Chemical Disorder in Topological Insulators: A Route to Magnetism Tolerant Topological Surface States

M. Carmen Martínez-Velarte  
*University of Zaragoza*

Bernhard Kretz  
*Donostia International Physics Center*

María Moro-Lagares  
*University of Zaragoza*

Myriam H. Aguirre  
*University of Zaragoza*

Trevor A. Riedemann  
Ames Laboratory, tmr@ameslab.gov

Follow this and additional works at: [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/mse_pubs](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/mse_pubs)

Part of the **Condensed Matter Physics Commons, Materials Chemistry Commons**, and the **Materials Science and Engineering Commons**

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at [https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/mse_pubs/304](https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/mse_pubs/304). For information on how to cite this item, please visit [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html).
Chemical Disorder in Topological Insulators: A Route to Magnetism Tolerant Topological Surface States

Abstract
We show that the chemical inhomogeneity in ternary three-dimensional topological insulators preserves the topological spin texture of their surface states against a net surface magnetization. The spin texture is that of a Dirac cone with helical spin structure in the reciprocal space, which gives rise to spin-polarized and dissipation-less charge currents. Thanks to the nontrivial topology of the bulk electronic structure, this spin texture is robust against most types of surface defects. However, magnetic perturbations break the time-reversal symmetry, enabling magnetic scattering and loss of spin coherence of the charge carriers. This intrinsic incompatibility precludes the design of magnetoelectronic devices based on the coupling between magnetic materials and topological surface states. We demonstrate that the magnetization coming from individual Co atoms deposited on the surface can disrupt the spin coherence of the carriers in the archetypal topological insulator Bi2Te3, while in Bi2Se2Te the spin texture remains unperturbed. This is concluded from the observation of elastic backscattering events in quasiparticle interference patterns obtained by scanning tunneling spectroscopy. The mechanism responsible for the protection is investigated by energy resolved spectroscopy and ab initio calculations, and it is ascribed to the distorted adsorption geometry of localized magnetic moments due to Se–Te disorder, which suppresses the Co hybridization with the surface states.

Keywords
3D topological insulators, chemical disorder, magnetic atoms, quasiparticle-interference pattern, scanning tunneling microscopy

Disciplines
Condensed Matter Physics | Materials Chemistry | Materials Science and Engineering

Comments
This document is the Accepted Manuscript version of a Published Work that appeared in final form in Nano Letters, copyright © American Chemical Society after peer review and technical editing by the publisher. To access the final edited and published work see DOI: 10.1021/acs.nanolett.7b00311. Posted with permission.

Authors
M. Carmen Martínez-Velarte, Bernhard Kretz, María Moro-Lagares, Myriam H. Aguirre, Trevor A. Riedemann, Thomas A. Lograsso, Luis Morellón, M. Ricardo Ibarra, Arán García-Lekue, and David Serrate

This article is available at Iowa State University Digital Repository: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/mse_pubs/304
**Chemical Disorder in Topological Insulators: A Route to Magnetism Tolerant Topological Surface States**

M. Carmen Martínez-Velarte, Bernhard Kretz, María Moro-Lagares, Myriam H. Aguirre, Trevor M. Riedemann, Thomas A. Lograsso, Luis Morellón, M. Ricardo Ibarra, Arán García-Lekue, and David Serrate

ABSTRACT: We show that the chemical inhomogeneity in ternary three-dimensional topological insulators preserves the topological spin texture of their surface states against a net surface magnetization. The spin texture is that of a Dirac cone with helical spin structure in the reciprocal space, which gives rise to spin-polarized and dissipation-less charge currents. Thanks to the nontrivial topology of the bulk electronic structure, this spin texture is robust against most types of surface defects. However, magnetic perturbations break the time-reversal symmetry, enabling magnetic scattering and loss of spin coherence of the charge carriers. This intrinsic incompatibility precludes the design of magnetoelectronic devices based on the coupling between magnetic materials and topological surface states. We demonstrate that the magnetization coming from individual Co atoms deposited on the surface can disrupt the spin coherence of the carriers in the archetypal topological insulator Bi$_2$Te$_3$, while in Bi$_2$Se$_2$Te the spin texture remains unperturbed. This is concluded from the observation of elastic backscattering events in quasiparticle interference patterns obtained by scanning tunneling spectroscopy. The mechanism responsible for the protection is investigated by energy resolved spectroscopy and ab initio calculations, and it is ascribed to the distorted adsorption geometry of localized magnetic moments due to Se–Te disorder, which suppresses the Co hybridization with the surface states.

KEYWORDS: 3D topological insulators, magnetic atoms, chemical disorder, scanning tunneling microscopy, quasiparticle-interference pattern

The topological insulators (TI) Bi$_2$(Se$_{1-y}$Te$_y$)$_3$ have a metallic surface state with a Dirac dispersion relation within the bulk band gap. It is called a topological surface state (TSS) because it arises from the combination of a topologically nontrivial electronic structure of the bulk and strong spin–orbit coupling. As a consequence, the TSS exhibits a helical spin structure due to spin-momentum locking. Thus, the probability of large scattering vectors (q) is dramatically suppressed since the initial state has null or negligible projection onto the final one in spin space. In particular, backscattering is quantum mechanically prohibited. This provides coherent spin currents in response to an electric field.

Given the size of the bulk bandgap of about 0.3 eV in Bi$_2$(Se,Te)$_3$, the TSS can be exploited even at room temperature offering high electron mobility, dissipation-less spin torque, topological magneto-electric coupling, or tunneling magnetoresistance. Another crucial advantage of TIs is that the functionalities of the surface are protected against any perturbation that preserves time reversal symmetry (TRS), such as contamination, structural defects, or phonon scattering. This is because the Dirac cone nature of the TSS is imposed by the nontrivial topology of the bulk. However, to implement spintronic applications, materials with magnetic order have to be interfaced with the surface, breaking consequently TRS. Without TRS, the TSS becomes

Received: January 23, 2017
Revised: June 7, 2017
Published: June 13, 2017
gapped and backscattering events are allowed since incoming electrons can exchange spin with the magnetic moment, turning the metallic states of the surface into trivial ones. In order to overcome this apparent contradiction, it is natural to explore interaction mechanisms between TSS and individual magnetic moments that preserve the TRS of the TI. TRS breaking can be probed by angle-resolved photoemission spectroscopy (ARPES), seeking the associated gap opening at the Dirac point. However, in ARPES experiments, the instrumental energy resolution and the Dirac node impurity band brought about by magnetic dopants (crossing the Dirac point) hinder the gap opening caused by disperse single magnetic atoms. On the other hand, quasiparticle interference (QPI) patterns obtained by scanning tunneling microscopy (STM) have proven to be extremely sensitive to minute amounts of scatterers. This technique pays attention to the emergence of $q$ vectors associated with backscattering. Differential conductance ($dI/dV$) maps portray an image of the local density of states (LDoS) at energy $\epsilon = \epsilon_{\text{bias}}$. Constructive interference among scattered surface electrons produce LDoS oscillations in real space from which the scattering intensity in $q$ space can be mapped out by means of the fast Fourier transform (FFT) of the conductance image. In this Letter, we compare the impact of around 1% of ML of Co in the QPI patterns of Bi$_2$Se$_3$Te with $\delta = 0$ and $\delta = 2/3$ (BST). We find that TRS is preserved in the ternary compound with $\delta = 2/3$, while in the binary compound with $\delta = 0$ TRS is destroyed.

Sample preparation, structural characterization, and conditioning of the (111) surface (in rhombohedral indexing) are described in the Supporting Information. Cosublimation is performed by e-beam heating of high purity rods and keeping the sample below 5 K to avoid atom clustering. We fix the evaporation conditions to achieve a stable rate of 0.018 $\pm$ 0.002 ML/min, guaranteeing in this way a coverage regime with only single atoms on the surface (exemplified in Supporting Information Figure S1c). We define one monolayer (ML) coverage as one Co atom per surface unit cell. Scanning tunneling microscopy and spectroscopy have been performed in a low-temperature Specs JT-STM with sample bias convention, base temperature of 4.3 K, and at a pressure better than 2 $\times$ 10$^{-10}$ mbar. Further details on spectroscopy methods are given in the Supporting Information.

Sessi et al. showed that doping Bi$_2$Te$_3$ with Mn atoms at the level of 1% of a ML is enough to induce backscattering spots in QPI patterns and therefore break TRS. For this to occur, the magnetic perturbation must have a finite stationary magnetization component perpendicular to the electron’s wave vector. Note that a strong magnetic anisotropy with in-plane easy axis could mask a potential TRS breaking. In order to ensure a sizable out-of-plane Co magnetic moment, we perform our experiments under a 3 T field normal to the sample surface provided by a superconducting split coil. We have confirmed that this field strength is not enough to produce Landau quantization of the Dirac electrons, as expected for TSSs with scattering centers deposited on the surface.
particular, $dI/dV$ spectra of the surface at 0 and 3 T fully overlap. The crystal structure of Bi$_2$(Se$_{δ}$,Te$_{1−δ}$)$_3$ consists of stacks of quintuple layers, each formed by five atomic layers, along the [111] direction (see Figure 1a). The interaction between quintuple layers is weaker (van der Waals) than between the layers inside. Thus, these crystals are naturally cleaved along these outer layers (hexagonal faces in Figure 1a). For Bi$_2$Te$_3$, the cleaved surface is Te-terminated as evidenced by the homogeneous atomically resolved STM topography (Supporting Information Figure S1). In contrast, BST topography presents an inhomogeneous surface segregated in regions of a few nanometers in size, as shown in Figure 1b. This segregation is due to the Se–Te chemical disorder, and it does not modify the crystalline structure shown in the inset of Figure 1b: BST and Bi$_2$Te$_3$ have the same hexagonal surface unit cell with just different lattice parameter. Similar surface inhomogeneity was reported for other bismuth-based TIs, but it is not observed in the binary compounds. In line with neutron diffraction refinements, cross sectional images in scanning transmission electron microscopy reveal that the outer layers have a 50:50 Te/Se random occupation (Supporting Information Figure S2). This disordered surface will be a key ingredient in the protection of TRS after Co deposition.

Individual Co atoms were deposited on the BST surface. The topography of the doped surface taken at $V_{bias} = −600$ mV displays a variety in the atoms appearance (Figure 1c). Strikingly, the topography image of the very same region taken at $−200$ mV shows the total absence of Co atoms (Figure 1d), anticipating that there are no available states to tunnel to the tip at this energy. This does not occur on the Te homogeneous surface of Bi$_2$Te$_3$. Here, Co atoms are found at two different high-symmetry hollow sites, namely fcc and hcp, providing two Co apparent shapes (Figure 2a). In contrast, the inhomogeneous surface of BST can alter the preferred Co site according to its specific environment giving rise to multiple adsorption geometries. With a random Se or Te occupation, a hollow site can have eight different environments: two high symmetry sites with three Se or three Te neighbors, three asymmetric sites with two Se neighbors and one Te, and three asymmetric sites with one Se and two Te neighbors. Note that each hollow site can be either fcc or hcp, resulting in a doubled multiplicity. We performed a thorough analysis of the adsorption sites (30 atoms from atomically resolved STM images as in Figure 2b), out of which we identified seven inequivalent sites out of the eight possible ones (a detailed description is given in Supporting Information Table S1). Most of them (76 ± 3%) undergo a remarkable shift away of the high-symmetry hollow site, as is the case in Figure 2b. This deviation is confirmed by density-functional theory (DFT) calculations, which were performed applying the projector augmented-wave method as implemented in the VASP code. We obtain the relaxed structure of Co atoms on a Bi$_2$Se$_3$ stack with substitutional Te in the outermost layer (see Figure 2).
Supporting Information Table S2 and Note 2 for computational details. Based on the theoretical distortions, Figure 2d sketches possible adsorption geometries for the atom in Figure 2b. The typical apparent shapes of Co on BST at $V_{\text{bias}} = -600$ mV are shown in Figure 2c. From the statistical analysis of this kind of topographies without atomic resolution (near 1000 Co atoms included), we find that 99% of the Co atoms on BST can be classified into two categories: big round protrusions with height between 40 and 90 pm (hereafter Cob) and smaller ones with heights between 20 and 30 pm (Cos). Cob and Cos have almost the same abundance and are found in nonequivalent distorted adsorption sites, as detailed in Supporting Information Table S1, which suggests they might correspond to hollow sites surrounded by two Te (Cob) or one Te (Cos).

To get insight into the absence of tunneling current from the Co atoms at a certain $V_{\text{bias}}$ we performed $dI/dV$ spectroscopy over Cob and Cos shown in Figure 3a. As seen in Figure 3b, the $dI/dV$ spectra reveal an energy region where LDoS on both species is identical to that of the surface. This energy region matches with great accuracy the bulk energy gap, where there are only TSSs. The absolute position of the band gap has been extracted from ARPES data of the same crystal shifted in energy to match our experimentally obtained dispersion relations. We note that these spectra were acquired in constant height conditions, so the tip distance to the BST surface is the same with or without Co atom underneath. The apparent height of single atoms on metals in STM ranges 50 to 100 pm. This entails an enormous change of conductance if one takes into account that the associated raise of tunneling probability is significant.

Figure 3. Lack of hybridization of Co states with Dirac TSSs on Bi$_2$Se$_2$Te. (a) Topography image ($V_{\text{bias}} = -600$ mV) showing Cob and Cos on BST (upper panel) and corresponding profiles along the dotted lines extracted from constant height $dI/dV$ maps (bottom panel) at energies matching the resonances found in $dI/dV$ spectra (see panel b). (b) $dI/dV$ spectra obtained on the bare BST surface and on the two Co species shown in panel a. The three spectra were taken after opening the feedback over the surface at $V_{\text{bias}} = -200$ mV, $I_{\text{set}} = 50$ pA. The dashed red line marks the position of the Dirac point (DP) and the overlaid thick line gives the error stemming from linear fit of the dispersion relation (see Figure 5). Valence band (VB) and conduction band (CB) edges are indicated with black dashed lines, the thicker gray line giving the error coming from the uncertainty in the DP. The pale gray shaded area thus coincides with the bulk energy gap, a region populated exclusively by topological surface states (TSSs). (c) Constant current topography image of a Cob (left) taken at $V_{\text{bias}} = -100$ mV displays just the BST lattice underneath the atom (red arrow points at the Co position), while the same atom is imaged at $V_{\text{bias}} = -600$ mV (right) as a prominent protrusion. (d) Topography images ($V_{\text{bias}} = -250$ mV) of the two types of high symmetry Co adsorption sites on Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and cross sectional profiles of their apparent shape along the dotted lines at different biases. (e) $dI/dV$ spectra of Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and Co atoms shown in panel d, adsorbed on the two high symmetry hollow sites: fcc (Co$_1$) and hcp (Co$_2$). The setting bias chosen to open the feedback before acquiring the $dI/dV$ spectra are 50 and 200 mV, respectively, where Co$_1$ and Co$_2$ display the minimum apparent height, which sets almost constant height conditions. (f) Constant current topographies of Co$_1$ and Co$_2$ atoms at 50 and $-10$ mV. Unlike on the BST crystal, Co atoms on Bi$_2$Te$_3$ possess large LDoS inside the TSSs energy range, making them visible in topography at any $V_{\text{bias}}$ within that region.
In the case of the BST crystal, to accurately locate the DP we point (DP), the hexagonal warping is so weak that scattering where the expected linear dispersion for Dirac Fermions in both samples in order to sample the reciprocal space with the overlap of spectra over atoms and over the surface within the bulk band gap is a reproducible feature. Consequently, the total absence of Co LDOS inside the TSSs energy range is a strong evidence for the lack of hybridization of Co states and the TSSs in BST.

Co$_0$ atoms exhibit an atomic resonance far below the energy range of the Dirac cone, at around $-550$ mV (see Supplementary Figure S5), which is responsible for their larger apparent height in topography at $-600$ mV (Figure 3a). The resonance found in Co$_0$ slightly below the Dirac point at $-300$ mV (Figure 3b) can be interpreted as a true atomic state, or alternatively as the fingerprint of a bound state owing to the confining electrostatic potential created by a point-like impurity. In the latter case, the coupling mechanism is of purely electrostatic origin, which cannot induce magnetic coupling between the TSS and the Co moment. In addition, taking into account the spatial extent of this resonance of less than 1 nm observed in the red profiles of Figure 3a, the average interatomic distance of ca. 6 nm in our sample impedes the formation of a delocalized bound state band. In the case that the Co$_0$ resonance stems from an atomic orbital, its spectral weight in the region of TSS is given by the small tail of the onset starting right at the Dirac point, where the TSS density of states is minimal. Altogether, the coupling of Co$_0$ atoms to the TSS can be considered marginal.

In contrast to BST, Figure 3e shows strong LDOS resonances within the TSSs region of Co atoms adsorbed on Bi$_2$Te$_3$, in particular the ones shown in Figure 3d. On this surface, the atoms are visible in constant current topography images inside the entire bulk band gap region (Figure 3f), and certainly at the energy position corresponding to the resonances found at the two high symmetry Co adsorption sites (Figure 3d). Therefore, in this case there are Co states and TSS coexisting at the same energy. Now we turn our attention to QPI patterns of the pristine BST and Bi$_2$Te$_3$ surfaces. The spin-texture of TSSs prohibits backscattering. However, due to the hexagonal warping of the Dirac cone at high energies, some scattering channels that are fully compatible with TRS open up. In the warped region of TSSs, electrons propagating along the $\Gamma K$ direction of the surface Brillouin zone acquire an out-of-plane spin component, which is of the same sign in alternate K points. This gives rise to q vectors parallel to the $\Gamma K$ direction (see sketch in Figure 3c), that are detected in the FFT $dI/dV$ maps of undoped surfaces as energy dispersing bright spots along the $\Gamma M$ direction with 6-fold symmetry, Figure 4. In Figure 4a,b, we show the dependence of $q_{\Gamma M}$ on energy (black symbols), where the expected linear dispersion for Dirac Fermions in both Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and BST is observed. For energies near the Dirac point (DP), the hexagonal warping is so weak that scattering along $\Gamma M$ extinguishes. The $\Gamma M$ scattering allows us to obtain the DP by fitting the dispersion relation to a linear regression. In the case of the BST crystal, to accurately locate the DP we took into account a slight change in the slope of the Dirac cone near the DP (thick lines in Figure 5b). After Co doping of BST and Bi$_2$Te$_3$ surfaces, just by looking at the dispersion of $\Gamma M$ scattering, we find that the entire Dirac cone has shifted approximately 100 meV to lower energies in both Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and Bi$_2$Se$_2$Te crystals, confirming the electron donor character of Co atoms. This is in agreement with the overall shift toward lower energies experienced by the $dI/dV$ spectra of the bare surface after doping. However, more remarkably, Figure 5c shows that, while Co doping induces strong scattering spots along $\Gamma K$ in Bi$_2$Te$_3$, this contribution is totally absent in BST. The comparison of Co mediated scattering between both surfaces in the $\Gamma K$ directions is our central result. Figure 5c displays the FFT $dI/dV$ maps at energies for which the $q$ range lies between 1 and 2.5 nm$^{-1}$, comparing the same $q$ values for both samples in order to sample the reciprocal space with the same resolution. As mapping energy ($e = eV_{bias}$) approaches the Dirac point, new scattering channels along $\Gamma K$ in Bi$_2$Te$_3$ progressively reinforced; while the scattering ascribed exclusively to hexagonal warping ($q_{\Gamma M}$) weakens due to the depopulation of the warped regions. The dispersion relation of $q_{\Gamma M}$ follows the expected behavior for backscattering taking into account the scattering geometry of the constant energy contours (see middle row in Figure 5c). This means that $q_{\Gamma M}(e)$ should coincide with the line $q_{\Gamma M}(e)/\cos(30)$, both lines intersecting the ordinate axis at the Dirac point, as is the case of the scattering patterns along $\Gamma K$ from Co/Bi$_2$Te$_3$ (Figure 5a). Then, we can unambiguously conclude that Co doping opens a gap in the energy range of the Dirac cone in Bi$_2$Te$_3$.
backscattering channels at an applied field of 3 T and therefore breaks TRS.

The scenario in BST is very different (Figure 5c, bottom row). QPI patterns along $\Gamma M$ direction persist after Co doping, but no intensity was detected along $\Gamma K$ direction at any $V_{bias}$ around Fermi level. A quenching of the Co magnetic moment upon adsorption in BST is ruled out from the robust magnetic moment of Co, ranging 1.4 to 2.0 $\mu_B$, obtained in DFT calculations for the disordered surface (Supporting Information Table S2). To discard a possible magnetic or structural coupling among Co sites in BST, we have confirmed that the ground state magnetic moment is robust against a coverage decrease from 0.25 to 0.11 ML. According to the calculations, the overall easy axis for the magnetic moment is out-of-plane. Only 25% of Co sites relax to a ground state with larger in-plane magnetization component. In those cases, the weak magneto-crystalline anisotropy can be overcome by the 3 T out-of-plane field (Supporting Information Note 2), as was found for the magnetic dichroism of 0.01 ML Co on Bi$_2$Se$_3$.

To conclude, in spite of the introduction of TRS breaking perturbations of the same strength as in Bi$_2$Te$_3$, backscattering remains prohibited in BST, and therefore, the TSSs is robust against the perturbation. From the analysis of backscattering patterns, we find that TRS is preserved in the Se–Te mixed surface termination of BST under the same coverage and experimental conditions for which TRS is destroyed in the Te-terminated surface of Bi$_2$Te$_3$. Furthermore, $dI/dV$ spectroscopy reveals the absence of Co states within the bulk band gap of BST, the energy region where only TSS exist. This evidences that the modified adsorption geometry in the disordered surface precludes Co magnetic states from hybridizing with the TSS, preserving in this way TRS. This principle can be expected to apply in many other ternary TIs, enabling the design of functional interfaces based on magnetic probes in close contact to topological surface states.

Figure 5. Quasiparticle interference scattering patterns in Co-doped Bi$_2$Se$_2$Te and Bi$_2$Te$_3$ under a 3 T magnetic field normal to the surface. (a,b) Energy dispersion in Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and BST, respectively, inferred from the analysis of FFTs. The Dirac point of the bare surface (corresponding FFTs shown in Figure 4) is obtained by the linear fitting of the data along $\Gamma M$ (black dots) yielding $E_D = -131 \pm 14$ meV in Bi$_2$Te$_3$ and $E_D = -154 \pm 11$ meV in BST. One percent Co-doping induces a shift toward lower energies of about 100 meV (red triangles). Bi$_2$Te$_3$ FFTs spots along $\Gamma K$ show linear dispersion pointing also to the Dirac point, at $-220 \pm 4$ meV, ascribed to backscattering processes (red empty dots). Red dashed lines denote the expected dispersion for backscattering (if allowed) vectors ($\Gamma K$) derived from the $q_{\Gamma M}$ dispersion (see text). (c) Fast Fourier transform of the $dI/dV$ images of Co-doped Bi$_2$Te$_3$ (0.012 ML Co, upper row) and BST (0.015 ML Co, bottom row) in an out-of-plane magnetic field of 3 T. The energy range $eV_{bias}$ is chosen so that the scattering vectors have similar value (vertical arrows in panels a,b), resulting in the same resolution in reciprocal space. White scale bars correspond to 3 nm$^{-1}$. Middle row: Sketch of constant energy contour of the warped surface states in the reciprocal space, where the scattering vectors $q_{\Gamma M}$ and $q_{\Gamma K}$ are indicated as red and gray arrows.
Details on sample preparation and experimental set up, together with figures and tables with topography images of the Co adsorption geometry, HRTEM cross sectional views of the crystals, detailed spectroscopy data, and computational parameters (PDF)

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

**Corresponding Author**

*E-mail: serrate@unizar.es (D.S.).

**ORCID**

Bernhard Kretz: 0000-0002-6728-1025

Myriam H. Aguirre: 0000-0002-1296-4793

Luis Morellón: 0000-0003-3724-508X

Arán García-Lekue: 0000-0001-5556-0898

David Serrate: 0000-0002-3260-9641

**Present Addresses**

(M.C.M.-V.) Department of Quantum Nanoscience, Delft University of Technology, Lorentzweg 1, 2628 CJ Delft, The Netherlands.

(M.M.-L.) Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic. Regional Centre of Advanced Technologies and Materials, Faculty of Science, Department of Physical Chemistry, Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

**Notes**

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We acknowledge the use of SAI-Universidad de Zaragoza. T.M.R and T.A.L. acknowledge support by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Science, Basic Energy Sciences, Materials Science and Engineering Division. Ames Laboratory is operated for the U.S. DOE by Iowa State University under contract DE-AC02-07CH11318. Financial support was provided from Spanish MINECO (MAT2013-46593-C6-2-P and MAT2014-46593-C6-3-P, MAT2013-46593-C6-2-P and MAT2014-46593-C6-3-P, IT-756-15, 2016). B.K. and A.G.L. were also funded by the Basque Departamento de Educación (IT-756-15, 2016).

**ABBREVIATIONS**

TI, topological insulator; TSS, topological surface state; TRS, time reversal symmetry; ARPES, angle resolved photoemission spectroscopy; QPI, quasiparticle interference; STM, scanning tunneling microscopy; LDoS, local density of states; FFT, fast Fourier transform; BST, Bi2Se2Te; ML, monolayer; DFT, density functional theory; DP, Dirac point; PEAM, automated electron microprobe; HAADF, high angular annular dark field; GGA, generalized gradient approximation; PBE, Perdew–Burke–Enzerhof; VB, valence band; CB, conduction band

**REFERENCES**


