psi \\ & \left\{ \frac{64}{9} (c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 A + 4\pi^2 c_A^2 c_V^2 B \cos \phi \right. \end{aligned} \quad (3.9)$$

$$\left. + \frac{32}{9} (c_V^2 + c_A^2)^2 C \cos(2\phi) \right\} \quad (3.10)$$

where  $\psi$  is the polar angle of the  $Z$  bosons in the C.M. frame of the incoming gluons. The left and right handed couplings of the quarks to the  $Z$  bosons,  $g_L$  and  $g_R$ , are equal to

$$g_L^2 = \begin{cases} \frac{16}{9} \pi \alpha \tan^2 \theta_W & \text{for the u-type quarks} \\ \frac{4}{9} \pi \alpha \tan^2 \theta_W & \text{for the d-type quarks} \end{cases} \quad (3.11)$$

$$g_R^2 = \begin{cases} \frac{\pi \alpha}{\sin^2 \theta_W \cos^2 \theta_W} \left( 1 - \frac{4}{3} \sin^2 \theta_W \right)^2 & \text{for the u-type quarks} \\ \frac{\pi \alpha}{\sin^2 \theta_W \cos^2 \theta_W} \left( 1 - \frac{2}{3} \sin^2 \theta_W \right)^2 & \text{for the d-type quarks} \end{cases} \quad (3.12)$$



The coefficients  $A$ ,  $B$  and  $C$  in eq. (3.10) are given by

$$A = \frac{t}{u} + \frac{u}{t} + 4 \frac{sm_Z^2}{ut} - 4m_Z^2 \left( \frac{1}{t^2} + \frac{1}{u^2} \right) \quad (3.13)$$

$$B = -\frac{m_Z^2}{(s - 4m_Z^2)^2} \left\{ m_Z^2 (sm_Z^2 + 4ut - 8m_Z^4) \left[ \frac{1}{t} - \frac{1}{u} \right]^2 + s \left[ m_Z^2 \left( \frac{1}{t} + \frac{1}{u} \right) + 2 \right]^2 \right\} \quad (3.14)$$

$$C = \frac{m_Z^4 (ut - m_Z^4)}{(s - 4m_Z^2)^2} \left[ \frac{1}{t} - \frac{1}{u} \right]^2 \quad (3.15)$$

The symbols  $s$ ,  $t$  and  $u$  in the above equations are the usual Mandelstam variables. The hadronic cross sections can be obtained by folding eqs. (3.7) and (3.10) with the  $gg$  and  $q\bar{q}$  fluxes, respectively.

From eq. (3.7) one can see that the correlation is only sizeable for a relatively light Higgs. This can also be seen in fig. 8 where we show for the LHC the decay plane correlation due to the Higgs signal only, for  $m_H = 200, 400$  and  $600$  GeV. For the SSC we find exactly the same results. We have checked that our MC program reproduces the results for the Higgs signal and the  $q\bar{q}$  background as found by our analytical calculation.

For a more realistic study of the decay plane correlation we have imposed the same lepton cuts as mentioned before. Moreover, in our Monte Carlo also the  $gg$  background process, for which we have not calculated analytically the  $\phi$  distribution, is taken into account. In figs. 9 and 10 we show the decay plane correlation after imposing the lepton cuts for three values of the Higgs mass. From these figures one can see that for a Higgs of 200 GeV the decay plane correlation might be observable. However, for a much heavier Higgs it does not seem probable that the correlation can be observed experimentally. To investigate the effects of the lepton cuts on the  $\phi$ -distribution we have plotted in figs. 11 and 12 the decay plane correlation at the LHC, with and without the lepton cuts for a 200 GeV Higgs. As can be seen in fig. 11, without the lepton cuts the background is only very weakly correlated and it is the Higgs which is responsible for the correlation. However, after imposing the lepton cuts also the background gets correlated. We have found similar results for the SSC. As the lepton cuts clearly have the tendency to enhance the decay plane correlation for both signal and background, it is not clear whether this distribution can be used to distinguish a Standard Model Higgs from non-standard ones as suggested by [26,27].

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## Tables

**Table 1**

Total cross sections for  $ZZ$  production, followed by  $Z \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ . Muon cuts of  $|y_i| < 3$  and  $p_{Ti} > 20$  GeV are assumed.

$\sigma(fb)$	$m_H = 200$ GeV	$m_H = 400$ GeV	$m_H = 600$ GeV	$m_H = \infty$
LHC (16 TeV)	9.7	8.8	7.3	6.7
SSC (40 TeV)	28.1	26.7	20.1	17.3

**Table 2**

Signal and background for the Higgs. The signal is defined as the cross section after imposing the following cuts:  $|m_{ZZ} - m_H| < \max(\Gamma_H, 10 \text{ GeV})$ ,  $|y_i| < 3$  and  $p_{Ti} > 20$  GeV. The background as the cross section with the same cuts, but for  $m_H = \infty$ . The background is given between brackets.

$\sigma(fb)$	$m_H = 200$ GeV	$m_H = 400$ GeV	$m_H = 600$ GeV
LHC (no cut)	4.49 (1.43)	1.91 (0.33)	0.70 (0.29)
LHC ( $p_T$ cut)	3.84 (1.16)	1.62 (0.19)	0.55 (0.17)
SSC (no cut)	14.7 (3.45)	8.13 (0.91)	3.16 (0.90)
SSC ( $p_T$ cut)	12.7 (2.80)	7.17 (0.56)	2.68 (0.57)

## Figure Captions

1. Invariant mass distribution for  $Z$  boson pairs at the LHC.
2. Invariant mass distribution for  $Z$  boson pairs at the SSC.
3. Transverse momentum distribution of the  $Z$  bosons at the LHC.
4. Transverse momentum distribution of the  $Z$  bosons at the SSC.
5. Distribution of the lepton decay angle  $\theta$  in the  $Z$  rest frame at the LHC.
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8. Decay plane correlation of the  $Z$  bosons from the Higgs signal without cuts at the LHC.
9. Decay plane correlation of the  $Z$  bosons from the Higgs signal + background, including lepton cuts, at the LHC.
10. Decay plane correlation of the  $Z$  bosons from the Higgs signal + background, including lepton cuts, at the SSC.
11. Decay plane correlation of the  $Z$  bosons for a 200 GeV Higgs, without lepton cuts, at the LHC.
12. Decay plane correlation of the  $Z$  bosons for a 200 GeV Higgs, including lepton cuts, at the LHC.

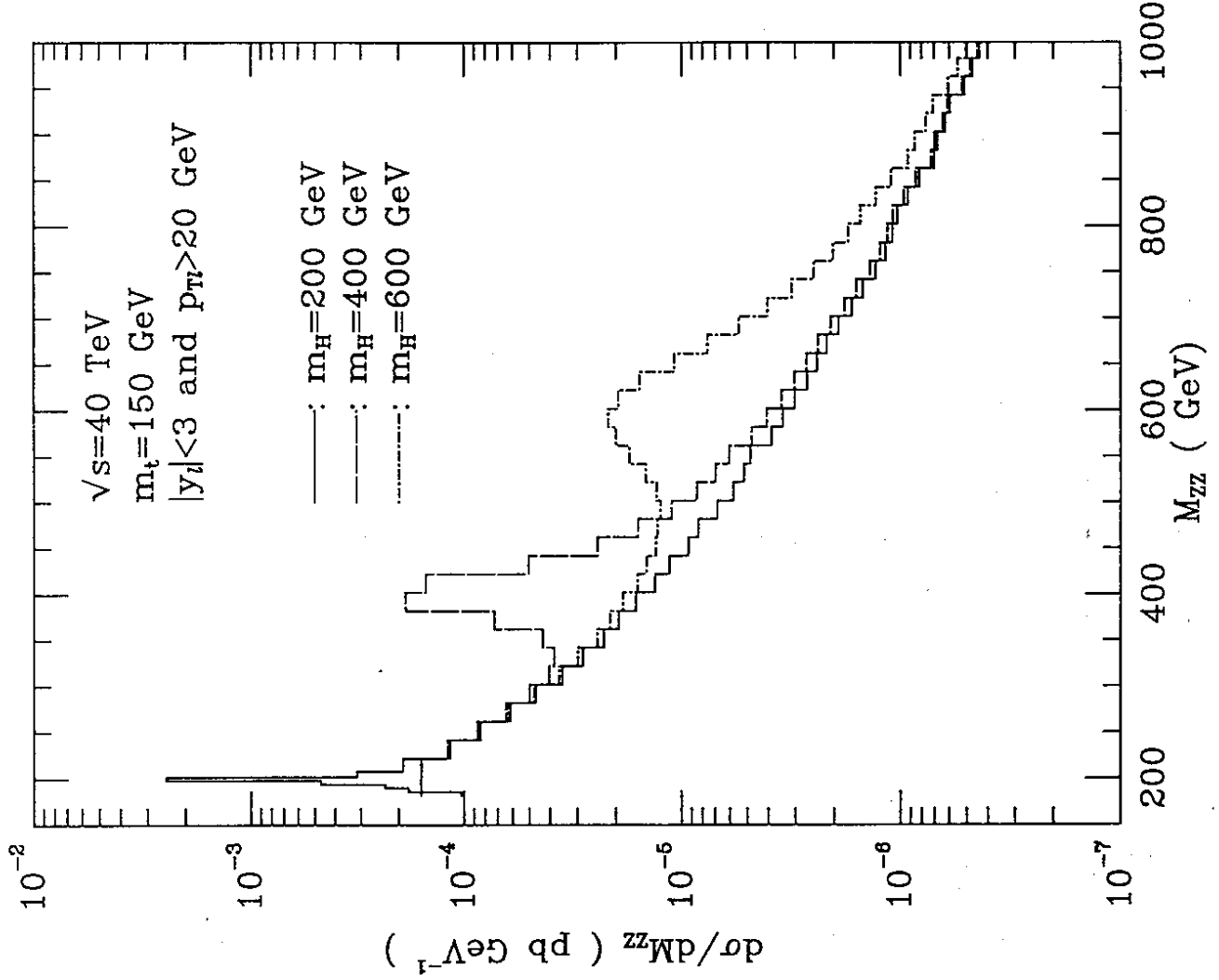


Fig. 1

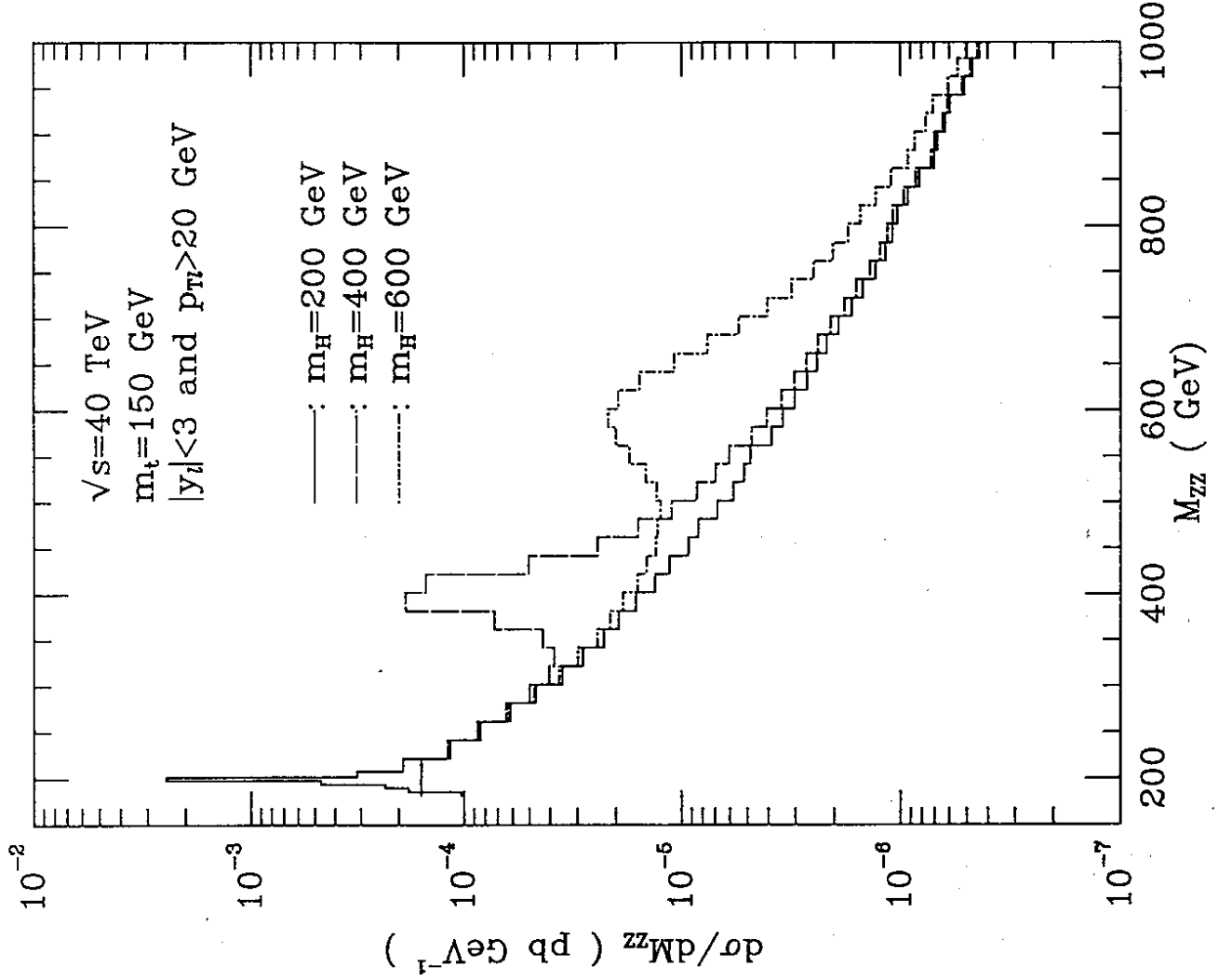


Fig. 2

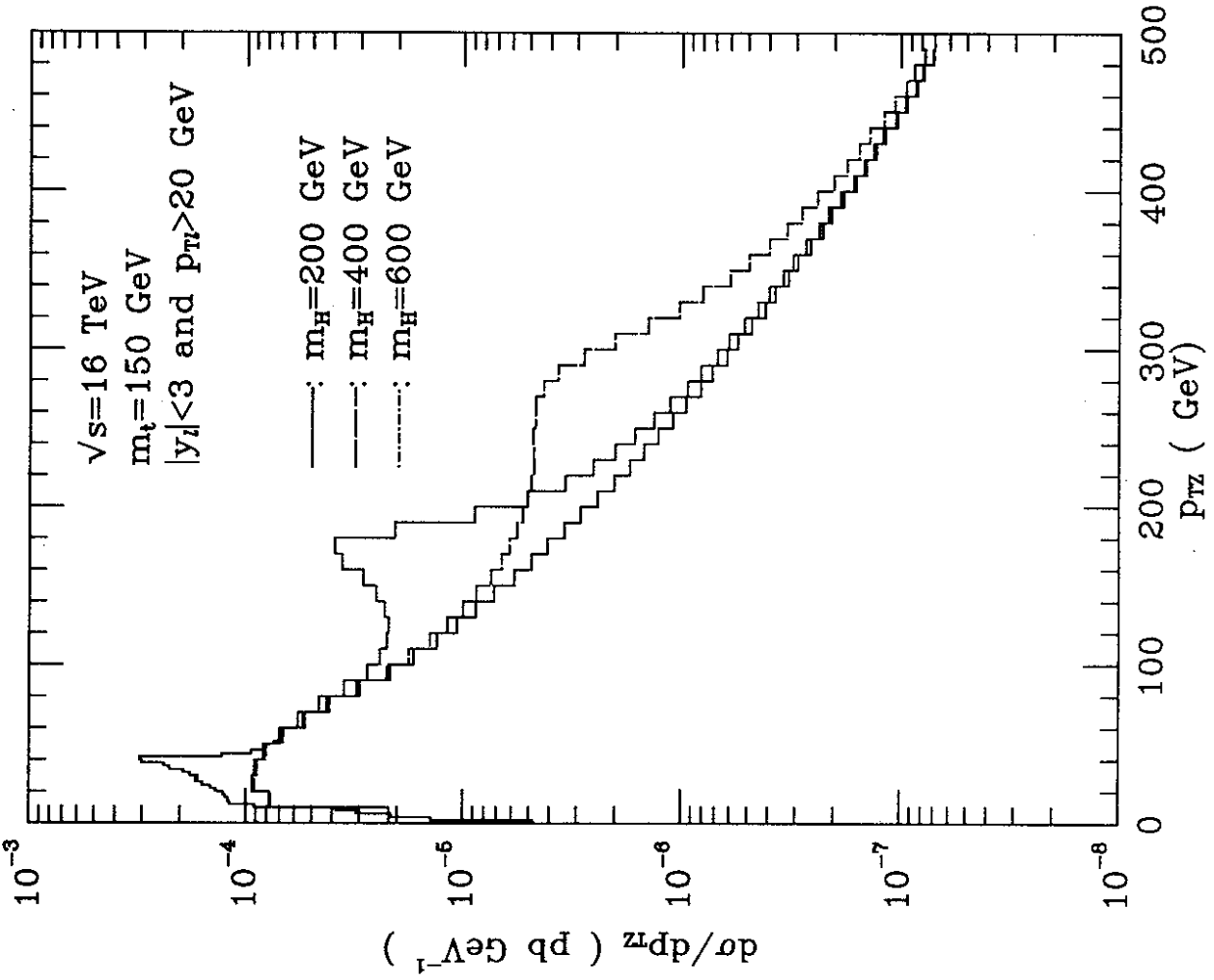


Fig. 3

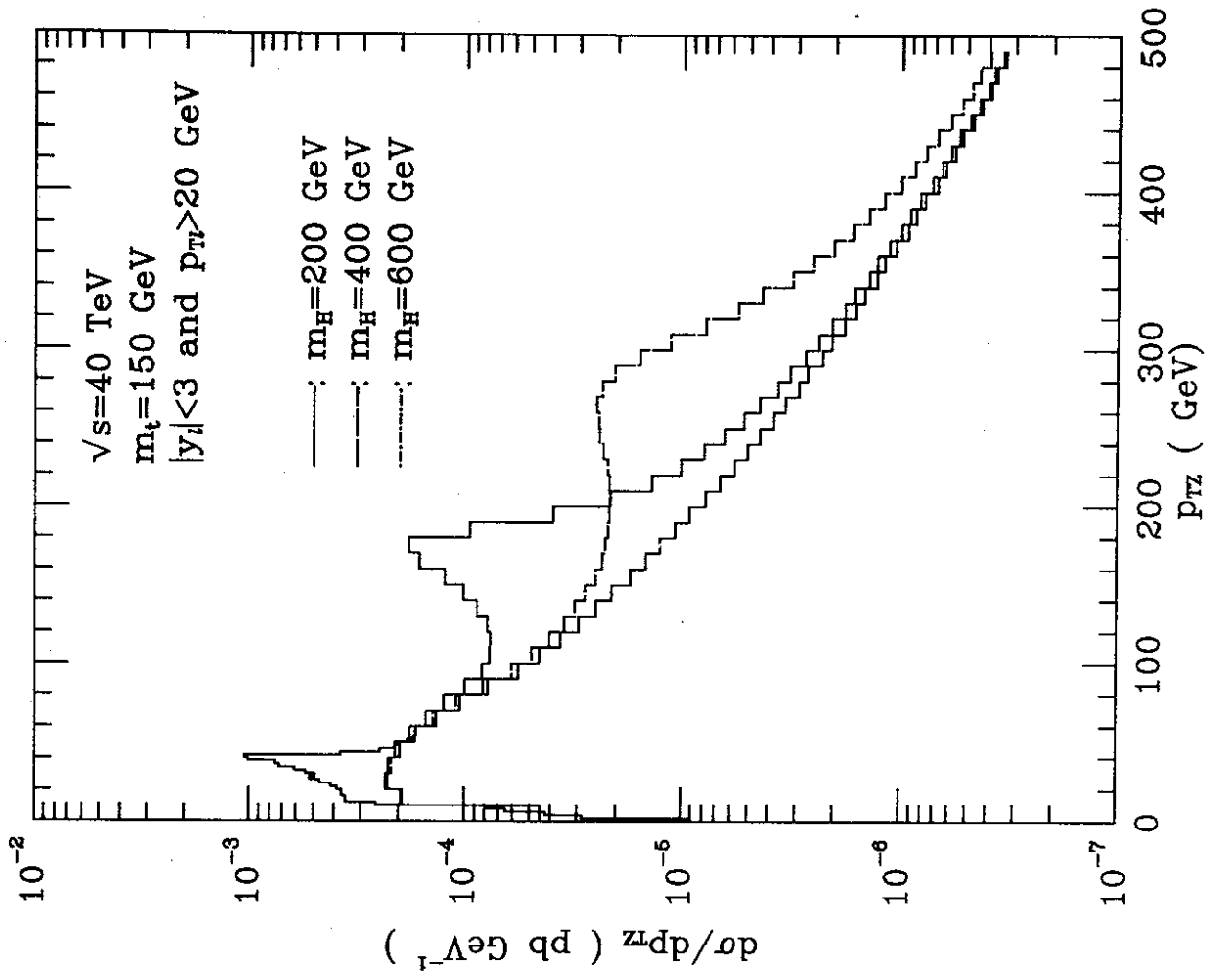


Fig. 4

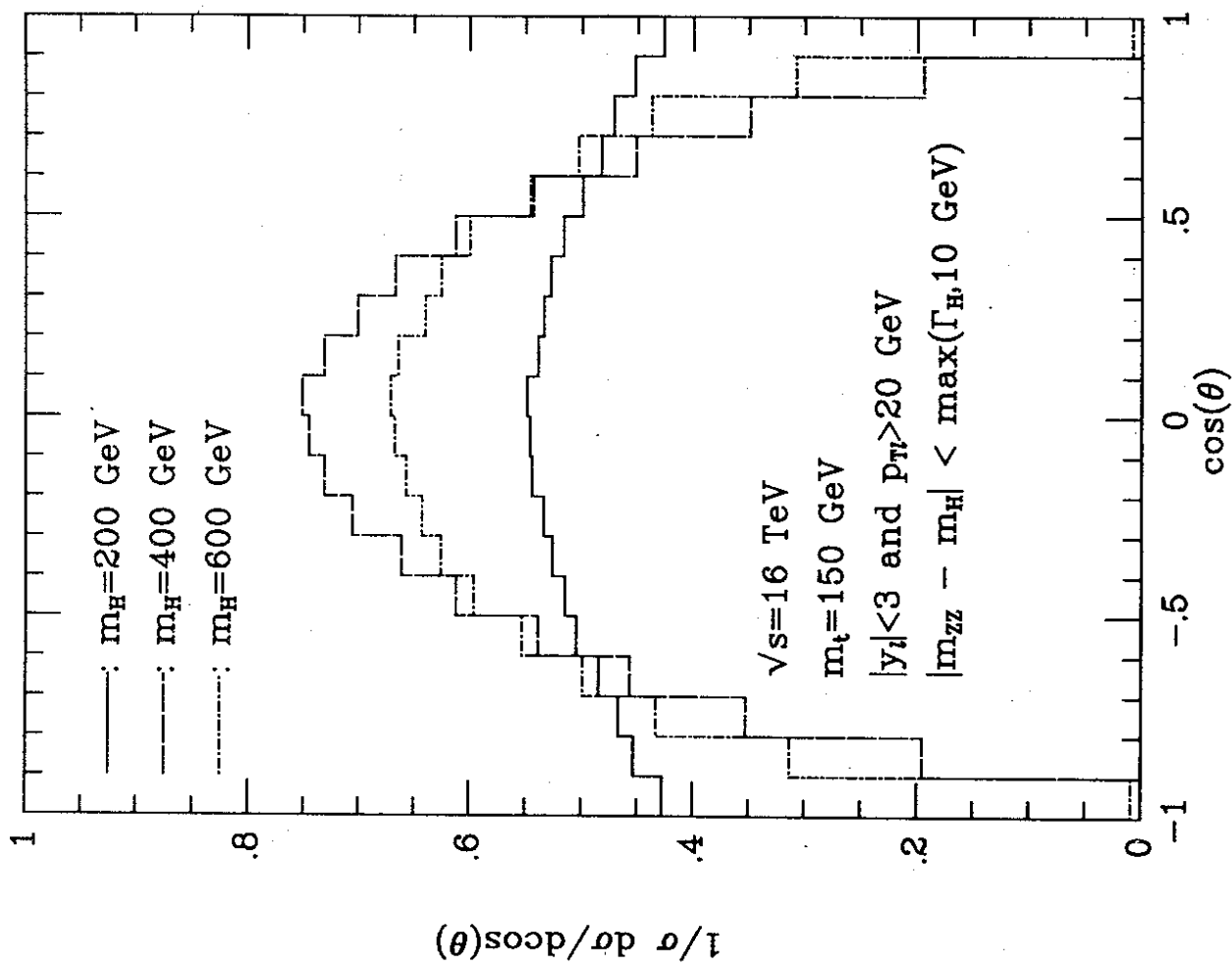


Fig. 5

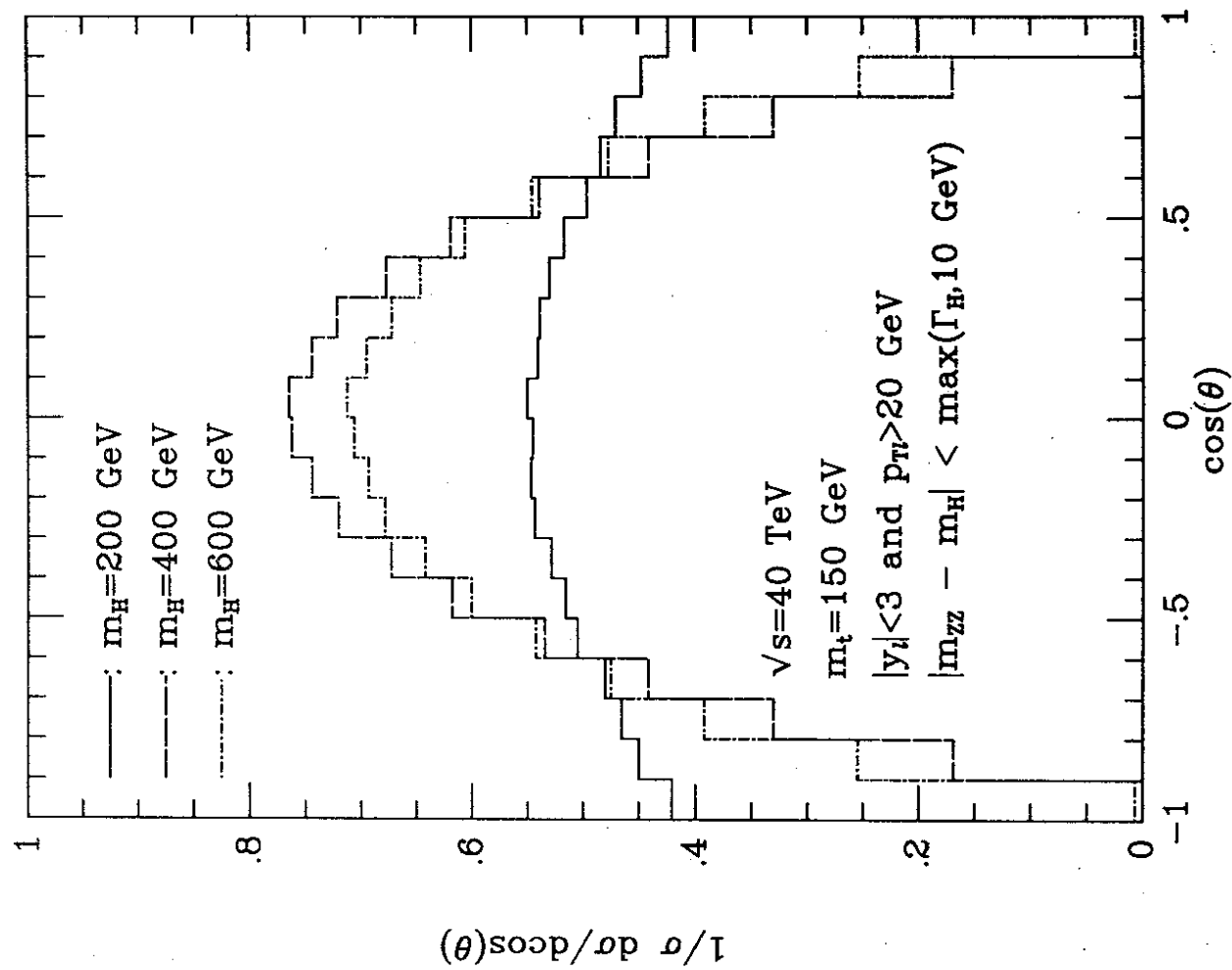


Fig. 6



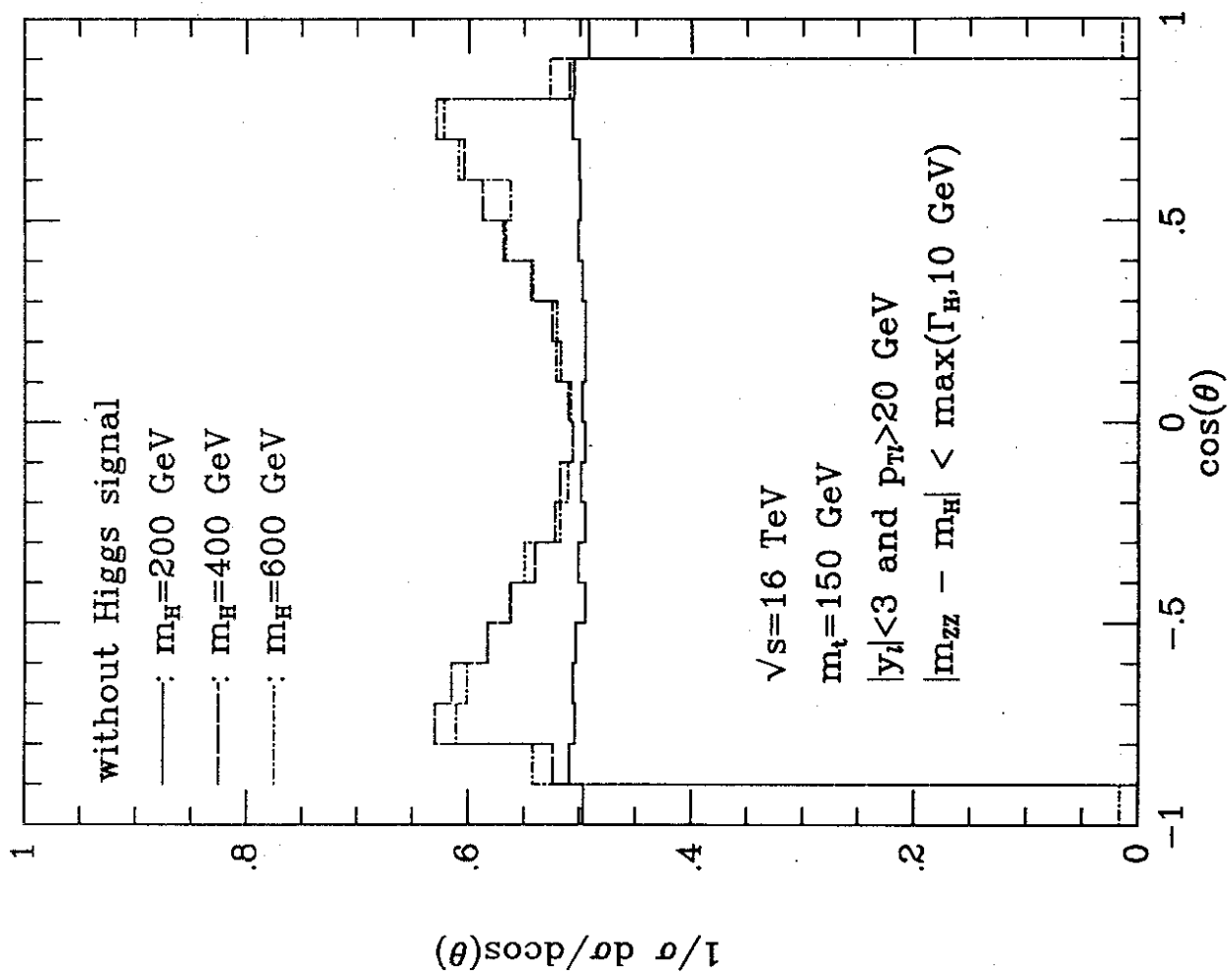


Fig. 7

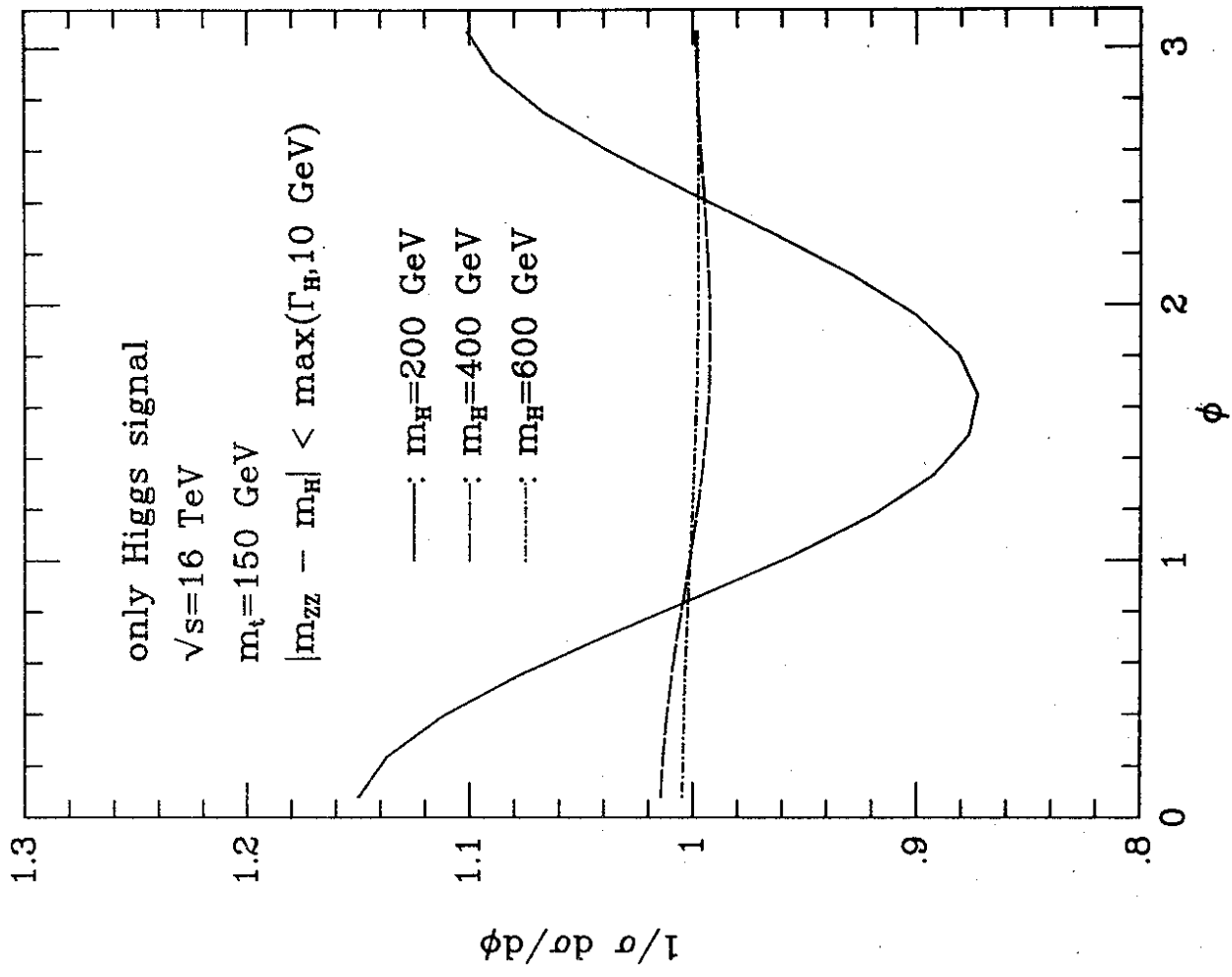


Fig. 8

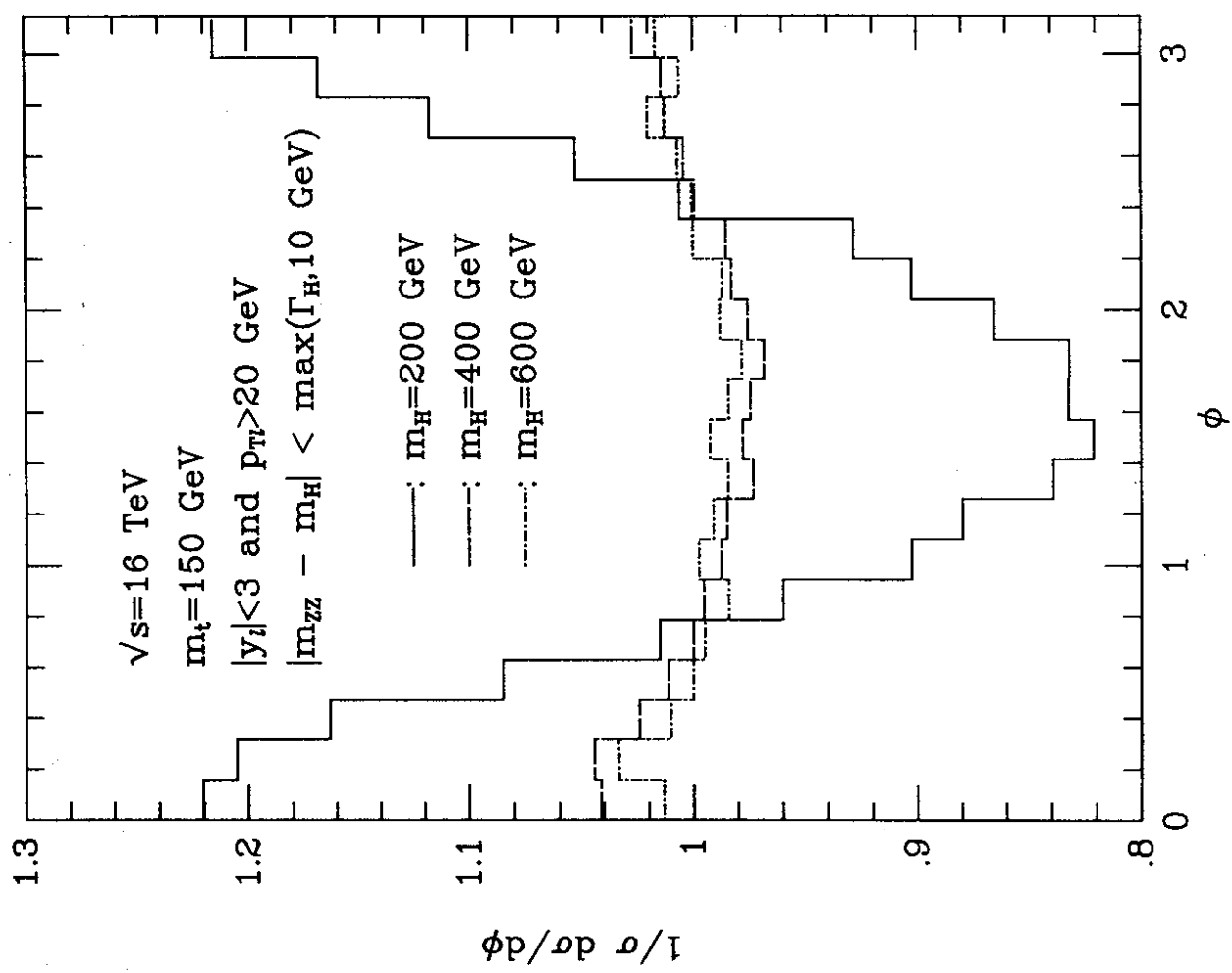


Fig. 9

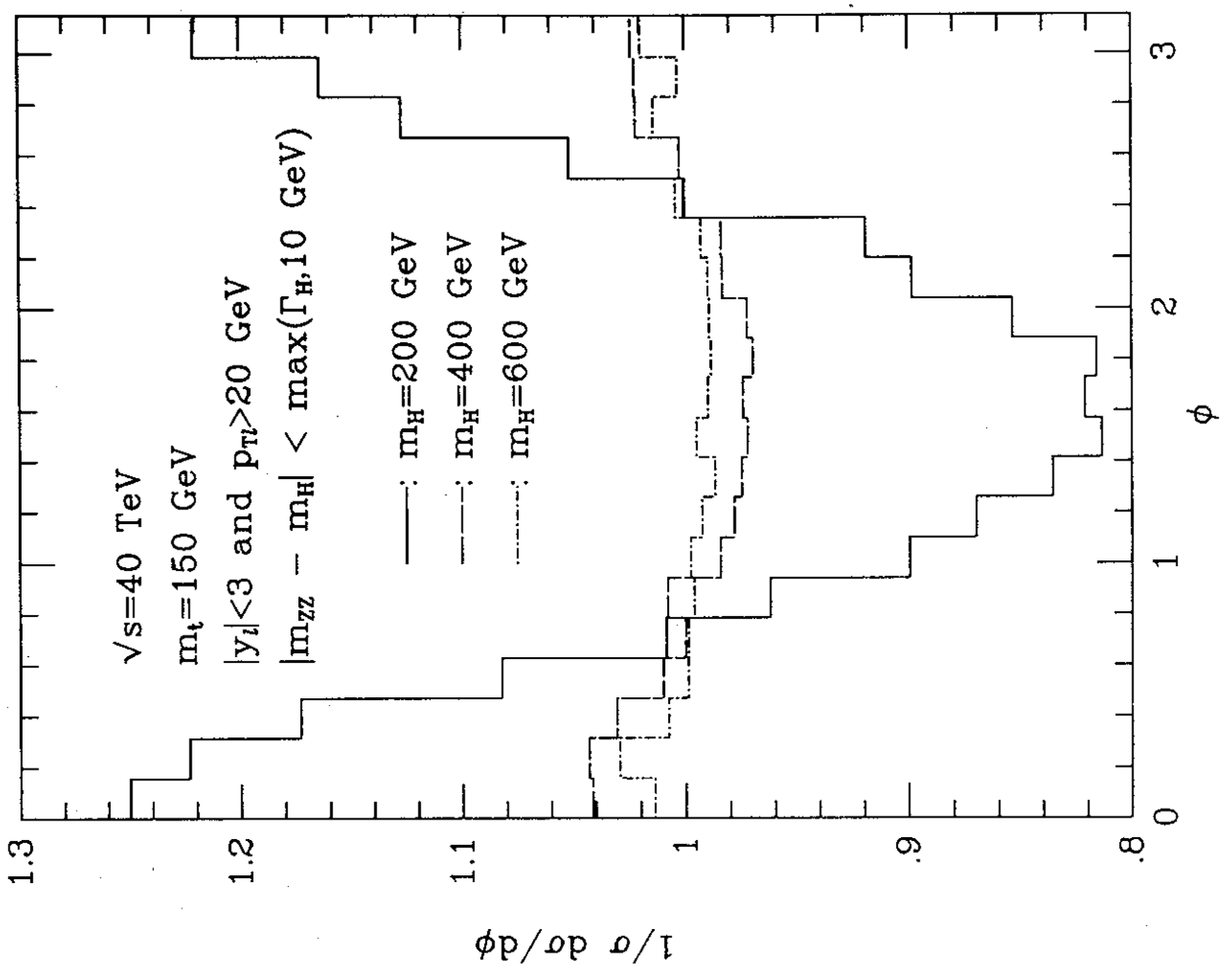


Fig. 10

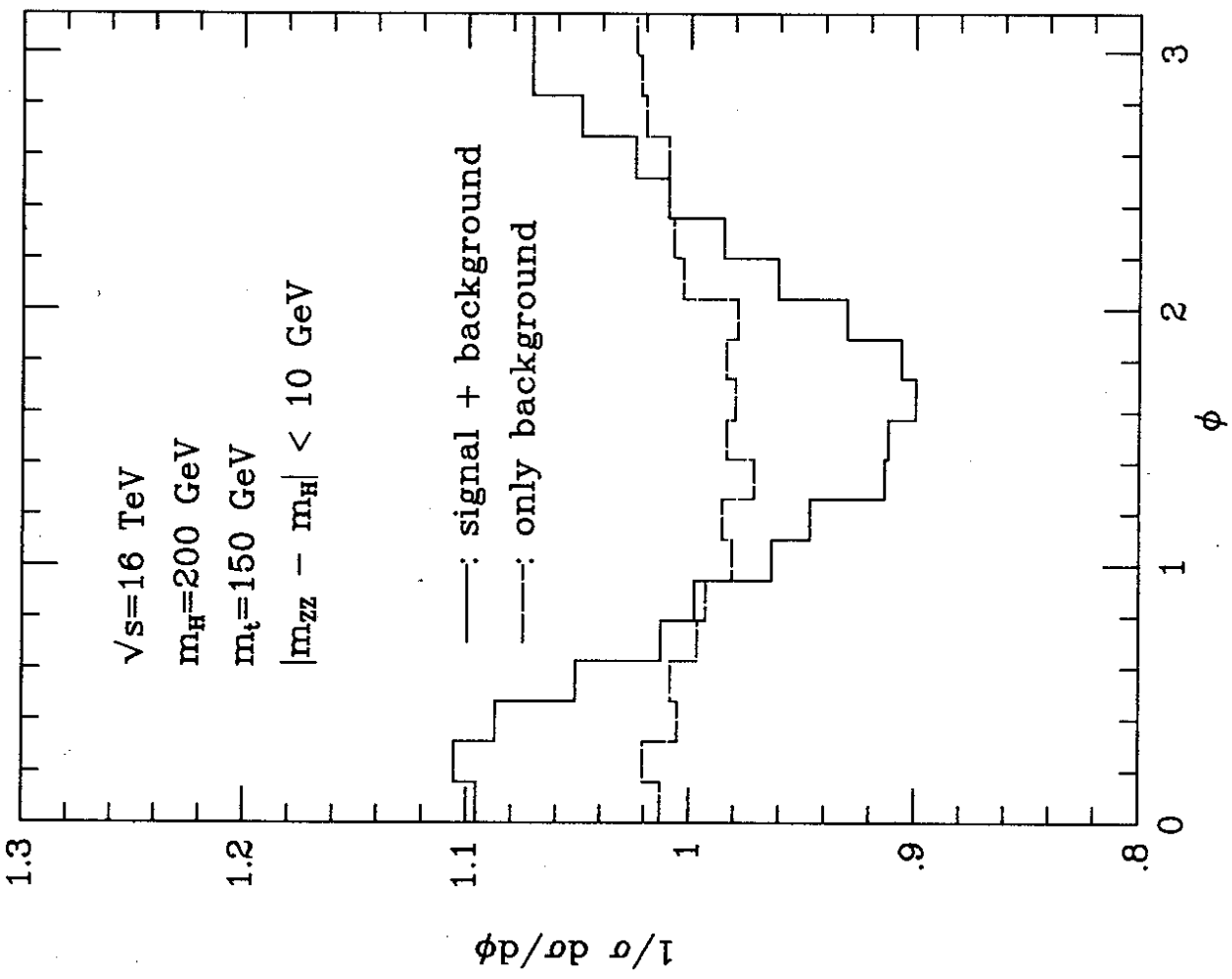


Fig. 11

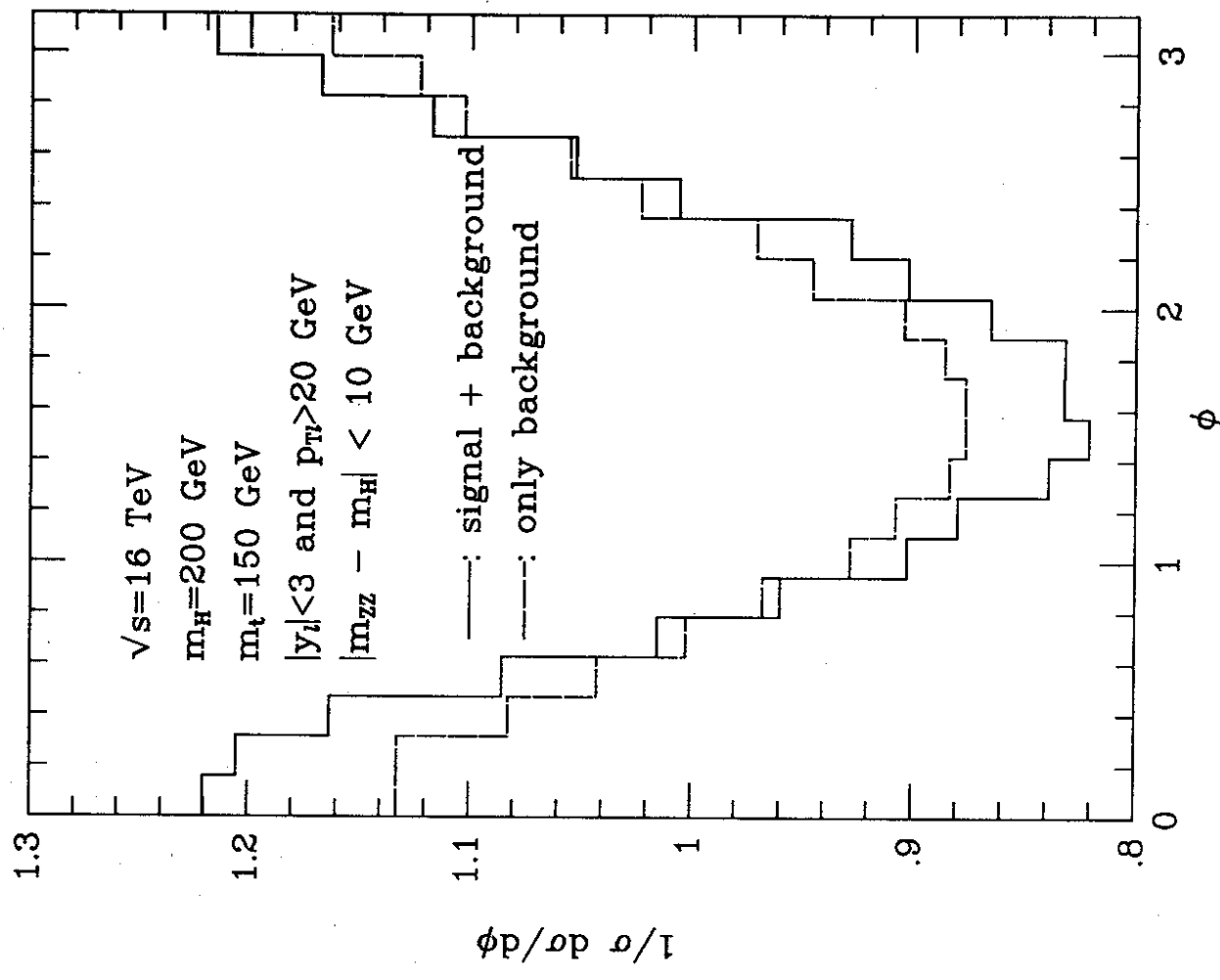


Fig. 12