## Induced anomalous Hall effect of massive Dirac fermions in ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub> thin flakes

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Research on the anomalous Hall effect (AHE) has been lasting for a century to make clear the underlying physical mechanism. Generally, the AHE appears in magnetic materials, in which the extrinsic process related to scattering effects and intrinsic contribution connected with Berry curvature are crucial. Recently, AHE has been counterintuitively observed in nonmagnetic topological materials and attributed to the existence of Weyl points. However, the Weyl point scenario would lead to unsaturated AHE even in large magnetic fields and contradicts the saturation of AHE in several tesla (T) in experiments. In this work, we investigate the Hall effect of ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub> thin flakes in static ultrahigh magnetic fields up to 33 T. We find the AHE saturates to 55 (70)  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup> for ZrTe<sub>5</sub> (HfTe<sub>5</sub>) thin flakes above ~10 T. Combining detailed magnetotransport experiments and Berry curvature calculations, we clarify that the splitting of massive Dirac bands without Weyl points can be responsible for AHE in nonmagnetic topological materials ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub> thin flakes. This model can identify our thin flake samples to be weak topological insulators and serve as a tool to probe the band structure topology in topological materials.

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Anomalous Hall effect (AHE) is an important electrical transport phenomenon attracting extensive interest in both fundamental physics and potential applications [1,2]. Since the discovery of AHE in ferromagnetic iron in 1881 [3], the controversy of the microscopic mechanisms of AHE has lasted for almost a century. Two mechanisms have been identified nowadays: an extrinsic process related to scattering effects and an intrinsic contribution connected with Berry curvature [1,4–6]. The intrinsic AHE is quantitatively determined by the Berry curvature of the occupied states. Based on the theoretical developments, many experimental works of AHE in magnetic materials are convincingly explained by detailed band structure calculations [7–13]. Usually, timereversal symmetry breaking by the magnetism is taken as the prerequisite for the AHE. Counterintuitively, nonmagnetic topological materials Cd<sub>3</sub>As<sub>2</sub> and ZrTe<sub>5</sub> were recently found to show AHE or anomalous Nernst effect (ANE) [14-17] under the external magnetic field (B). In these materials, the Weyl points, which might be from the magnetic field induced Dirac points splitting, were believed to contribute to the AHE/ANE [18]. However, the Weyl point scenario leads to increasing AHE when the field continuously separates

Weyl points, until Weyl points annihilate and generate a threedimensional (3D) quantized AHE, as shown in Figs. 1(a) and 1(d). This contradicts the fact that the AHE saturates in the field of several tesla (T) and presents a low plateau in previous experiments (the anomalous Hall conductivity (AHC) is usually tens of  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup>) [15,17].

Transition-metal pentatelluride  $ZrTe_5$  and  $HfTe_5$  have been studied since the 1970s due to their outstanding thermoelectric properties [19,20]. They are predicted [21] and confirmed to be topological materials with massive Dirac bands at the border between the strong and weak topological insulators (TIs). The electronic structures of  $ZrTe_5$  and  $HfTe_5$  are sensitive to the interlayer coupling and lattice parameters, which makes them promising platforms to study various intriguing phenomena including log-periodic quantum oscillations [22,23], 3D quantum Hall effect [24], negative magnetoresistance (NMR) [25,26], unconventional Hall effect [27,28], etc. However, the topological categorizations of these two materials are challenging because it is not easy for experiments to independently determine whether they are weak or strong TIs [29–34].

In  $ZrTe_5$  and  $HfTe_5$ , clear nonlinear Hall traces are usually observed and the mechanisms for the Hall response are still under debate. The widely used two-carrier model tends to interpret the nonlinearity as the presence of more than one type of carriers [23–25,35,36]. On the other hand, Berry

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FIG. 1. Schematics of Dirac band splitting and the anomalous Hall effect. (a) Nearly massless Dirac bands split into Weyl bands as increasing the magnetic field (from the left to the right). Two Weyl points continue to split until they annihilate with each other at the boundary of two Brillouin zones, leading to 3D quantized AHE  $(\sigma_{xy}^{A} = e^{2}/hb, b$  is the lattice parameter). Dirac bands refer to massless or small-mass Dirac states. Blue and red, respectively, represent the positive and negative Berry curvature, as shown by the color bar. (b) Ordinary bands generate negligible Berry curvature, although they also split in the magnetic field. Ordinary bands refer to common spin-degenerate bands that have negligible coupling with other bands, displaying nearly zero Berry curvature because the interband transition is the direct cause of Berry curvature. (c) Massive Dirac bands split without generating Weyl points. An energy gap exists to gap the Dirac point and thus two spin channels exhibit opposite, large Berry curvature near the band gap. Because the total carrier density is a constant, the Fermi surface remains unchanged after the critical Zeeman energy, leading to the saturation of the AHE. The chemical potential  $(E_F)$  determines the critical field. (d) Schematics of the field dependence of the anomalous Hall conductivity for three cases.

curvature induced AHE was claimed in the  $ZrTe_5$  system, which also contributes to the nonlinearity of Hall traces [15,17]. The origin of the AHE in the nonmagnetic topological materials remains to be unambiguously and quantitatively clarified. The weak interaction between the layers of  $ZrTe_5$ and HfTe<sub>5</sub> allows us to obtain flakes from the bulk by exfoliation [21]. The precisely aligned Hall bar structures obtained by micro- and nanofabrication processes are advantageous for measurements compared with previous works on bulk materials. More importantly, the high magnetic field is necessary to thoroughly investigate the field dependence of AHE.

In this work, we perform systematic magnetotransport measurements on ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub> flakes with thicknesses of about 210 nm in static ultrahigh magnetic fields up to 33 T. The nonlinear Hall resistance saturates at high magnetic fields, which cannot be explained by the classical Drude model. Because the magnetic field modifies the band structure by Zeeman splitting, it can sensitively change carrier densities of two spin channels. Thus, we develop an unusual Hall model with field-dependent carrier densities and explain the nonlinear Hall traces well. The AHE saturates to 55 (70)  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup> for ZrTe<sub>5</sub> (HfTe<sub>5</sub>) above a critical field ~10 T at 2 K. Our band structure calculations reveal that the nonzero Berry curvature from splitting massive Dirac bands leads to the saturated AHE, which does not necessarily require



FIG. 2. Anomalous Hall effect in a ZrTe<sub>5</sub> flake (s1) with a thickness of about 215 nm. (a) Hall resistivity of s1 versus B at different temperatures from 2 to 80 K. Inset: crystal structure of ZrTe<sub>5</sub>/HfTe<sub>5</sub>. (b) Magnetic field dependence of longitudinal resistivity of s1 at selected temperatures from 2 to 80 K. Inset: schematic structure for the electrical transport measurements. (c) Hall conductivity of s1 as a function of B at 2 K. Red dots are experimental data; the black solid line is the fitting result by using the empirical formula based on our model, including modified Drude term and anomalous term; the dark yellow dashed line is the contribution from modified Drude model (labeled as modified Drude term) and the blue dashed line is the anomalous term. (d) Magnetic field dependence of Hall conductivity of s1 at selected temperatures. The black lines are the fitting results by using the empirical formula. The inset shows the temperature dependence of saturated values of anomalous Hall conductivity. Curves in Figs. 2(a), 2(b), and 2(d) are shifted for clarity.

the existence of Weyl points. We note that the Berry curvature intimately originates in the Dirac bands, whereas it cannot come from ordinary bands by Zeeman splitting, as illustrated in Figs. 1(b)-1(d). Furthermore, our model reveals that the strong and weak TIs exhibit opposite signs in the field-induced AHE and identifies our ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub> thin flakes to be weak TIs.

Figure 2 shows our magnetotransport results of a typical ZrTe<sub>5</sub> flake with a thickness of about 215 nm (s1). The Hall resistivity  $(\rho_{yx})$  of s1 at different temperatures is represented in Fig. 2(a). The  $\rho_{yx}$  grows sharply around 0 T, indicating a hole-dominated carrier type (p type). The slope of  $\rho_{yx}$  decreases with increasing *B*, finally leading to a saturated  $\rho_{vx}$ . Figure 2(b) shows the magnetic field dependence of longitudinal resistivity ( $\rho_{xx}$ ). No obvious structures appear in  $\rho_{xx}$  up to 33 T, indicating that the saturation of  $\rho_{yx}$  is not due to the formation of an energy gap [24]. For clarity, data curves in Figs. 2(a) and 2(b) are shifted. Besides, we show the crystal structures of the layered materials with the space group Cmcm in the inset of Fig. 2(a) [37]. The inset of Fig. 2(b) is the schematic of the Hall bar structure used for electrical transport measurements. The current is applied along the a axis and the field is always along the *b* axis.

We calculate the Hall conductivity  $(\sigma_{xy})$  of s1 at 2 K by the relation  $\sigma_{xy} = \frac{\rho_{yx}}{\rho_{yx}^2 + \rho_{xx}^2}$  and plot  $\sigma_{xy}$  vs *B* in Fig. 2(c). Because ZrTe<sub>5</sub> is a nonmagnetic material and there is no contribution from the scattering of magnetic impurities to Hall response, we try to use the classical Drude model with one or two types of carriers to fit the  $\sigma_{xy}$  over the entire magnetic field range, as shown in Fig. S1(a) of the Supplemental Material [38–41]. However, both of the fitting lines cannot match the experimental data well. The discrepancy between the Drude model and experimental data was reported in SnTe/PbTe heterostructures and Bi<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Se nanoplates, which show linear magnetoresistance [42,43]. However, the physics has not been fully understood. In our observation, the unusual saturation in the Hall resistivity recalls the AHE induced by Berry curvature [41]. As shown in Fig. S2(a) [38], the Hall conductivity can be only fitted by the classical Drude model in the weak magnetic field regime. The saturated discrepancy between the raw Hall conductivities and the Drude terms at large magnetic fields indicates the extra AHC contribution. We further adopt a different formula based on the theoretical scenario discussed in Fig. 1(c) and obtain satisfactory fitting results [black line in Fig. 2(c)] Details for the derivation of the empirical formulas are shown in the Supplemental Material [38]. The obtained empirical formulas are as follows:

$$\sigma_{xy}(B) = \sigma_{xy}^A(B) + \sigma_{xy}^N(B), \qquad (1)$$

$$\sigma_{xy}^A(B) = \sigma_0^A \tanh(B/B_0), \qquad (2)$$

$$\sigma_{xy}^{N}(B) = \left(\frac{\frac{n_{0}}{2} \left[1 + \tanh\left(\frac{B}{B_{0}}\right)\right] \mu_{1}^{2}}{1 + (\mu_{1}B)^{2}} + \frac{\frac{n_{0}}{2} \left[1 - \tanh\left(\frac{B}{B_{0}}\right)\right] \mu_{2}^{2}}{1 + (\mu_{2}B)^{2}}\right) eB.$$
(3)

Here,  $\sigma_{xy}^A(B)$  [blue dashed line in Fig. 2(c), labeled as the anomalous term] is the *B*-dependent AHC and  $\sigma_0^A$  is the saturation value of  $\sigma_{xy}^A$ ,  $B_0$  is a parameter related to the saturation field, and  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  can reach  $0.99\sigma_0^A$  at a critical field  $B_c \sim 3B_0, \sigma_{xy}^N(B)$  [dark yellow dashed line in Fig. 2(c), labeled as the modified Drude term] is the contribution from both carriers with spin up or spin down under Lorentz force,  $n_0$  is the total carrier density, and  $\mu_{1,2}$  is the mobility of carriers with different spins. The fitting result indicates a total carrier density  $n_0$  of about 2.8 × 10<sup>17</sup> cm<sup>-3</sup> and the mobilities of the two pockets are estimated to be  $1.6 \times 10^4$  cm<sup>2</sup> V<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> and  $3.7 \times 10^3$  cm<sup>2</sup> V<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>. The relatively low carrier density of the sample indicates weak hole doping [44,45]. Figure 2(d) shows  $\sigma_{xy}(B)$  at different temperatures. The temperature dependence of  $\sigma_0^A$  estimated from the fitting is shown in the inset of Fig. 2(d) and the critical field  $B_c$  as a function of temperature is plotted in the inset of Fig. S3 [38]. When the temperature is lower than 60 K, both  $\sigma_0^A$  and  $B_c$  are almost temperature independent with values of 55  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup> and 12 T, respectively. The slight drop of  $\sigma_0^A$  and enhancement of  $B_c$  at high temperatures may result from the smearing effect.

To further study the universality of AHE in transition-metal pentatelluride, we carried out electrical transport measurements on a HfTe<sub>5</sub> flake with a thickness of about 205 nm (*s*2) at 2 and 5 K. Figure 3(a) shows the Hall resistivity of *s*2 (*p* type) and the inset represents the  $\rho_{xx}$  vs *B* of *s*2. An obvious Hall plateau can be observed at large magnetic fields, similar to those results of the ZrTe<sub>5</sub> flake. The Hall conductivity of the HfTe<sub>5</sub> flake cannot be fitted by the classical Drude model



FIG. 3. Anomalous Hall effect in a HfTe<sub>5</sub> flake (*s*2) with a thickness of about 205 nm. (a) Hall resistivity of *s*2 versus *B* at 2 and 5 K. Inset: magnetic field dependence of longitudinal resistivity at 2 and 5 K. (b) Magnetic field dependence of Hall conductivity of *s*2. The black lines are fitting results based on our model. The inset shows the extracted anomalous Hall term of *s*2 at 2 K. The saturation field (anomalous Hall conductivity) is estimated to be about 8.1 T (70  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup>). Purple curves in Figs. 3(a) and 3(b) are shifted for clarity.

either [Fig. S1(b)] [38]. Meanwhile, we notice that Eq. (3) could also well reproduce the AHC results as represented in Fig. 3(b). Purple curves in Figs. 3(a) and 3(b) are shifted for clarity. The inset of Fig. 3(b) shows the anomalous Hall contribution  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  of s2 as a function of the magnetic field at 2 K. The total carrier density  $n_0$  of s2 is  $1.8 \times 10^{17}$  cm<sup>-3</sup> at 2 K. Besides, the saturation field and value of  $\sigma_0^A$  are estimated to be about 8.1 T and 70  $\Omega^{-1}$  cm<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. The anomalous contribution in transport can also be supported by thermoelectric measurements. Figure S4 [38] represents the raw Nernst signals in a HfTe<sub>5</sub> flake with a thickness of about 210 nm (s3). A clear steplike feature with a plateau can be observed in Nernst voltages at 5 and 10 K, consistent with the feature of ANE [14]. It is noted that the field scale of the saturation region is consistent between the raw data of Nernst voltage and Hall resistivity. The raw Nernst voltages are composed of the ordinary effect and the ANE contributed by the Berry curvature. Considering that the Mott relation is applicable to the intrinsic AHE and ANE [46], the field scale of the extracted ANE is expected to be close to that of the AHE [inset of Fig. 3(b)].

The weak temperature dependence of the  $\sigma_0^A$ , as shown above, indicates the intrinsic origin of the AHE in Dirac materials ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub>. Most previous works attribute the AHE to the existence of Weyl points when the conduction and valence bands cross each other by the Zeeman splitting [15]. The Weyl point mechanism leads to unsaturated AHE even in large magnetic fields before the system reaches the 3D quantized AHE, which corresponds to  $\sigma_0^A = \frac{e^2}{h} \frac{1}{b} \approx 260 \,\Omega^{-1} \,\mathrm{cm^{-1}}$ (*b* is the lattice parameter). However, the AHE saturates when the magnetic field is larger than ~10 T (the critical field  $B_c$ ) in our work or ~2 T in the previous work [15]. The  $B_c$  difference may be due to the variation of the Fermi energy for different samples. Besides, the observed  $\sigma_0^A$  values are one order of magnitude smaller than  $\frac{e^2}{h} \frac{1}{b}$ . Therefore, we can rule out the Weyl point scenario in our experiment.

Different from ordinary bands, both massive and massless Dirac bands naturally exhibit Berry curvature if the double degeneracy is lifted. Heuristically, the Berry curvature of a specific band comes from the Dirac nature, and the



FIG. 4. The band structure and AHE evolution with respect to the Zeeman splitting. (a) The band dispersion near the  $\Gamma$  point for the weak TI phase.  $E_{\rm F}$  is the Fermi level;  $\Delta E$  denotes the energy splitting. (b) Anomalous Hall conductivity ( $\sigma_{xy}^A$ ) with different carrier densities.  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  saturates after at the critical field  $g\mu_B B_c$ . (c),(d) The band structure and  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  for the strong TI phase. AHE exhibits an opposite sign and no plateau, compared to the weak TI.

magnetic field can break the cancellation of Berry curvature from degenerate bands. In ZrTe<sub>5</sub> and HfTe<sub>5</sub>, the large Landé g factor [35,47,48] can generate sizable Zeeman splitting. As pointed out in previous calculations [21], the strong and weak TI phases depend sensitively on the lattice parameters. We build a Wannier function-based tight-binding Hamiltonian via ab initio density-functional theory (DFT) calculations on ZrTe<sub>5</sub>. Using the DFT-relaxed lattice parameters (a = 4.03 Å; b = 15.00 Å; c = 13.79 Å), we obtain a weak TI phase with massive Dirac bands near the  $\Gamma$  point and a small energy gap  $E_{\rm g} = 43$  meV. Using the experimental lattice parameters (a =3.98 Å; b = 14.51 Å; c = 13.70 Å) [36], we obtain a strong TI phase with massive Dirac bands near the  $\Gamma$  point with an indirect energy gap  $E_g = 41 \text{ meV}$ . Then we introduce a Zeeman energy  $g\mu_{\rm B}B/2$  to the system and investigate the band splitting  $\Delta E \approx g\mu_{\rm B}B$  for both weak and strong TI scenarios.

The energy bands are doubly degenerated without the Zeeman field. The Berry curvatures of two degenerate bands cancel each other exactly. Once an external magnetic field is applied along the b axis, the energy bands split into two with opposite Berry curvature. The Berry curvature distributes mainly in the band edge region, as a feature of the massive Dirac fermions. The nonzero Berry curvature on the Fermi surfaces induces the AHE since the Berry curvature from the Fermi sea is zero [6]. As bands split, the Fermi surface topology changes while the total carrier density remains the same. Therefore, we determine the new Fermi energy by fixing the total carrier density  $[n_0 \text{ in Eq. } (3)]$  for each Zeeman energy. Then we integrate the Berry curvature over the corresponding Fermi surfaces [49] and obtain the AHC  $\sigma_{xy}^A$ . Based on our experiments, we set the carrier to be p type and focus on the top region of the valence bands, which are located near the  $\Gamma$  point. We check several carrier densities from 0.4 to  $10.2 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$  in calculations.

Figure 4(a) shows the evolution of the band structure of the weak TI phase. For increasing  $g\mu_B B$ , one Fermi surface expands in volume and the other shrinks until the smaller Fermi surface vanishes into a point and disappears at the critical field  $B_c$ . The critical field  $g\mu_B B_c$  is proportional to the Fermi energy  $E_F$ , as shown in Fig. 4(b), where  $E_F \approx g\mu_B B_c/2$  in the presence of strong spin-orbit coupling. After the critical field, the large Fermi surface remains unchanged because of the fixed total carrier density. For a very large field  $g\mu_B B \approx 50$  meV, the valence and conduction bands touch each other and induce Weyl points. Because their energy is still far from the Fermi level, the Weyl points weakly affect the Berry curvature on the Fermi surface. As shown in Fig. 4(b), the plateau feature remains nearly flat from 50 to 60 meV.

Based on our Fermi surface calculations, we find empirically  $n_0 = 0.04 |E_F|^{1.77}$ , where  $n_0$  is in the unit of  $10^{17}$  cm<sup>-3</sup> and  $E_F$  is in the unit of meV. Therefore, we extract the *g* factor independently. From Fig. 2(c), we find the critical field  $B_c = 12$  T and the total carrier density  $n_0 = 2.8 \times 10^{17}$  cm<sup>-3</sup> and obtain  $E_F = -11$  meV and  $g \approx \frac{2|E_F|}{\mu_B B_c} = 32$  for ZrTe<sub>5</sub> flake *s*1. In Fig. 3(b), we have  $B_c = 8.1$  T and  $n_0 = 1.8 \times 10^{17}$  cm<sup>-3</sup> and obtain  $E_F = -8.6$  meV and  $g \approx \frac{2|E_F|}{\mu_B B_c} = 37$  for HfTe<sub>5</sub> flake *s*2. The obtained *g* factor is in agreement with previous measurement results [35,47,48]. It is noted that the theoretical  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  is in the same order of magnitude as the experiments. The smallness of the theoretical value may be due to the large Dirac mass ( $E_g \sim 40$  meV) used in the calculations, which sensitively depends on the sample condition [50]. Further experimental and theoretical investigations are needed to fully understand this discrepancy.

We also calculate the Fermi surfaces and the AHE for the strong TI phase, as shown in Figs. 4(c) and 4(d). For a weak TI, both the  $\Gamma$  and Z points have band inversions while the strong TI phase has a band inversion only at the Z point. For the weakly *p*-doped case, the Fermi surfaces are located around the  $\Gamma$  point. The mass of Dirac fermions at  $\Gamma$  is positive (negative) for the strong (weak) TI. Therefore, strong and weak TIs exhibit opposite signs of the Berry curvature for the same Zeeman splitting, which provides a qualitative criterion to distinguish the strong and weak phases. For the *p*-type carriers, the weak and strong TIs exhibit positive and negative, respectively, signs in the AHC. If the sample is n doped, the sign reverses compared to the *p*-doped case. Besides, a salient feature in the strong TI phase is the existence of Weyl points when two valence bands cross each other along the  $\Gamma$ -Z axis. The AHE is sensitively affected by Weyl points. Even after they are pushed below the Fermi energy after a critical field, the Weyl-point-induced Berry curvature remains on the Fermi surface. Instead of a plateau, the AHE decreases after this point. Because of both the positive value of  $\sigma_{xy}^A$  and the appearance of the plateau, we identify our thin flake samples to be weak topological insulators, which is consistent with previous spectroscopic reports [30,31,34].

In summary, the AHE in nonmagnetic materials  $ZrTe_5$  and  $HfTe_5$  was clearly demonstrated via transport measurements of thin flakes under perpendicular magnetic fields up to 33 T. We reveal that the massive Dirac nature leads to the AHE in the presence of the Zeeman splitting, without involving Weyl points. The model can further distinguish the strong and

weak TI phases by identifying the sign of the AHE, and our thin flake samples are characterized to be the weak TI. The results clearly clarify the AHE in transition-metal pentatellurides by high magnetic field measurements on flake samples with precise Hall bar and quantitative theoretical models. This work resolves important questions about the unusual AHE in nonmagnetic topological materials and provides a useful tool to distinguish strong/weak TIs by AHE analysis.

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