

General scattering and electronic states in a quantum-wire network of moiré systems

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We investigate electronic states in a two-dimensional network consisting of interacting quantum wires, a model adopted for twisted bilayer systems. We construct general operators which describe various scattering processes in the system. In a twisted bilayer structure, the moiré periodicity allows for generalized umklapp scatterings, leading to a class of correlated states at certain fractional fillings. We identify scattering processes which can lead to an insulating gapped bulk with gapless chiral edge modes at fractional fillings, resembling the quantum anomalous Hall effect recently observed in twisted bilayer graphene. Finally, we demonstrate that the description can be useful in predicting spectroscopic and transport features to detect and characterize the chiral edge modes in the moiré-induced correlated states.

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Moiré bilayer structures provide a platform for strongly correlated systems, where unconventional states of matter emerge [1–4] as a consequence of flat energy bands [5]. Since the discovery of correlated insulating states and superconductivity in twisted bilayer graphene (TBG) [6,7], various exotic states or features have been observed [8], including nematicity [9–12], pressure-enhanced superconductivity [13], strange metal [14,15], cascade of transitions [16,17], orbital magnetism [18,19], independent superconducting and correlated insulating states [20–22], fragile correlated states against twist angle disorder [23], entropy-driven phase transition [24,25], unconventional superconductivity [26], and spin-orbit-driven ferromagnetism [27].

In addition to features that resemble existing strongly correlated systems such as cuprates and iron-based superconductors, there are observations suggesting the existence of topological phases. Specifically, nonlocal transport demonstrated the presence of chiral edge modes at $3/4$ filling in TBG [28], accompanied by the quantization of Hall resistance at zero magnetic fields [29]. More recent studies revealed a series of quantum anomalous Hall or Chern insulators with Chern numbers $C = \pm 1, \pm 2$, and ± 3 at $\pm 3/4, \pm 1/2$, and $\pm 1/4$ fillings, respectively [30–32]. Furthermore, there is experimental indication of a many-body origin for the topological phases [27,30–36]. The observations on various electronic states motivated theoretical studies on TBG [37–53] and the development of moiré electronics, including structures beyond bilayers [54–63] and materials other than graphene [64–69].

A major theoretical challenge in strongly correlated moiré systems involves incorporating many-body effects with numerous atoms due to the large moiré unit cell. It is thus crucial to identify the relevant degrees of freedom to construct an effective model for efficient quantitative analysis. Remarkably, correlated phenomena in TBG can be investigated

in the context of (Tomonaga-)Luttinger liquids, which inherently includes electron-electron interactions [70–72]. Specifically, in the presence of an interlayer potential difference, one-dimensional channels emerge at domain walls between AB- and BA-stacking regions [73–75] and form a triangular quantum-wire network illustrated in Fig. 1; we also note spectroscopic [9–11,76,77] and transport [78] features of the domain-wall network [79]. These findings motivated theoretical studies on network models based on Luttinger liquids [80–84], reminiscent of earlier works on (crossed) sliding Luttinger liquids proposed for cuprates [85–88] and

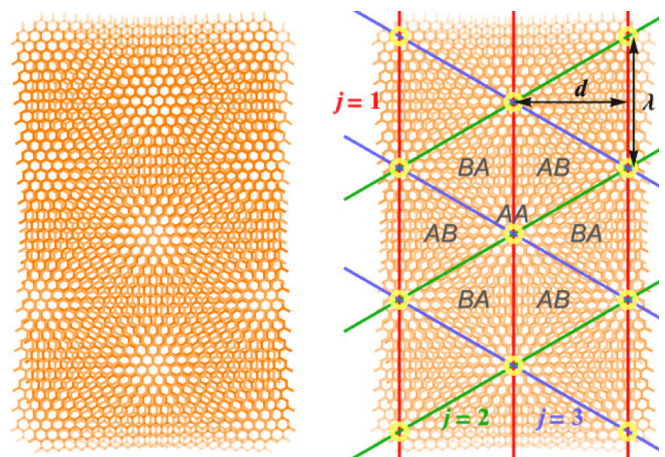


FIG. 1. Moiré pattern and quantum-wire network of the TBG. When two graphene monolayers (orange) are stacked with a misalignment, there appears a moiré pattern with the wavelength $\lambda = a_0/[2 \sin(\theta/2)]$, monolayer lattice constant a_0 , and the angle θ between the layers. The moiré pattern results in three sets of parallel quantum wires, plotted in distinct colors and labeled by j , with the interwire distance $d = \sqrt{3}\lambda/2$.

the coupled-wire constructions of various quantum Hall states [89–99]. From a different perspective, moiré systems provide mesoscopic realizations of coupled-wire systems originally proposed for entirely distinct systems [85–88].

In this work, we extend the network models [80–84] to explore the possibility of topological phases in moiré systems. We construct operators describing general scattering processes based on conservation laws and investigate the resulting electronic states. In moiré structures, the periodic potential allows for generalized umklapp scatterings, which lead to correlated states at fractional fillings. Remarkably, we identify processes that lead to a gapped bulk with gapless modes along the edges, resembling the observed Chern insulators in TBG [28–35]. Furthermore, we demonstrate that this description can be useful by making concrete predictions for spectroscopic and transport features. In addition to TBG, our mechanism can apply to other nanoscale systems forming arrays of one-dimensional channels, such as twisted moiré bilayers formed by WTe_2 [100] or topological insulators [101,102], as well as strain-engineered graphene [103].

Bosonization. We introduce the fermion field $\psi_{\ell m \sigma}^{(j)}$ with the array index $j \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, wire index $m \in [1, N_\perp]$ within each array, the index $\ell \in \{R \equiv +, L \equiv -\}$ labeling the moving direction, and spin $\sigma \in \{\uparrow \equiv +, \downarrow \equiv -\}$; see Fig. 2. The fermion field can be bosonized as

$$\psi_{\ell m \sigma}^{(j)}(x) = \frac{U_{\ell m \sigma}^j}{\sqrt{2\pi a}} e^{ik_F x} \times e^{\frac{-i}{\sqrt{2}} [\ell \phi_{\ell m}^j(x) - \theta_{\ell m}^j(x) + \ell \sigma \phi_{\xi m}^j(x) - \sigma \theta_{\xi m}^j(x)]}, \quad (1)$$

with the Klein factor $U_{\ell m \sigma}^j$, short-distance cutoff a , local coordinate x , Fermi wave vector k_F (identical for all wires), and the index $\xi \in \{c \equiv +, s \equiv -\}$ for the charge/spin sector of the boson fields $\phi_{\xi m}^j$ and $\theta_{\xi m}^j$, satisfying

$$[\phi_{\xi m}^j(x), \theta_{\xi' m'}^{j'}(x')] = i \frac{\pi}{2} \text{sgn}(x' - x) \delta_{jj'} \delta_{\xi\xi'} \delta_{mm'}. \quad (2)$$

Below we omit the Klein factor and x whenever possible.

The unperturbed Hamiltonian $H_0 + H_{fs}$ describes a crossed sliding Luttinger liquid at the fixed point [82], with the kinetic energy H_0 and marginally relevant forward scattering terms H_{fs} quadratic in the density operator $\propto \partial_x \phi_{cm}^j$. In addition, there exist intrawire or interwire backscattering processes, arising from electron-electron interactions and/or tunnelings, which can destabilize the fixed point characterized by the quadratic terms, as those in coupled-wire systems [89–99]. Since the bandwidth W serves as high-energy cutoff [104], the dimensionless coupling g/W , with the strength g characterizing a general scattering, takes a larger value in (quasi-)flat-band systems, allowing for higher-order scatterings to play a more significant role. As in Refs. [89,95], we do not specify H_{fs} ; for demonstration, a specific model [82,85–88] is presented in the Supplemental Material (SM) [105]. Below we construct operators describing general scatterings, including higher-order processes (previously discussed in multiband wires [106,107]), and discuss the resulting electronic states.

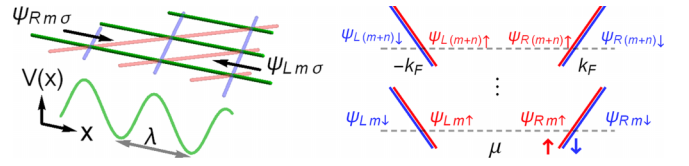


FIG. 2. Quantum-wire network in a moiré structure. Left: For each wire, we define the local coordinate x and fermion fields $\psi_{\ell m \sigma}$, which experience a periodic potential $V(x)$ generated by the moiré structure. Right: Each array consists of parallel wires with the chemical potential μ and Fermi wave vector k_F , where we linearize the energy dispersion and bosonize the fields with Eq. (1).

General scattering operator. We consider the operator

$$O_{\{s_{\ell p \sigma}^j\}} = \sum_{m=1}^{N_\perp} \prod_{p=0}^3 \prod_{j=1}^3 [\psi_{R(m+p)\uparrow}^{(j)}]^{s_{Rp\uparrow}^j} [\psi_{L(m+p)\uparrow}^{(j)}]^{s_{Lp\uparrow}^j} \times [\psi_{R(m+p)\downarrow}^{(j)}]^{s_{Rp\downarrow}^j} [\psi_{L(m+p)\downarrow}^{(j)}]^{s_{Lp\downarrow}^j}, \quad (3)$$

where the subscript $\{s_{\ell p \sigma}^j\}$ denotes an integer set for all values of (j, ℓ, p, σ) with $p \in \text{integers}$. The set characterizes O ; a negative value implies Hermitian conjugate: $\psi^s \equiv (\psi^\dagger)^{|s|}$ for $s < 0$. A nonzero s for a given p indicates that the p th nearest neighbor wires participate in the scattering. While O can in principle involve any number of wires, physically one expects s to vanish for large p in systems subject to finite-range interactions.

The operator O describes scatterings within an array when s is nonzero for a single j value. The corresponding renormalization-group (RG) relevance condition is given by $\Delta_{s_{\ell p \sigma}^j} < 2$, where the scaling dimension $\Delta_{s_{\ell p \sigma}^j}$ is determined by $H_0 + H_{fs}$. In a network consisting of crossed wires, interarray scatterings can occur at wire intersections [81,82,87,88], as characterized by Eq. (3) with nonzero s for multiple j values. References [81,82] showed that such scatterings can induce superconducting and insulating phases in moiré bilayers. However, the RG relevance condition in this case is more stringent: $\Delta_{s_{\ell p \sigma}^j} < 1$, since the corresponding operator enters the effective action without involving the spatial integral [105]. Furthermore, the interarray scatterings are independent of the filling factor. To explore correlated states from more RG relevant scatterings, below we examine scatterings within an array and suppress j .

We start with the constraints on possible $s_{\ell p \sigma}$ values. In the absence of proximity-induced “external” pairing, the global particle number or charge is conserved, giving

$$\sum_{p,\sigma} (s_{Rp\sigma} + s_{Lp\sigma}) = 0. \quad (4)$$

For clean systems, the momentum conservation gives additional constraint. Here, the moiré structure plays an important role, as it creates a periodic potential, which partially relaxes the constraint from the momentum conservation. As illustrated in Fig. 2, electrons experience a moiré potential with a spatial period of λ . This leads to a generalized condition for momentum conservation,

$$k_F \sum_{p,\sigma} (s_{Rp\sigma} - s_{Lp\sigma}) = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} \times \text{integer}, \quad (5)$$

which allows us to organize $O_{\{s_{\ell p \sigma}\}}$ into two categories.

In the first category, scatterings are allowed for any k_F independent of the filling factor, provided that the coefficients satisfy

$$\sum_{p,\sigma} (s_{Rp\sigma} - s_{Lp\sigma}) = 0. \quad (6)$$

Together with the constraint in Eq. (4), we get

$$\sum_{p,\sigma} s_{Rp\sigma} = \sum_{p,\sigma} s_{Lp\sigma} = 0, \quad (7)$$

meaning that the numbers of the left- and right-moving particles are individually conserved. We refer to these processes as *conventional scatterings*, which characterize electronic states corresponding the “crystalline states” in Ref. [89].

At certain fillings, on the other hand, another category of scatterings can take place even when Eq. (6) is not fulfilled. The momentum difference due to the number imbalance between the left- and right-moving particles can be compensated by the “crystal momentum” proportional to the reciprocal lattice vector $2\pi/\lambda$. With Eqs. (4)–(5) and the relation between the filling factor and Fermi wave vector $\nu = k_F\lambda/\pi$ [104], we get a condition on the filling factor,

$$\nu = \frac{P}{\sum_{p,\sigma} s_{Rp\sigma}}, \quad (8)$$

with a nonzero integer P . In our description, $\nu = 1$ corresponds to 4 electrons per moiré unit cell in TBG [81,82]. Since these processes are feasible owing to the presence of the moiré periodic potential, in analogy to Refs. [104,108], we refer to the second category as *moiré umklapp scatterings* and the corresponding states of matter *moiré correlated states*.

For both categories, the bosonization in Eq. (1) gives

$$O_{\{s_{\ell p\sigma}\}} = \sum_{m=1} \exp \left\{ \frac{i}{\sqrt{2}} \sum_p [s_{p,c} \phi_{c(m+p)} + \bar{s}_{p,c} \theta_{c(m+p)} + s_{p,s} \phi_{s(m+p)} + \bar{s}_{p,s} \theta_{s(m+p)}] \right\}, \quad (9)$$

with the coefficients

$$s_{p,\xi} = s_{Lp\xi} - s_{Rp\xi} + \xi(s_{Lp\downarrow} - s_{Rp\downarrow}), \quad (10a)$$

$$\bar{s}_{p,\xi} = s_{Lp\xi} + s_{Rp\xi} + \xi(s_{Lp\downarrow} + s_{Rp\downarrow}). \quad (10b)$$

The global charge conservation requires $\sum_p \bar{s}_{p,c} = 0$. The momentum conservation requires $\sum_p s_{p,c} = 0$ for conventional scatterings and $\nu \sum_p s_{p,c} = 2P$ for moiré umklapp scatterings. If the charge (spin) is conserved for a fixed p , the coefficient $\bar{s}_{p,c}$ ($\bar{s}_{p,s}$) vanishes. While there is in general no constraint on $\bar{s}_{p,s}$, for simplicity we choose $\bar{s}_{p,s} = 0$, as operators with nonzero $\bar{s}_{p,s}$ are typically less RG relevant.

The conventional scatterings fulfilling Eq. (7) include charge-density-wave couplings, Josephson couplings, and hoppings. They lead to charge density wave, superconducting, and Fermi liquid states, respectively [105]. In addition, the twisted structure enables moiré umklapp scatterings, which we discuss below.

Moiré correlated states. The moiré umklapp scatterings can be further categorized into four types, depending on whether they involve multiple wires, whether they involve scatterings between wires, and whether they conserve the particle number

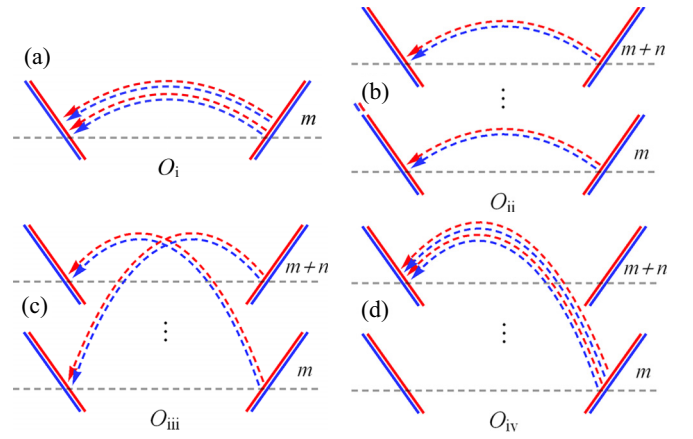


FIG. 3. Examples for moiré umklapp scatterings at $\nu = P/4$. (a) O_i , characterized by Eq. (3) with $(s_{R0\sigma}, s_{L0\sigma}) = (2, -2)$. (b) O_{ii} , with $(s_{R0\sigma}, s_{L0\sigma}, s_{Rn\sigma}, s_{Ln\sigma}) = (1, -1, 1, -1)$. (c) O_{iii} , with $(s_{R0\sigma}, s_{L0\sigma}, s_{Rn\sigma}, s_{Ln\sigma}) = (1, -1, 1, -1)$. (d) O_{iv} , with $(s_{R0\sigma}, s_{L0\sigma}, s_{Rn\sigma}, s_{Ln\sigma}) = (2, 0, 0, -2)$. Here we illustrate processes that are invariant upon changing the spin sign; see Table S1 for more general cases [105].

for each wire. While the operator in Eq. (3) describes general processes at fractional fillings in Eq. (8), below we provide specific examples allowed at $\nu = P/4$.

We start with processes involving only single wires and denote the corresponding operator as O_i . In Fig. 3(a), we illustrate the process with nonzero coefficients, $(s_{R0\sigma}, s_{L0\sigma}) = (2, -2)$ for both $\sigma = \uparrow$ and $\sigma = \downarrow$. The example describes a process where four electrons at k_F are backscattered to $-k_F$, with the total momentum difference $8k_F = 4\nu \times (2\pi/\lambda)$ compensated by the moiré potential. Next, there are umklapp processes involving multiple wires with correlated intrawire scatterings, labeled as O_{ii} . The simplest case involves two n th nearest neighboring wires, with an example in Fig. 3(b); we note that the number of backscatterings in each wire can be different. Furthermore, we have O_{iii} involving interwire scatterings while still conserving the particle number for each wire. As mentioned above, the latter constraint implies $\bar{s}_{p,c} = 0$ for any p , as in the case for O_i and O_{ii} . For instance, in Fig. 3(c) we show a process involving two n th nearest neighbor wires. Finally, allowing for processes which do not conserve the particle number for some wires, we have O_{iv} , with $\bar{s}_{p,c} \neq 0$ for some p . In Fig. 3(d) we plot a two-wire process. In addition to the depicted examples, we present the moiré umklapp scatterings in Table S1 in the SM [105], covering a broader range of fillings and higher-order processes.

For O_i , O_{ii} , and O_{iii} , one can obtain a sum of sine-Gordon terms upon bosonization. Taking Fig. 3(a) as an example, we have $O_i + O_i^\dagger \propto \sum_m \cos(4\sqrt{2}\phi_{cm})$. When the corresponding operator is RG relevant, it gaps out all the ϕ_{cm} fields and leads to a correlated insulating state at fractional fillings. In the strong-coupling limit, ϕ_{cm} is pinned to a minimum of the cosine. A kink excitation corresponds to a tunneling process between two neighboring minima, where ϕ_{cm} changes its value by $\pm\pi/(2\sqrt{2})$. We find that the system hosts fractional excitations with charge $\pm e/2$ associated with the kink. In

contrast to the first three types, the states resulting from O_{iv} can host gapless edge modes, which we demonstrate next.

Chiral edge modes. We consider O_{iv} scattering involving the n th nearest neighbor wires, which allows us to keep only a few nonzero coefficients in Eq. (10); i.e., $S_{n,c} = S_{0,c}$ and $\bar{S}_{n,c} = -\bar{S}_{0,c}$. To proceed, we introduce chiral fields $\Phi_{\ell m} = -\ell\phi_{cm} + f\theta_{cm}$ with $f = -\bar{S}_{0,c}/S_{0,c}$, which satisfy

$$[\Phi_{\ell m}(x), \Phi_{\ell' m'}(x')] = i\ell\pi\delta_{\ell\ell'}\delta_{mm'}f \operatorname{sgn}(x - x'). \quad (11)$$

The transformation leads to

$$O_{iv} + O_{iv}^\dagger \propto \sum_{m=1} \cos \left\{ \frac{S_{0,c}}{\sqrt{2}} [\Phi_{L(m+n)} - \Phi_{Rm}] \right\}. \quad (12)$$

The expression indicates the presence of n gapless chiral modes $\Phi_{L,1}, \dots, \Phi_{L,n}$ at one edge and, similarly, n gapless right-moving modes at the opposite edge. To proceed, we define $\tilde{\Phi}_{m,n} = [\Phi_{L(m+n)} - \Phi_{Rm}]/2$ and get $O_{iv} + O_{iv}^\dagger \propto \sum_{m=1} \cos(\sqrt{2}S_{0,c}\tilde{\Phi}_{m,n})$. Using Eq. (11), it can be shown that the $\tilde{\Phi}_{m,n}$ fields for any m commute [105], gapping out the bulk modes in the interior of the system. Similar to the correlated states induced by O_i - O_{iii} , the system hosts fractional excitations, with charge $\pm 2e/S_{0,c}$. We expect formation of chirality domains, hosting gapless chiral modes at domain walls [105]. While the formation of domain walls costs energy, (disorder-induced) local magnetic moments can trigger their formation, which increases the entropy and therefore lowers the free energy at finite temperatures. Remarkably, a finite magnetic field is required to train domains in order to stabilize edge modes with a definite chirality in micrometer-size samples [28,29].

Using the Landauer-Büttiker formalism [109–112], we obtain quantized Hall resistance $h/(ne^2)$. For $n = 1$ and $\nu = 3/4$, it leads to a value of h/e^2 , as observed in Ref. [29]. In consequence, the system exhibits quantum anomalous Hall effect with chiral edge modes and fractional excitations. We note that it is possible to reproduce a sequence of Chern insulating states with $C = \pm 1, \pm 2$, and ± 3 (corresponding to n here) at fillings $\nu = \pm 3/4, \pm 1/2$, and $\pm 1/4$, respectively. The complete sequence was observed in Refs. [30–32], while a partial set was reported in Refs. [27–29,33–36].

To demonstrate that O_{iv} can be RG relevant, we compute its scaling dimension and get [105]

$$\Delta_{iv} = \frac{1}{2} |S_{0,c}\bar{S}_{0,c}| \left(1 + \frac{2U}{\hbar v_0} \right)^{-\frac{1}{2}}, \quad (13)$$

with the $q \sim 0$ Fourier component U of the density-density interaction and the velocity v_0 . In consequence, for a given scattering process, the RG relevance condition $\Delta_{iv} < 2$ is fulfilled for sufficiently large U .

Experimental signatures. The predicted chiral edge modes can be characterized by spectroscopic and transport measurements. For simplicity we consider a moiré correlated state hosting a single edge mode [105]. Utilizing scanning tunneling spectroscopy, one can probe the local density of states, which follows a universal scaling curve for energy ϵ and temperature T ,

$$\rho(\epsilon) \propto T^{\frac{1}{f}-1} \cosh \left(\frac{\epsilon}{2k_B T} \right) \left| \Gamma \left(\frac{1}{2f} + i \frac{\epsilon}{2\pi k_B T} \right) \right|^2. \quad (14)$$

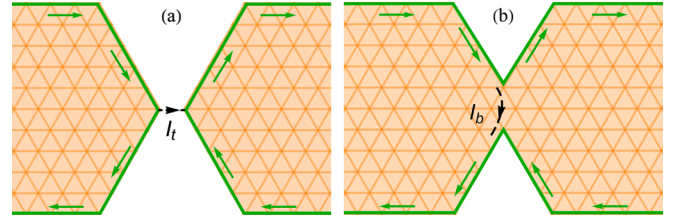


FIG. 4. QPC setups for systems in a moiré correlated state with a gapped bulk (orange) and gapless chiral edge modes (green). The setup (a) allows for tunnel current I_t . The setup (b) leads to backscattering current I_b and conductance correction δG .

In contrast to carbon nanotubes [113,114] or helical liquids [115,116], the scaling exponent here does not depend on H_{fs} , demonstrating the topological nature of the chiral edge modes.

Alternatively, one can probe the chiral edge modes via charge transport [117–122]. Specifically, we consider two setups employing quantum point contacts (QPCs). The setup in Fig. 4(a) allows for interedge tunneling with a current described by another universal scaling formula,

$$I_t \propto T^{\frac{2}{f}-1} \sinh \left(\frac{eV}{2k_B T} \right) \left| \Gamma \left(\frac{1}{f} + i \frac{eV}{2\pi k_B T} \right) \right|^2, \quad (15)$$

with bias voltage V . On the other hand, the interedge backscattering in Fig. 4(b) leads to power-law correction in the (differential) conductance with the magnitude $|\delta G| \propto \max(eV, k_B T)^{2f-2}$. Unlike fractional quantum Hall states [117–121], the scaling exponents depend on f here, but not directly on the filling factor ν . The same QPC geometry can be used to detect fractional charges through shot noise [123–125].

As a remark, while the theoretical works establishing a quantum-wire network in moiré bilayers [73,75] involve a sufficiently large interlayer potential difference, achievable via voltage gates, we expect that the network can form under broader conditions [9–11,76–78]. Namely, a spectral gap can be generally induced in graphene-based devices through coupling to other layered materials or substrates, depending on their stacking configurations [27–29,36,126–130]. Therefore, a gap with a spatially dependent sign can be achieved through nanoscale engineering [82,103,131], leading to a network of gapless domain walls that separate regions with opposing gap signs.

Finally, we point out that, through the proposed experimental verification, the system can reveal the long-sought intrinsic fractional quantum anomalous Hall states, where topology and many-body physics interplay. Upon inducing superconductivity (e.g., by proximity), moiré correlated states hosting fractional edge modes provide a platform to stabilize parafermion edge or zero modes [132–141] even without magnetic fields.

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