Hierarchy of Spin and Valley Symmetry Breaking in Quantum Hall Single Layer Graphene

arXiv: 0910.1388

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12/2009 @ KIAS, KOREA
Graphene

- Semi-metal on a honeycomb lattice
- Electron and hole bands touch at two inequivalent points in BZ $K$ and $K'=-K$ (valley)
- Low energy theory is given by Dirac Hamiltonian with energy dispersion relation $E_k = \pm v_F \hbar |k|$

The six corners: Dirac points; holes & electrons: Dirac fermions
Quantum Hall Effect in Graphene

• Energy spectrum in a perpendicular magnetic field $B$

$$\varepsilon_n = \pm v_F \sqrt{2e\hbar B n}$$

• Hall conductivity and longitudinal resistivity

$$\sigma_{xy} = \nu \frac{e^2}{h}, \quad \nu = \pm 4 \cdot \left( n + \frac{1}{2} \right)$$

**Factor 4: spin & valley degeneracy**

**Factor 1/2: Berry phase due to the valley precession**

$n$: Landau level index
$
u$: filling factor


“Only problem” in graphene QHE

- The spin+valley symmetry of the central LL\( (n=0) \) breaks down at higher magnetic field
- Conductance steps at -2, +2
- Conductance steps at -2, 0, +2
- Conductance steps at -2, -1, 0, 1, 2

All symmetries broken

$\nu = 2$

Spin+Valley symmetry

Spin symmetry

All symmetries broken

Valley symmetry

Spin+Valley symmetry

Which symmetry will be broken first, Spin or valley?

$\sigma_{xy} = \nu \frac{e^2}{h}$

$\nu = 2$

$\nu = 1$

$\nu = 0$

$\nu = -1$

$\nu = -2$

SPIN

VALLEY

References:

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Mechanisms of symmetry breaking

• LL n=0 \(\Rightarrow\) Kinetic energy is quenched

• Hamiltonian governing LL physics consists of
  - Coulomb interaction
    \[ H^C \sim \frac{1}{2} \int V_{rr'} \rho_{r'} \rho_r \sim H^D + H^{EX} \]
  - Coulomb exchange is dominant: \( H^{EX} \)
  
  - Zeeman interaction
    \[ H^B \sim \sum_{\sigma \tau} \sigma B_{\sigma} \Psi_{\sigma\tau}^\dagger(r) \Psi_{\sigma\tau}(r) \]
    Spin:
    \[ \uparrow = |\sigma+\rangle \quad \downarrow = |\sigma-\rangle \]
Mechanisms of symmetry breaking

- Valley-scattering impurity

\[ H^{imp} \sim \sum_{\sigma \tau} V'(r) \Psi^{\dagger}_{\sigma \tau}(r) \Psi_{\sigma \bar{\tau}}(r) \]

- Electron-phonon coupling

\[ H^{el-ph} \sim \sum_{\sigma \tau} \lambda u_{2K} \Psi^{\dagger}_{\sigma \tau}(r) \Psi_{\sigma \bar{\tau}}(r) \]

If phonon condenses (Kekule distortion), it will generate effective valley-polarizing field, much like spin-polarizing Zeeman field!

\[ \sim \sum_{\sigma \tau} \lambda \langle u_{2K} \rangle \Psi^{\dagger}_{\sigma \tau} \Psi_{\sigma \bar{\tau}} \sim U \sum_{\sigma \tau} \Psi^{\dagger}_{\sigma \tau} \Psi_{\sigma \bar{\tau}} \]

Valley:

\[ \uparrow = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|\tau = +\rangle + |\tau = -\rangle) \]

\[ \downarrow = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (|\tau = +\rangle - |\tau = -\rangle) \]
Self-consistent Hartree-Fock theory (SCHFT)

- Energy levels at half-filling from self-consistent solutions

- $H^{\text{EX}}$ alone, the initial 4-fold degeneracy of the LL is split: $+E^{\text{EX}}$
- Inclusion of Zeeman field $\Rightarrow$ spin-SU(2) symmetry is broken
- Valley-scattering impurity does not result in additional splitting levels and gives rise to broadened energy levels of width $W$.

- The number of flux through the lattice $N_\phi = 50$
- The impurity broadening $W = 0.1$
- The Zeeman field is $B_\sigma = 0.08$
- Exchange energy $E^{\text{EX}} \approx 0.52$
SCHFT: $H^{EX} + H^{el-ph} + H^B$ (half-filling case)

(a) Phase diagram of the CLL(n=0)  (b) Schematic energy levels

- In I, Zeeman effect dominates, spin-polarized level splitting
- In II, el-ph interaction $U$ dominates, main polarization direction is along valley axis

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SCHFT: $H^{\text{EX}} + H^{\text{el-ph}} + H^{\text{B}}$ (quarter-filling case)

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2B_\sigma

(a)

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U

(b)

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“valley-first” – split region I

↔

“spin first” – split region II

Zhihua Yang & JungHoon Han, submitted, 2009
SCHFT: $H^{\text{EX}} + H^{\text{el-ph}} + H^{B} + H^{\text{imp}}$(half-filling case)

- Schematic energy levels

In region I, the impurity does not alter the basic features of phase diagram $(2B_{\sigma}, U)$,
In region II, the impurity does not alter the features of phase diagram $(2B_{\sigma}, U)$ when $W < W_c$,
When $W > W_c$ the original 4-fold splitting levels in region II disappear => Region III.

I: $(2B_{\sigma}, U) = (0.32, 0.36), W = 0.1$
II: $(2B_{\sigma}, U) = (0.32, 0.4), W = 0.1$
III: $(2B_{\sigma}, U) = (0.32, 0.4), W = 0.15$
$(2B_{\sigma}, U) = (0.32, 0.4), W_c = 0.12$
Edges and domain wall

- Valley domain walls may exist because $E(\sigma, \tau) = E(\sigma, \bar{\tau})$ due to Zeeman splitting.

- Considering a spinless case first, $H = H^K + H^m$

$$H^K \sim \hbar v_F \sum \Psi^\dagger_{\tau} (k_x \sigma_y + \tau k_y \sigma_x) \Psi_{\tau}, \quad \Psi_{\tau} = \begin{pmatrix} \Psi_{A\tau} \\ \Psi_{B\tau} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$H^m \sim m(y) \sum_{\tau} \Psi^\dagger_{A\tau} \Psi_{B\tau} + \Psi^\dagger_{B\tau} \Psi_{A\tau}$$

$$m(y) = \begin{cases} m_v, & y > 0 \\ -m_v, & y < 0 \end{cases}$$
Conclusion and Outlook

• Several microscopic mechanisms are explored=>breaking n=0 4-fold LL degeneracy in a single-layer graphene
  
  **Coulomb exchange, Zeeman interaction, valley-scattering impurity, electron-phonon interaction**

• The competitive nature of the valley-splitting(el-ph interaction) and spin-splitting(Zeeman interaction) leads to a phase diagram
  
  Either “spin first” or “valley first” level splitting

• Gapless states exist when LLs with opposite valley polarities form a domain wall

• Our calculation suggests full LL splitting implies CDW order

• Graphene QHE in single and bilayers shows interesting symmetry breaking pattern
  
  **Bilayer case will be more complicated**