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SU(3) and SU(4) singlet quantum Hall states at $\nu = 2/3$

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We report on an exact diagonalization study of fractional quantum Hall states at filling factor $\nu = 2/3$ in a system with a four-fold degenerate $n=0$ Landau level and SU(4) symmetric Coulomb interactions. Our investigation reveals previously unidentified SU(3) and SU(4) singlet ground states which appear at flux quantum shift 2 when a spherical geometry is employed, and lie outside the established composite-fermion or multicomponent Halperin state patterns. We evaluate the two-particle correlation functions of these states, and discuss quantum phase transitions in graphene between singlet states with different number of components as magnetic field strength is increased.

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Introduction:—The presence of internal degrees of freedom in the quantum Hall regime has often provided fertile ground for the emergence of new strongly correlated quantum liquid physics. Examples include the pioneering work of Halperin [1] in which he constructed multicomponent generalizations of the celebrated Laughlin states [2], the prediction of skyrmion quasiparticles [3] in systems with small Zeeman splitting, and the identification of excitonic superfluidity [4, 5] in bilayer systems. Multicomponent fractional quantum Hall systems are often experimentally relevant thanks to the rich variety of two-dimensional electron systems that possess nearly degenerate internal degrees of freedom, for example spin [1], layer [6] and/or sub-bands [7, 8] in GaAs quantum wells, spin and/or valley in graphene [9], anomalous additional orbital indices in the $N = 0$ Landau levels of few-layer graphene [10–12], valley in AlAs [13], and cyclotron and Zeeman splittings that have been tuned to equality in ZnO [14, 15]. In monolayer and bilayer graphene in particular, the nearly four-fold and eight-fold degenerate $N = 0$ Landau levels have recently been shown to give rise to interesting examples of ground states with competing orders [16–26].

A diverse toolkit of theoretical approaches that can be successfully applied to understand fractional quantum Hall states has accumulated over the nearly three decades of research. One of the most widely employed frameworks is that of composite fermions [27, 28]. The success of the composite fermion picture stems in part from its simplicity, since it allows fractional quantum Hall states of electrons to be viewed as integer quantum Hall states of composite fermions. An important success of the composite fermion approach is that it provides explicit trial wavefunctions that accurately approximate the ground states computed using exact diagonalization for the Jain sequence of filling fractions $\nu = n/(2n \pm 1)$ [27, 28]. The composite fermion picture can be generalized to account for a multicomponent Hilbert space, and it has been argued that it correctly captures the incompress-

ible ground states of 4-component systems with SU(4) invariant Coulomb interactions [29–31]. However, a detailed test of composite fermion theory in the SU(3) and SU(4) cases has been absent.

In this Letter we report on a striking deviation from the composite-fermion picture arising at filling fraction $\nu = 2/3$ for three and four-component electrons residing in the $n = 0$ Landau level and interacting via the Coulomb potential. This circumstance is relevant to the fractional quantum Hall effect in graphene [25, 26, 32, 33], and also bilayer quantum wells [34, 35]. Employing exact diagonalization for the torus and sphere geometries we find that SU(3) and SU(4) singlets, in which electrons respectively occupy three and four components equally, have lower energy than the known single-component state and SU(2) singlet [36, 37] at the same filling factor. More specifically, we find that on the torus the ground state for $N_e = 6$ electrons and $N_\Phi = 9$ flux quanta is a SU(3) singlet, and that for $N_e = 8$ and $N_\Phi = 12$ the ground state is a SU(4) singlet. There are previous exact diagonalization studies of SU(4) Landau levels [29, 38, 39], but to our knowledge there is no previous report of the states we describe below.

On the sphere a shift \mathcal{S} occurs in the finite-size relationship between flux quanta and electrons compared to the torus $N_\Phi = \nu^{-1}N_e - \mathcal{S}$. The shift is a quantum number that often distinguishes competing quantum Hall states associated with the same filling factor. In particular, under space rotational invariance, any two states that differ in their shift cannot be adiabatically connected and would thus belong to distinct quantum Hall phases [40–42]. Our SU(3) and SU(4) singlets appear on the sphere at $(N_\Phi, N_e) = (7, 6)$ and at $(N_\Phi, N_e) = (10, 8)$ respectively, corresponding to a shift $\mathcal{S} = 2$ in both cases.

For two-component electrons the composite fermion picture allows two competing trial wavefunctions at $\nu = 2/3$ [28, 43]. One is a fully spin polarized state that approximates the particle-hole conjugate of the $\nu = 1/3$ Laughlin state. The second is a SU(2) spin singlet, con-

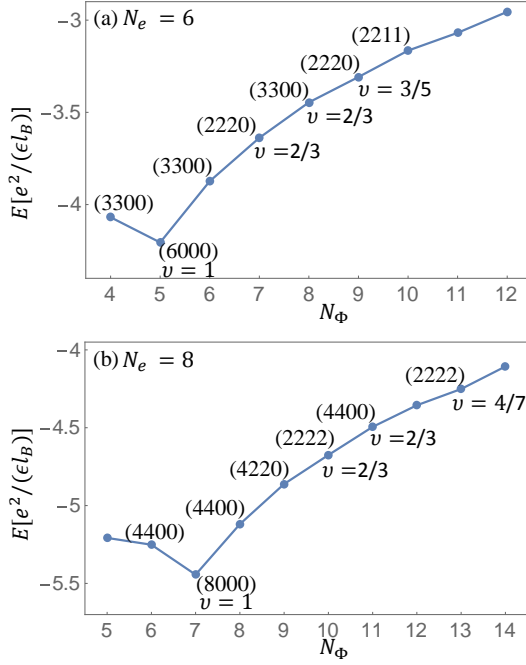


FIG. 2: Ground state energy as a function of N_Φ on the sphere for $N_e = 6$ (a), and $N_e = 8$ (b). The filling factors assignments are based on comparisons between torus and sphere spectra.

shows the ground state energy on the sphere as a function of N_Φ at $N_e = 6$ (Fig. 2(a)) and $N_e = 8$ (Fig. 2(b)). For $N_e = 6$ (Fig. 2(a)), the ground state at $N_\Phi = 8$ is a SU(2) singlet, which is the composite-fermion singlet with $\nu = 2/3$ and $\mathcal{S} = 1$. At $N_\Phi = 7$, the ground state is our new SU(3) singlet at $\nu = 2/3$ with $\mathcal{S} = 2$. Note that a SU(3) singlet also appears at $N_\Phi = 9$, which we identify as a composite-fermion SU(3) singlet with $\nu = 3/5$ and $\mathcal{S} = 1$. The analysis of Fig. 2(b) is similar. We identify the SU(4) singlet at $N_e = 8$ and $N_\Phi = 10$ to $\nu = 2/3$ with shift $\mathcal{S} = 2$.

In Table I, we compare the Coulomb energies between the SU(3) and SU(4) singlets and the SU(2) singlet at $\nu = 2/3$ [48]. In graphene Zeeman energy favors the SU(2) singlet which can have full spin polarization. Ideally, one would observe a transition from the new singlet states discovered here as the magnetic field is increased. The absence of an apparent transition in current experiments [26] might be explained by screening [49, 50] and Landau level mixing effects [51, 52] which tend to weaken effective interaction strengths, reducing the critical fields to values where it is challenging to observe the fractional quantum Hall effect.

The largest system size we have attempted is on a torus with $N_e = 2N_\Phi/3 = 10$. For this number of electrons it is impossible to construct exact SU(3) or SU(4) singlets. We restricted the numerical calculation to 3-fold degenerate LLs, and found that a multiplet labeled by (4420)

TABLE I: Energy difference per electron between SU(3) or SU(4) and SU(2) singlet states on a torus at $\nu = 2/3$. ΔE_C is the energy difference for pure Coulomb interaction. ΔE_Z is the Zeeman coupling energy difference between states in graphene with a g -factor of 2. μ_B is the Bohr magneton. For comparison, $[\mu_B B]/[e^2/(\epsilon l_B)] = 10^{-3} \epsilon \sqrt{B[T]}$. The critical field B_c is obtained by setting $\Delta E_C + \Delta E_Z$ to 0.

	$\Delta E_C/N_e[e^2/(\epsilon l_B)]$	$\Delta E_Z/N_e[\mu_B B]$	$B_c[T]$
(2220),(3300)	-2.7203×10^{-3}	2/3	$16.65/\epsilon^2$
(2222),(4400)	-2.3015×10^{-3}	1	$5.30/\epsilon^2$

has a lower energy than the SU(2) singlet. This adds to evidence that the $\nu = 2/3$ SU(2) singlet predicted by composite fermion theory is not the ground state in LLs with more than two components. We hope that future studies will be able to extend our study to larger system sizes.

Pair Correlation functions:— We now discuss the spatial correlation functions that describe the probability of finding two electrons at certain distance from each other. We have found that our new SU(3) and SU(4) singlets have similar short-distance correlations to the conventional SU(2) singlet and single component state at $\nu = 2/3$, and the long-distance correlations are different. The flavor-dependent spatial correlation function $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$ is defined by

$$g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r}) = \frac{A}{N_\alpha N_\beta} \sum_{i \neq j} \delta(\vec{r}_i - \vec{r}_j - \vec{r}) (|\chi_\alpha\rangle\langle\chi_\alpha|)_i (|\chi_\beta\rangle\langle\chi_\beta|)_j, \quad (2)$$

where A is the area of the 2D system, and N_α is the number of electrons in flavor state $|\chi_\alpha\rangle$.

Figs. 3(a) and (b) plot $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$ of $\nu = 2/3$ states along the diagonal line of the torus, *i.e.* along $r_x = r_y$. As required by the Pauli exclusion principle, $g_{11}(r)$ vanishes as $r \rightarrow 0$. It turns out that $g_{12}(r)$ is very small, but not exactly zero, at $r = 0$ for the singlets. In graphene, SU(4) symmetry is weakly broken by short-range interactions that arise from lattice-scale Coulomb interactions and electron-phonon interactions. The short-range interactions are typically modeled by a δ -function potential [18]. Since the probability for two electrons to spatially overlap is small in these $\nu = 2/3$ singlets, the short-range interactions should have a negligible effect on these states [19–21].

At small electron separation, $g_{11}(r)$ is similar in all singlet states, and likewise $g_{12}(r)$, with $g_{12}(r)$ smaller than $g_{11}(r)$ as shown in Fig. 3(a) and (b). We note that the four-component Halperin wavefunction with $m_s = 3$ and $m_d = 1$ has the opposite behavior, *i.e.* $g_{12}(r) > g_{11}(r)$ for small r . This is another distinct feature between the Halperin wavefunction and the exact SU(4) singlet, besides the difference in the shift.

The similarities between the pair correlation functions of different singlet states at small r do not extend to

larger distances. For the SU(2) singlet, $g_{11}(\vec{r})$ reaches a maximum at the maximum particle separation, while $g_{12}(\vec{r})$ reaches its maximum closer. The opposite behavior applies for SU(3) and SU(4) singlets at the system sizes we are able to study, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

To get a deeper understanding of the small r behavior of $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$, we consider the relative-angular-momentum (RAM) correlation function $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m)$:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m) = \frac{2N_\Phi}{N_\alpha N_\beta} \sum_{i \neq j} P_m^{i,j} (|\chi_\alpha\rangle\langle\chi_\alpha|)_i (|\chi_\beta\rangle\langle\chi_\beta|)_j, \quad (3)$$

where $P_m^{i,j}$ [28] projects electrons i and j onto a state of RAM m . $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m)$ contains the same information as $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$ and can be more physically revealing:

$$g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r}) = \pi l_B^2 \sum_m |\eta_m(\vec{r})|^2 \mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m), \quad (4)$$

where η_m is the wave-function for a state of a RAM m [28]. At small electron separation r , $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$ is mainly determined by $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m)$ with small m ,

$$\begin{aligned} g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r}) &\approx \frac{1}{4} \mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(0) + \frac{1}{16} [\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(1) - \mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(0)] (r/l_B)^2 \\ &\approx \frac{1}{16} \mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(1) (r/l_B)^2. \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

The approximation in the second line of Eq. (5) follows from the fact that $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(0) = 4g_{\alpha\beta}(0)$ is always extremely small for states we consider. Values of $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(1)$ are displayed in Fig. 3(c). Like the pair correlation functions, $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(1)$ has similar values in all singlet states for both $\alpha = \beta$ and $\alpha \neq \beta$. As proved in the Supplemental Material [45], $\langle \mathcal{L}_{11}(1) \rangle_s = 2 \langle \mathcal{L}_{12}(1) \rangle_s$ in any singlet state. This property explains why $g_{12}(r)$ is smaller than $g_{11}(r)$ at small r .

The energy per electron of a SU(n) singlet can be decomposed into contributions from interactions in different angular momenta channel:

$$\begin{aligned} \langle H/N_e \rangle_s &= \sum_m V_m [\varepsilon_m(n) - (N_e - 1)/N_\Phi], \\ \varepsilon_m(n) &= \frac{\nu}{4} [\langle \mathcal{L}_{12}(m) \rangle_s + \frac{1}{n} \langle \mathcal{L}_{11}(m) - \mathcal{L}_{12}(m) \rangle_s], \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where V_m is the m th Haldane pseudopotential of the Coulomb interaction [28], and the term $(N_e - 1)/N_\Phi$ takes into account the contribution from the neutralizing background. For the $\nu = 2/3$ SU(n) singlets described above, $\varepsilon_0(n)$ is approximately zero, while $\varepsilon_1(n)$ decreases as n increases from 2 to 3 or 4. This analysis sheds light on why SU(3) and SU(4) singlets have lower energy than the SU(2) singlet at $\nu = 2/3$.

Summary:— By diagonalizing the Coulomb interaction Hamiltonian for electrons in multicomponent $n = 0$ Landau levels, we have discovered translationally invariant SU(3) and SU(4) singlet ground states at filling factor

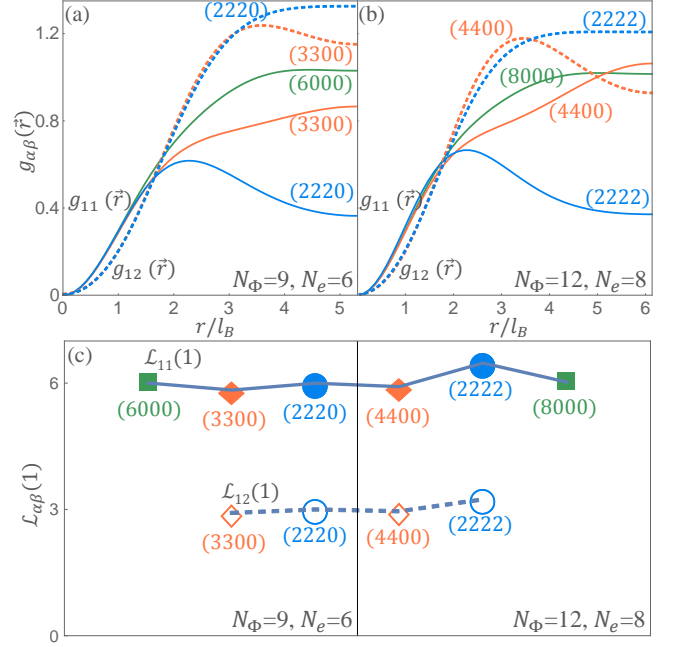


FIG. 3: (Color online) (a) and (b) Correlation function $g_{\alpha\beta}(\vec{r})$ for the single-component state and the multi-component singlets at $\nu = 2/3$. The direction of \vec{r} is along the diagonal line of the torus. Solid and dashed lines distinguishes intra-flavor and inter-flavor correlation functions. (c) RAM correlation function $\mathcal{L}_{\alpha\beta}(m)$ with $m = 1$. Filled and empty symbols designate intra-flavor and inter-flavor correlation functions respectively. Note that for any singlet, $\langle \mathcal{L}_{11}(1) \rangle_s = 2 \langle \mathcal{L}_{12}(1) \rangle_s$.

$\nu = 2/3$. We have found these states in systems containing 6 and 8 electrons respectively, on both sphere and torus geometries. Both states on the sphere have shift $\mathcal{S} = 2$. The pair correlation function of these states is similar to that of composite fermion SU(2) singlet state at short electron separation, and becomes different at large distances.

Our findings are striking because the states we have discovered do not fit into either the composite fermion or the multicomponent Halperin state patterns. These singlets are candidates to join the handful of important states that do not fit the simple composite fermion paradigm, such as the Pfaffian state [53] and Read-Rezayi states [54]. It is remarkable that this novel physics occurs in the lowest Landau level where past experience has suggested that composite fermions best describe Coulomb interaction incompressible states.

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