Recent Advances in Two-Dimensional Materials Beyond Graphene

Ganesh R. Bhimanapati[Ϯ], Zhong Lin[ϙ], Vincent Meunier [Ϧ], Yeonwoong Jung [€], Judy Cha [Ӿ], Saptarshi Das [Γ], Di Xiao [Φ], Youngwoo Son[£], Michael S. Strano[£], Valentino R. Cooper [Ѡ], Liangbo Liang [Ϧ], Steven G. Louie[Ϫ], Emilie Ringe[ζ], Wu Zhou[Ѡ], Bobby G. Sumpter[Ѡ], Humberto Terrones[Ϧ], Fengnian Xia[Ӿ], Yeliang Wang[Ħ], Jun Zhu[ϙ], Deji Akinwande[‡], Nasim Alem[Ϯ], Jon A. Schuller[¥], Raymond E. Schaak[¶], Mauricio Terrones[Ϯ,ϙ,¶], Joshua A Robinson[Ϯ,*]

Ϯ - Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Center for Two-Dimensional and Layered Materials, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, United States. **ϙ** - Department of Physics, Center for Two-Dimensional and Layered Materials, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802, United States. **€**- Nanoscience Technology Center, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida 32826, United States, **Ӿ** –Department of Mechanical Engineering and Material Science, Yale school of Engineering and Applied Sciences, New Haven, CT 06520, United States. **Ϧ-** Department of Physics, Applied Physics, and Astronomy, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York 12180, United States and Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, United States. **Γ** - Birck Nanotechnology Center & Department of ECE, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907, United States. **Φ** - Department of Physics, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, United States. **£** - Department of Chemical Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA 02139, United States. **Ѡ** - Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences and Computer Science & Mathematics Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831, United States. **Ϫ** - Department of Physics, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, California 94720, United States and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, Berkeley, California 94720, United States. **Ħ**- Beijing National Laboratory for Condensed Matter Physics, Institute of Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190, China, **ζ** - Department of Materials Science & Nano Engineering, Rice University, Houston 77005, United States. **‡**- Microelectronics Research Centre, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas 78758, United States. **¥**-Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, University of California Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California 93106, United States **¶** - Department of Chemistry and Materials Research Institute, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, United States.

Abstract

The isolation of graphene in 2004 from graphite was a defining moment for the "birth" of a field: Two-dimensional (2D) materials. In recent years, there has been a rapidly increasing number of papers focusing on non-graphene layered materials, including transition-metal dichalcogenides (TMDs), because of the new properties and applications that emerge upon 2D confinement. Here we review significant recent advances and important new developments in 2D materials "beyond graphene". We provide insight into the theoretical modeling and understanding of the van der Waals (vdW) forces that hold together the 2D layers in bulk solids, as well as their excitonic properties and growth morphologies. Additionally, we highlight recent breakthroughs in TMD synthesis and characterization and discuss the newest families of 2D materials, including monoelement 2D materials (*i.e.*, silicene, phosphorene, *etc.*) and transition metal carbide- and carbon nitride-based MXenes. We then discuss the doping and functionalization of 2D materials beyond graphene that enable device applications, followed by advances in electronic, optoelectronic, and magnetic devices and theory. Finally, we provide perspectives on the future of 2D materials beyond graphene.

Keywords: two-dimensional materials, graphene, heterostructures, transition metal dichalcogenide, phospherene, silicene, germanene, stanene, van der Waals epitaxy, van der Waals solid.

[*] jrobinson@psu.edu

Vocabulary:

$(NH_4)_2MoS_4$- Ammonia tetra thiomolybdate
2D – two-dimensional
3D- three dimensional
ADF- annular dark field
Ag- silver
AHM, $(NH_4)_6Mo_7O_{24}\cdot 4H_2O$- Ammonium heptamolybdate
ALD- Atomic layer deposition
ARPES- Angle resolved photoemission spectroscopy
Au- gold
$AuCl_3$- gold chloride
BP- Black phosphorous
BV- Benxyl viologen
C- Carbon
CF_3- carbon tetrafluoride radical
CH_3- methyl radical
CL- cathodoluminescence
Cl- chlorine atom
Cl_2- chlorine
Co- Cobalt
CrI_3- chromium iodide
$CrSiTe_3$- chromium silicon telluride
Cs_2CO_3- cesium carbonate
CVD- chemical vapor deposition
DCE- 1,2- dichloroethane
DF- density functional
DFPT- density functional perturbation theory
DFT- Density functional theory
DMC- Diffusion quantum Monte Carlo
DNA- deoxy ribonucleic acid
EELS- Electron energy loss spectroscopy
EG- Epitaxial graphene
FET- Field effect transistor
GaAlAs- Gallium aluminum arsenide
GaAs- Gallium Arsenide
GaN- Gallium nitride
GaSe- Gallium selenide
Ge- Germanium
GW-BSE- GW plus Bethe Salpeter equation
H_2O- water
H_2S- Hydrogen sulfide
hBN- Hexagonal boron nitride
HF- hydrogen fluoride
HfSe2- Halfnium selenide
HRTEM- High resolution Transmission electron microscopy
In_2Se_3- Indium selenide
K- potassium
LED- Light emitting diodes
Li- lithium
LSPR- Localized surface plasmon resonance
LSPR- localized surface plasmon resonance
MBE- Molecular beam epitaxy
Mn- manganese
Mo- Molybdenum
$MoCl_5$- Molybdenum chloride
MOCVD- Metal organic chemical vapor deposition
MoO_3- Molybdenum (VI) oxide
MoS_2- Molybdenum disulfide
$MoSe_2$- Molybdenum diselenide
Na- sodium
NADH- Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
NbS_2- niobium disulfide
NH_2- ammonia radical
NO_2- Nitrogen dioxide
O_2- Oxygen
OLED- organic light emitting diode
OTS – Octadecyltrichlorosilane
PDMS- polydimethyl siloxane
PEI- Polyethyleneimine
PL- Photoluminescence
PMMA- poly methyl methacrylate
PTAS- Perylene-3,4,9,10- tetracarboxylic acid tetrapotassium salt
p-TSA- p-toluene sulfonic acid
PVA- poly vinyl alcohol
QC- Quantum chemical
QFEG- Quasi- free-standing epitaxial graphene
QSHE- Quantum spin hall effect
S- Sulfur
SAMs- self-assembled monolayers
SBs- Schottky barriers
Sc- scandium
Se- Selenium
SERS- Surface enhanced raman spectroscopy
Si- Silicon
SiC- Silicon carbide
SiO_2- Silicon dioxide
Sn- tin
SnS_2- tun sulfide
$SnSe_2$- Tin diselenide
SO- spin orbit
SPR- surface plasmon resonance
STEM- scanning transmission electron microscopy
STM- Scanning tunneling microscopy

STMDs- semiconducting transition metal dichalcogenides
STS- Scanning tunneling spectroscopy
$TaSe_2$- Tantalum diselenide
TCNQ- 7,7,8,8- tetracyanoquinodimethane
TEM- Transmission electron microscopy
TFT- thin film transistors
TMDs – Transition metal dichalcogenides
TOF-SIMS- time of flight- secondary ion mass spectroscopy
UHV- ultra high vacuum
vdW – van der Waals
W- tungsten
WO3 – Tungsten (VI) oxide
WS2- Tungsten disulfide
WSe_2- Tungsten diselenide

Layered materials have existed for eons,[1] and have been studied scientifically for more than 150 years.[2] However, only recently[3] have we begun to realize the true potential of these systems for advanced technological applications. Each layered material, when thinned to its physical limits, exhibits novel properties different from its bulk counterpart. Therefore, at the physical limit these materials are referred to as two-dimensional (2D) materials. The most highly studied 2D material is graphene because of its exceptional electronic, optoelectronic, electrochemical and biomedical applications. Beyond graphene, there is a very wide spectrum of 2D electronic materials that range from insulators to semiconductors to metals and even to superconductors. 2D materials research initially focused on graphene following the seminal paper by Novoselev and Geim,[3] but it was also demonstrated very early on that other 2D materials also possess exciting properties.[4] Following graphene, 2D hexagonal boron nitride (hBN) was theoretically predicted to induce a bandgap in graphene when graphene was deposited onto it.[5] This led to a significant increase in hBN experimental research, and ultimately to an understanding that hBN may be an ideal substrate for graphene electronics.[6] Rapidly following graphene and hBN, research on semiconducting 2D layers provided evidence that the band structure of a subset of the 2D materials family changes drastically as they are thinned to monolayer thickness.[7] Device fabrication further ignited the interest of many in the electronics community.[8] These novel semiconducting 2D materials, known as transition-metal dichalcogenides (TMDs), are now a primary focus of many researchers, as clearly evidenced by the publication record devoted to such materials (Figure 1). There are many layered materials that go beyond TMDs, including monochalcogenides (GaSe, *etc*.), monoelemental 2D semiconductors (silicene, phosphorene, germanene), and MXenes (Figure 1). Finally, the true potential of these layered materials may emerge from the ability to stack them, layer-by-layer in any desired sequence, to create novel 3-dimensional (3D) architectures with entirely new functions.

In the following pages, we present a forward-looking review of recent advances in the field of 2D materials beyond graphene. Because the field is developing very rapidly, this review aims to summarize only the most recent advances in 2D theory, synthesis, characterization, and devices. Earlier developments were captured in prior reviews.[9–19]

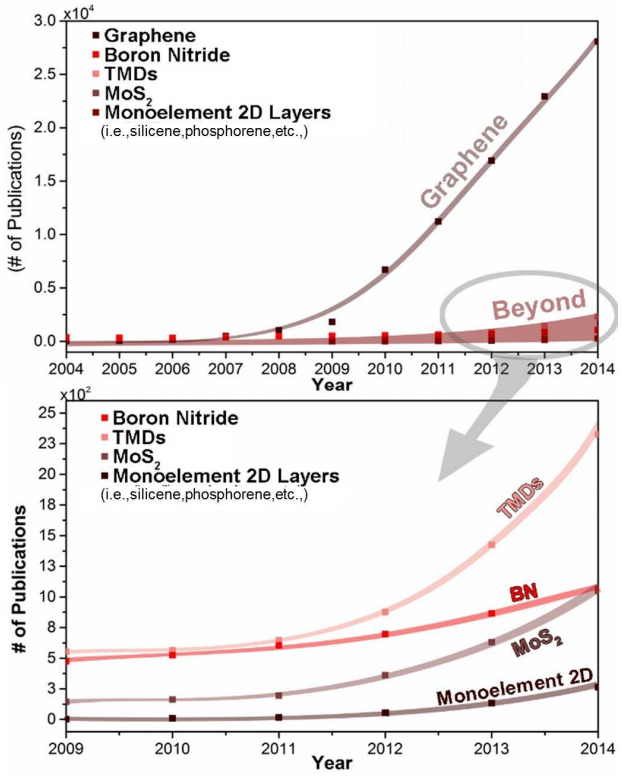

Figure 1: Publication trends in 2D materials beyond graphene. Source: Web of Science. Search index: [Title search (x) or title (y) and topic (z), where x = graphene or boron nitride or transition metal chalcogenides or molybdenum disulfide or monoelements (silicene, germanene, phosphorene, stanene or borophene), y = graphene or BN or TMDs or MoS_2) and z = graphene or boron nitride or transition metal chalcogenides (TMDs: MoS_2, WS_2, $MoSe_2$, WSe_2, TaS_2, $TaSe_2$, NbS_2) or MoS_2 or monoelement 2D: silicene, germanene, stanene, borophene, phosphorene.]

Modeling Growth Morphology

Growth of single-layer materials typically yields small (few to 100s of microns) single crystals with well-defined shapes, typically triangular. At such length scales, the particle morphology can influence many of their properties; hence morphology becomes a key factor in engineering new nanostructures with controllable functions. In this section, tools that help understand, describe and potentially predict shape based on thermodynamic and kinetic arguments are discussed.

Analogous to the highly size- and shape-dependent localized surface plasmon resonance (LSPR) phenomenon in metallic nanostructures, the photoluminescence of graphene quantum dots has been shown to vary with size[20] and shape[21]. Also, analogous to metal nanocrystals, a number of approaches exist to understand morphology in terms of thermodynamic properties and/or growth kinetics. In crystals, the famous Wulff construction[22–24] and its twinned[25], alloyed[26], supported[27,28], and kinetic[29,30] derivatives provide a full toolbox to understand the origin of the overall particle shape. Such constructions relate the relative expression of each crystallographic facet to its surface energy or growth velocity: the higher the surface energy, the least a facet is expressed, resulting in the dominant facet being that with the lowest energy. The direct analogue for 2D materials uses the edge energy or edge growth velocity. The higher the edge energy, the least likely it is to be present. Because these constructs relate easily observable and quantifiable values (relative surface expression) to important yet often intractable parameters (growth velocity, surface/interface energy), Wulff constructions are extremely helpful for interpreting and predicting experimental outcomes.

A number of novel 2D materials are generally more complex than graphene, and chemical termination now plays a significant role. In hBN, for example, zigzag edges can be B- or N- terminated while the composition of the armchair edge is stoichiometric. Controlling the chemical potential in the reaction leads to a continuous crystal shape transition from triangle to hexagon to inverted triangle, and a concurrent change of magnetic properties in embedded systems.[31] Preferential edge orientation and composition are also critical in the design of functional TMDs, where edges have been shown to dominate catalytic activity.[32,33] Finally, very recently Cao *et al.*[34] applied Wulff constructions to elucidate the shape,

edge, and magnetism evolution of monolayer MoS_2 (Figure 2) as a function of chemical potential from the Mo-rich to the S-rich condition. The findings can be applied to explain extensive experimental observations about the morphology of MoS_2 domains. Much work remains to be done in understanding the composition (and properties) of the edges in 2D materials, and Wulff constructions applied in 2D seem to constitute an attractive approach that, with time, will move from a theory tool to a routine experimental data analysis approach.

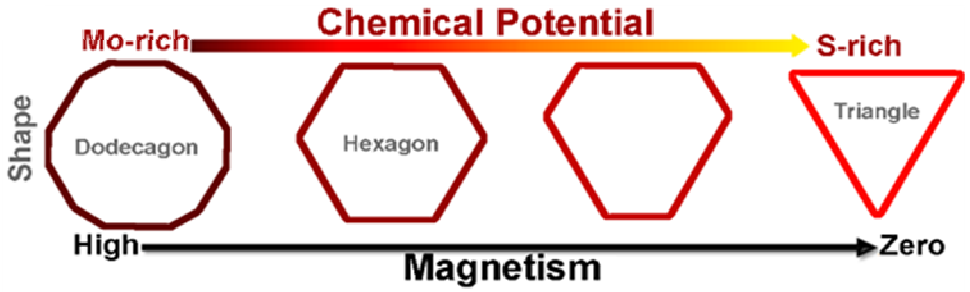

Figure 2: Simplified morphology and magnetism schematic of MoS_2 as a function of chemical potential (Mo to S-rich), calculated using Wulff constructions (Adapted with permission from Ref[34]).

Modelling vdW Interactions in Layered Materials

The mechanical separation of graphite to produce single (or a few) layers of graphene is a profound illustration of the importance of vdW forces in defining the structure and function of 2D materials.[3] The enormous variability in stacking sequences of 2D layered materials and the closeness of their corresponding cohesive energies with those of dense structures further emphasizes the role vdW forces play in the design and discovery of new 2D materials[35,36]. As such first principles methods that can model dense and sparse matter on the same footing are paramount not only to the discovery and design of new 2D materials, but also for developing our understand and control of growth morphology.

Advances in high performance computing and mathematical algorithms have made highly accurate diffusion quantum Monte Carlo (DMC) calculations (Figure 3) for interlayer binding energies in layered materials possible.[37,38] Such studies have allowed for an understanding of the intercalation of metal cations at the surface of or between carbon-based structures such as graphene bilayers,[37] thus representing a new era in our understanding of the electronic origins of dispersion interactions.

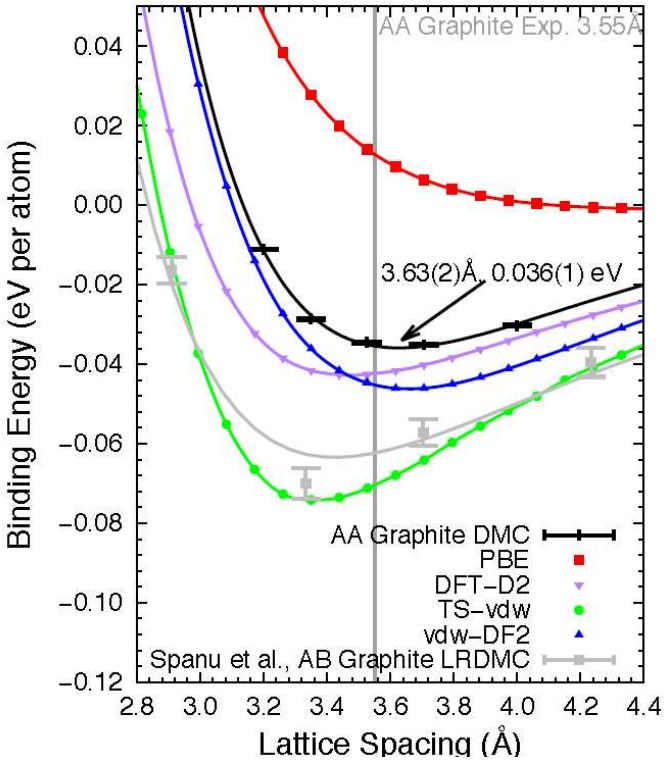

Figure 3: Calculated binding energies of AA stacked graphite as a function of interplanar lattice separation obtained from different density functionals and for DMC simulations. The self-consistent vdW functional vdw-DF2 shows good accuracy. (Adapted with permission from Ref [57])

Despite the reliability and accuracy of quantum chemical (QC) and DMC calculations, DFT still remains the workhorse for exploring larger, more complex systems with significant atomic relaxations such as the dichalcogenides and related vdW-heterostructures; thus placing the focus on correcting current deficiencies within the method. New techniques run the gamut from post-processing, semi-empirical, pairwise corrections[39–44] to the development of new, self-consistent, correlation functionals[45–52] and many-body approaches,[53–55] each having varying degrees of computational demands and transferability and with successive developments approaching chemical accuracy[56–63].

These modern DFT-based approaches are now mature enough, that with proper caution, it is possible to use theory to explore the classes of layered materials where vdW interactions are intrinsically important, and thereby placing us on the verge of a new era in computational aided materials research. Such methods provide tools for the discovery of new 2D materials that have yet to be synthesized. Of fundamental importance is the ability to assess the energetic and dynamic stability of candidate materials. Recent efforts have demonstrated that the inclusion of dispersion interactions through a non-local correlation term (as is done in the Rutgers-Chalmers vdW density functional; vdW-DF[46–49]) can be critical in assessing these energies relative to bulk materials and can guide the discovery of novel 2D materials[64–66]. Related to this is the cleavability of a material – the ability to separate/isolate individual layers of a material. In most 2D materials, this is solely defined through the vdW interactions that occur between layers. Again, such methods are fundamental in computing the relevant energy scales involved in this interaction[67,68] thus leading to the prediction of a candidate material for realizing 2D magnetism[68].

As discussed in this review, the ability to grow novel 2D materials has seen tremendous progress over the past decade. In many cases, the substrate may have significant effects on the fundamental properties of the 2D materials. The incorporation of dispersion interactions with DFT has not only made it possible to

more accurately study these effects, but to discern which substrates can be used to control materials properties. A profound example of the effects of substrate on 2D material properties is silicene and germanene. Free standing silicene, like graphene, is predicted to have a Dirac cone band structure. Early Angle resolved photoemission spectroscopy (ARPES) results for silicene on Ag (111)[69] suggested that the Dirac cone would remain despite the buckling of Si atoms. Subsequent theory was fundamental in demonstrating that in fact the linear bands were due to new states arising due to hybridization between Ag and silicene[70]. Since then much effort has been placed on understanding the effects of different substrates on the electronic structure of 2D materials. Such efforts have relied on the inclusion of dispersion interactions in DFT approaches either through self-consistent methods (as in vdW-DF) or through additive terms (e.g. the DFT-D2 assumes that the interactions between molecules or atoms are through the addition of semi-empirical pairwise corrections (e.g. Lennard-Jones type potentials) based on molecular C6 coefficients[39–42,52]. These methods have identified a number of suitable substrates for the growth of 2D materials that allow for better control of material properties[71–73]. In all cases, it has been demonstrated that growth on a vdW bonded material may be fruitful for truly retaining a 2D materials' free-standing properties. Furthermore, the role of dispersion interactions is invaluable. Not only is it useful for understanding the stability of a layered material adsorbed onto a substrate by dispersion interactions, but DFT methods which include dispersion interactions are now being employed to understand the fundamental interactions of precursor materials[74,75]. These can be used to optimize the growth process thus allowing for the controlled growth of new and interesting materials.

Regardless of which method is used for treating intermolecular vdW interactions, one thing is certain: the inclusion of vdW interactions is paramount to our ability to properly simulate and understand layered materials. Not only is this important for understanding binding, adsorption, and intercalation, but also when trying to understand relevant experimental signatures[76] due to interlayer lattice vibrational modes.[77–84] Thus, with continued progress in the development of first principles methods that can accurately account for vdW interactions it may be possible to truly discover and design novel 2D materials that may be experimentally realizable.

Modelling Electron Interactions and Excitonic Effects in 2D TMDs

An exciton describes a two-particle excitation with simultaneous creation of both an electron and a hole. Semiconducting TMD layers exhibit dramatically strong light-exciton interactions and greatly enhanced electron-electron interactions. Exciton binding energies in monolayer TMD materials can be hundreds of meV[85–90] – orders of magnitude larger than what is seen in typical bulk semiconductors. Such excitonic effects dominate the optical response in TMD mono- and few-layers, and create new opportunities for basic science studies and novel optoelectronic applications.

First-principles calculations based on the GW and GW plus Bethe Salpeter equation (GW-BSE) methods[91,92] on various quasi-2D TMDs (such as MoS_2, $MoSe_2$, and WSe_2) predicted that TMD monolayers can have multiple series of excitons, arising from different regions of the Brillouin zone, with binding energies in excess of 0.6 eV and unusual excitation spectra (optically bright and dark excited states of novel energy level and orbital-angular-momentum dependence) that cannot be explained by the usual 2D hydrogenic model (Figure 4 a,b).[85,89,90] These extraordinary features originate from enhanced Coulomb interactions owing to reduced dimensionality and, importantly, an incomplete and strongly spatial-dependent screening in quasi-2D systems[85,86,89,90]. The *ab initio* calculations further revealed that, despite their large binding energies, the TMD excitons are of the Wannier type with wave functions that are very extended in real-space, but localized in k-space.[85]

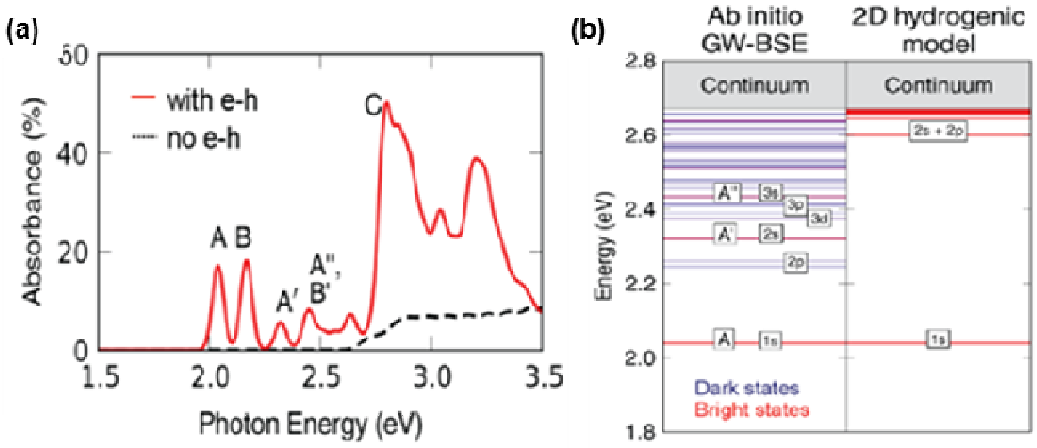

Figure 4: (a) Calculated absorbance of monolayer MoS_2 with (red line) and without (black dashed line) electron-hole interactions included, using the ab initio GW-BSE approach. A broadening of 20 meV is used to prepare the curves. There are three series of exciton states – A, B and C, and (b) Energy levels of the A series excitons in monolayer MoS_2 from ab initio GW-BSE calculations (left panel) and from a 2D hydrogenic model (right panel).[58]

The large exciton binding energy in monolayer $MoSe_2$ has been confirmed by combining scanning tunneling spectroscopy (STS), optical spectroscopy, and GW-BSE theory[90]. The electronic band-gap is given by single-particle excitations (sum of the energy for creating an isolated electron and an isolated hole). Furthermore, two-photon excitation spectroscopy has been used to investigate the novel excitonic level structure of monolayer WS_2, including dark states.[89] These measurements probed the optically inactive exciton 2p and 3p excited states, and show excellent agreement with theoretical predictions[89], both in their energies and ordering with respect to other orbital angular momentum exciton states. Another important and interesting aspect of the electronic and optical properties of TMD layers is that, owing to their quasi-2D atomic structure, they are very sensitive to environment screening. Both the electronic bandgaps and exciton binding energies can change substantially depending on the supporting substrates, as demonstrated in Ref.[90]

Large-Area, Morphology-Controlled Synthesis of TMDs

Two-dimensional TMDs have been realized by various synthetic methods, including vapor-phase chemical reactions, wet-chemical synthesis, and liquid exfoliations.[93–95] Vapor deposition techniques have been most extensively explored due to their potential for high scalability and morphological control. In this process, metal containing precursors [e.g., MoO_3, WO_3, or $(NH_4)_2MoS_4$][95] are vaporized and reacted with chalcogen elements through vapor-solid reactions, leading to the growth of 2D TMDs on a substrate downstream. Most common procedures rely on the co-evaporation of metal and chalcogen precursors both initially in solid phases. These techniques generally yield 2D TMDs with limited spatial homogeneity and uncontrolled morphologies due to the difficulty with controlling growth variables for vaporized reactants. Opposite to the commonly used solid-phase chalcogen elements, gas-phase chalcogen reactants such as hydrogen sulfide (H_2S) have been used to improve the scalability and uniformity of 2D MoS_2[19] Also, the synthesis of nanocrystalline 2D MoS_2 with controlled layer numbers has been demonstrated on the centimeter scale *via* the sulfurization of molybdenum chloride ($MoCl_5$) precursors[96] The success for the improved scalability is attributed to the balance control between the partial pressure of vaporized MoS_2 and its equilibrium pressure[18]. Moreover, pre-deposition of elemental metals on growth substrates and their subsequent reactions with chalcogen vapors have been

demonstrated to yield large-area 2D TMDs.[97–104] The major advantage of this approach is the morphology and the coverage control of 2D TMDs enabled by metal deposition methods. The goal of uniformity was further extended *via* seed-promoting molecules such as perylene-3,4,9,10-tetracarboxylic acid tetra-potassium salt (PTAS).[105,106] The high solubility of PTAS in water enhances the seed solution to be uniformly distributed on hydrophilic substrate surfaces on a large scale. Another such technique to grow high quality, precisely doped electronic grade 2D materials with abrupt interfaces is through molecular beam epitaxy (MBE)[107–112]. With the availability of *in situ* characterization during the growth, MBE particularly has an advantage of having precise thickness control and the ability to grow on 2D or 3D substrates. Finally, very recently, metal-organic CVD (MOCVD) based on gas-phase precursors[113–115] has proven that large-scale growth of 2D TMDs is readily achievable, with the most impressive demonstration being a 100-mm wafer of monolayer MoS_2 with uniform electrical properties (Figure 5a-c).[114] In addition to scalable growth, the synthesis of 2D TMDs with controlled orientation, layer number, chemical composition, and placement have been extensively pursued. CVD based on the thermal evaporation of elemental metal seed layers has demonstrated the growth of 2D TMDs in two distinct 2D layer orientations of vertical and horizontal (Figure 5d,e).[99,116,117] The thickness of the metal seed layers was identified to be the critical parameter to dictate the 2D layer growth orientation.[99] The chemical composition of 2D TMDs can also be controlled by simultaneously reacting multiple metal precursors with multiple chalcogen elements in vapor phases. For example, alloyed 2D monolayer of various compositions such as $Mo_xW_{1-x}S_2$[118,119] and MoS_xSe_{2-x}[120–122] have been synthesized, which present tunable band gap energies with varying ratios of elements. The control of the stoichiometric variations in MoS_2 have been demonstrated to provide tunable electrical and optical properties[123–125]. In addition to the chemical compositions control during growths, post-growth processes have also been developed to convert the chemical composition of 2D TMDs after their growths. For example, ion-exchange reactions have been applied to convert 2D MoS_2 into 2D $MoSe_2$, consequently tuning their opto-electrical properties[126,127]. Selective area growth of 2D materials has also recently been realized, in part, using a spin-coated ammonium heptamolybdate [AHM, $(NH_4)_6Mo_7O_{24}\cdot 4H_2O$] and pre-growth lithographic techniques to achieve site-specific, patterned growth of 2D MoS_2 (Figure 5f,g).[128] Finally, 2D MoS_2 with site-specifically controlled layer numbers has been demonstrated on a single SiO_2 growth substrate by modifying the surface properties of the SiO_2 *via* plasma etch treatments.[129] Despite the modest success in improving scalability and uniformity, the chemically-synthesized large-area 2D TMDs at present still exhibit electrical properties far from what are demanded for realistic applications. For example, the room temperature field-effect-transistor (FET) mobility of state-of-the art 2D MoS_2 grown on a four-inch wafer with uniform layer numbers is ~30 $cm^2V^{-1}s^{-1}$[114], an order-of-magnitude smaller than those of mechanically-exfoliated materials. Such limitation is attributed to the defective nature of chemically synthesized materials: intrinsic defects (e.g., vacancies) in individual 2D grains as well as interfacial defects (e.g., grain boundaries) across individual 2D grains. Further information on the growth of different TMD's using different techniques is summarized in Table 1. Here, mechanical exfoliation includes scotch tape exfoliation and chemical vapor transport. Powder vaporization covers the general CVD techniques that are based on powder transport to grow 2D materials on various substrates.

Table 1: Table showing the different TMD's grown till date using various techniques [7,39,90,96,99,105,106,113,114,119,121,126,130–194178,195–198]

Technique		Mono- and few-layer materials available to date					Achievements	Challenges
		Single phase TMD	*TMD alloy*	*Doped TMD*	*Vertical heterostructures*	*Lateral heterostructures*		
Top-down	Mechanical exfoliation (and CVT)	1T, 2H MoX_2 1T, 2H WX_2 BP,SnX_2, 1T, 2H $(Nb,Ti,Zr,Nb,Ta)X_2$	$Mo_xW_{1-x}S_2$ $Mo_xW_{1-x}Se_2$	Au-doped MoS_2, Re-doped MoS_2, Nb-doped MoS_2	2H (MoS_2-WS_2), 2H (MoS_2-WSe_2), 2H MoS_2-graphene, 2H WS_2-graphene, 2H MoX_2-hBN,2H WX_2-hBN, 2H WSe_2-1T $SnSe_2$, 2H MoS_2-BP	-	High crystallinity	Thickness control, yield, not scalable
	Liquid exfoliation	1T,2H MoX_2 1T,2H WX_2,2H TiS_2,2H TaS_2, $(Nb,Ti,Zr,Nb,Ta)X_2$	-	-	-	-	High scalability	Small crystallites, thickness control, yield.
Bottom- up	Powder Vaporization	1T, 2H MoX_2 1T, 2H WX_2	MoS_xSe_{2-x} $Mo_xW_{1-x}S_2$	Mn-doped MoS_2 Co-doped MoS_2	1T MoX_2-2H MoX_2, 2H MoX_2-2H WX_2,2H MoS_2-BP, 2H MoX_2-graphene, 2H WX_2-graphene, 2H MoS_2-2H WSe_2-GR, 2H MoS_2-GR, 2H WS_2-hBN, 2H MoS_2-SnS_2, 2H WS_2-SnS_2, 2II WSe_2-SnS_2	Graphene-hBN, 1T MoS_2-2H MoS_2, 2H MoS_2-WS_2 2H MoX_2-2H MoX_2 2H WX_2-2H WX_2	High scalability	Defect control, uniformity, stoichiometry control
	MOCVD	1T MoX_2, WX_2	-	-	MoS_2-WSe_2-graphene	-	High scalability	Defect control
	MBE	2H $MoSe_2$ 2H WSe_2	-	-	$MoSe_2$-graphene	-	High scalability	Defect control, domain size

X- S,Se, BP- Black phosphorous, GR- graphene ribbons

X- S,Se, BP- Black phosphorous, GR- graphene ribbons

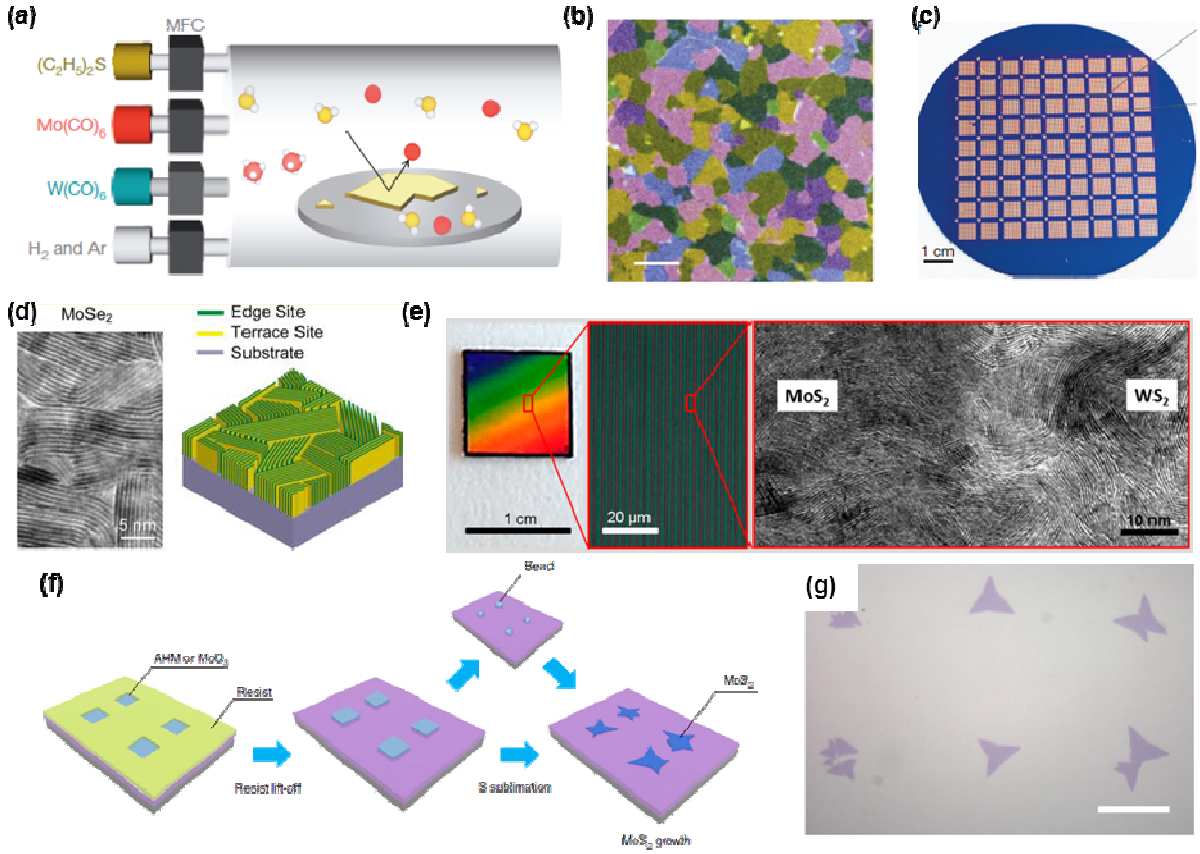

Figure 5: Synthesis of various 2D TMDs. (a) Schematic for the MOCVD process (Adapted with permission from Ref [114]), (b) false color dark-field TEM image showing continuous 2D monolayer MoS_2 (Adapted with permission from Ref [114]), and (c) four-inch wafer scale batch fabrication of 2D monolayer MoS_2 electronic devices (Adapted with permission from Ref [114]). (d), (e): Synthesis of 2D TMDs with vertically standing 2D layers. (d) 2D $MoSe_2$ with vertically standing 2D layers (Adapted with permission from Ref[32]) and (e) large-scale controlled synthesis of 2D MoS_2/WS_2 with vertically standing 2D layers. (Adapted with permission from Ref[33]). (f), (g): Site-specific synthesis based on CVD processes on patterned seed layers. (Adapted with permission from Ref[37]) (f) Schematics for synthesis and (g) site-specifically synthesized 2D MoS_2.

Synthesis of 2D-TMD Heterostructures

Developing new hybrid materials by combining 2D layered materials in vertical stacks offers an enormous amount of possibilities to broaden the versatility of 2D materials, allowing for achieving superior and unusual material properties that cannot be obtained otherwise.[199] Thus, securing robust methods that enable controlled stacking of a variety of 2D materials with any desired combination and thicknesses will play a key role for 2D materials to be widely used, in particular, in transparent and flexible electronic and optoelectronic device applications. Many of these structures are summarized in Table 1, where a commonly used scheme to fabricate 2D heterostructures such as MoS_2/WSe_2,[140,142] MoS_2/WS_2,[200] $MoS_2/MoSe_2$,[201] and $MoSe_2/WSe_2$[202] is the mechanical transfer of separately exfoliated 2D crystals.[143,147,149,203] However, despite the relatively high quality crystals, the dry transfer method may not be suitable when sophisticated control of lattice orientation is required and can introduce various adsorbates—such as hydrocarbons—trapped between layers during the process that may deteriorate the interface quality between the layers.[204] As a result, it is very advantageous to develop techniques capable of directly synthesizing these heterostructures. Vertically stacked 2D TMD/graphene[180,181,187,205–207] heterostructures (Figure 6a-c) have been synthesized by the sequential growth of 2D TMDs on top of pre-existing graphene (or hBN[208]). Additionally, a variety of 2D TMD-only heterostructures have also been demonstrated, including heterostructures with vertically-standing 2D layers such as MoS_2/WS_2 (or $MoSe_2/WSe_2$) synthesized by the one-step sulfurization (or selenization) of elemental metals.[117,209] In-plane 2D heterostructures have been more challenging to synthesize as the formation of alloyed structures is thermodynamically favored. Recently, in-plane heterostructures in lateral and vertical orientations have been demonstrated by the sequential *in-situ* vapor-solid reactions,[189,190] or by the co-reaction of Mo and W-containing precursors with chalcogens (Figure 6d,e).[173,175,190,210,211] Post-growth processes based on ion-exchange reactions have also been employed to develop 2D heterostructures. For example, an exchange of Se ions with S ions on pre-existing $MoSe_2$ has been demonstrated to site-specifically convert $MoSe_2$ into MoS_2 realizing in-plane 2D $MoSe_2/MoS_2$ heterostructures[127]. Finally, the epitaxy of MoS_2, WS_2, and WSe_2 on SnS_2 microplates was also demonstrated under mild experimental conditions (450 °C for 2-6 min), using $MoCl_5$/S, WCl_6/S and Se as precursors, respectively.[188] Despite significant lattice mismatch at the interface with SnS_2—15%, 16%, and 11% for MoS_2, WS_2, and WSe_2—the heterostructure can successfully form without a significant strain due to relatively weak vdW forces at the interface. At present, the synthesis of all the above mentioned 2D heterostructures has been limited to very small areas. More effort should be focused in the direction to produce scaled-up 2D heterostructures while maintaining their atomically seamless hetero-interfaces.

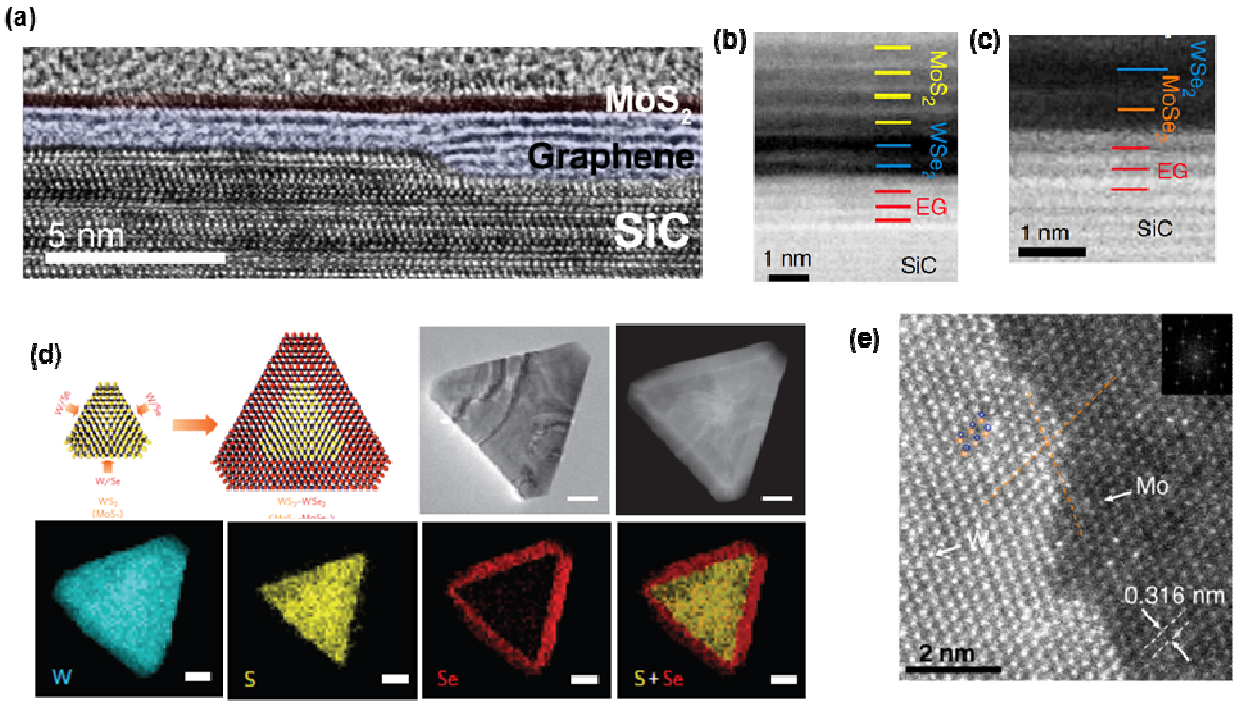

Figure 6: Synthesis of 2D TMD heterostructures, (a) Cross-sectional HRTEM of MoS_2/Quasi-free-standing epitaxial graphene (QFEG) showing the nucleation and subsequent lateral growth of MoS_2 on a SiC step edge covered with the top graphene layer is flat, (b), (c) Scanning TEM images of stacked MoS_2-WSe_2-EG vertical stacked heterostructures showing pristine interfaces with no intermixing of Mo-W or S-Se after synthesis. (d) 2D monolayer MoS_2/WS_2 heterostructures with lateral hetero interfaces. Synthesis schematic and chemical composition analysis.[79] (e) HRTEM image showing the hetero interface of 2D monolayer MoS_2/WS_2. (Adapted with permission from Ref [81])

Doping and Chemical Functionalization of TMDs

For versatile use of 2D materials in next-generation electronics and optoelectronics, development of controllable doping processes for tailoring their carrier types and Fermi levels is critical given the necessity of, for example, Schottky barrier modulation at TMD/metal junctions and realization of appropriate junctions. However, the traditional doping methods including dopant diffusion and ion-implantation used for conventional bulk semiconductors are not suitable for atomically thin 2D layers due to unavoidable crystal damage during the process. As a result, chemistries typically conducted on organic molecules and surfaces have thus been tried as a starting point for chemical functionalization in pursuit of simple and efficient routes for electronic and optical modulation. The motivations for chemical modification of 2D layers other than doping level tuning include opening an electronic band gap, charge storage, chemical and biological sensing, making new composite materials, and so on.

Similar to graphene,[212–214] various chemical approaches have been adopted to systematically tune electronic and optical characteristics of TMDs by modulation of the charge carrier type and concentration. These efforts have mostly been focused on single- and multilayers of MoS_2, $MoSe_2$, WS_2 and WSe_2—through physisorption of molecules,[215,216] metallic nanoparticles surface functionalization,[217,218] solution-based functionalization,[218–220] and plasma-assisted doping.[221,222] The molecular physisorption can offer wide-range control of charge density, thereby modulating optical properties such as the photoluminescence (PL) processes. Tongay *et al.*[216] have shown that the light emission efficiency in 2D TMDs (MoS_2, $MoSe_2$ and WSe_2) is largely modulated by charge transfer with physically adsorbed electronegative gaseous molecules including O_2 and H_2O—over a 100-fold modulation in the efficiency was achieved, while inert gases have exhibited a negligible effect. Physisorbed O_2 and H_2O molecules

electronically depleted n-type materials such as MoS_2 and $MoSe_2$, and resulted in drastic enhancement in PL; however, in p-type WSe_2 the opposite effect was observed. NO_2 molecules can also be utilized as a p-type dopant for 2D TMDs. When WSe_2 is exposed to NO_2 environment in N_2 gas, NO_2 could physically and chemically adsorb on the WSe_2 surface and transfer electrons from WSe_2 due to its strong oxidizing property.[215] The doping effect on MoS_2 through electronic beam (e-beam) deposition of metallic nanoparticles of noble metals (Au, Ag,Pd, Pt) is also investigated where p-type doping was observed which exhibited increasing trend with metal work functions for varying dose of nanoparticles. In addition, Mouri *et al.*[218] used F_4TCNQ and 7,7,8,8-tetracyanoquinodimethane (TCNQ) as p-type chemical dopants, and nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NADH) as n-type dopants to effectively tune the PL of monolayer MoS_2; the enhancement in PL intensity was observed upon the adsorption of the p-type dopants while the n-type dopants weakened the intensity. P-type dopants extract electrons from the MoS_2 such that the recombination of excitons becomes a dominant process instead of that of negative trions, while this switching of the mechanism is suppressed by n-type dopant molecules.[218]

Organic compounds, such as benzyl viologen (BV), can form an electron transfer complex to n-dope MoS_2 *via* surface charge transfer mechanism[223,224]. The BV-doped MoS_2 exhibits excellent stability in ambient air (with only a minimal change in the electrical characteristics after 9 days of air exposure), and an electron sheet density of ~1.2×10^{13} cm^{-2} is achieved that corresponds to the degenerate doping limit for MoS_2.[223] The neutral BV molecule transfers electrons to MoS_2, and eventually a two-electron transfer process is carried out between the two materials (Figure 6a). The doping process is reversible—which can be valuable not only for selective removal of the molecule for patterned doping, but the controlled modulation of charge carrier density—such that the BV molecules are removed from the MoS_2 surface by immersion in toluene; the transfer characteristics of BV-doped devices recover the original state before doping.[223] Multilayer MoS_2 is n-doped by p-toluene sulfonic acid (p-TSA), which has been widely used for tailoring charge density of conducting polymers—Raman spectroscopy and electrical measurements indicate an n-type doping where the threshold voltage shifts towards more negative gate voltages as the time of exposure to p-TSA increases.[225] Controlled tuning of electronic and optical properties of TMD flakes can also be achieved by modifying SiO_2 substrates with functional self-assembled monolayers (SAMs) with different dipole moments, thereby tuning the charge redistribution between the substrates and the flakes.[220] Raman data and electrical characteristics of field effect transistors show that fluoroalkyltrichlorosilane-SAMs with a large positive dipole moment significantly reduce the intrinsic *n*-type characteristic of MoS_2 flakes (p-type doping), whereas 3-(trimethoxysilyl)-1-propanamine-SAMs improve the intrinsic *n*-type characteristic (n-type doping). In general, CH_3-terminated SAMs exhibit little influence on charge carrier density due to the slight dipole moments while NH_2-/SH-SAMs with lone pair electrons and CF_3-SAMs possessing high electronegativity show electron- and hole-donating characteristics, respectively.[220]

A stable and tunable doping capability over a wide range, especially over the natural propensity of TMDs (n-type and p-type for MoS_2 and WSe_2, respectively), is critical to achieve practical junctions (*e.g.* p-n, p-n-p, *etc*.), which are required as central building blocks of electronic and optoelectronic devices. Due to the strong propensity towards a certain doping type of TMDs, much effort has been focused on realizing p-n junctions based on vertical vdW heterostructures by stacking different TMDs of dissimilar types.[142,226] In order to develop a homogeneous p-n junction utilizing a single 2D material, Suh *et al.*[138] have demonstrated a vdW vertical p-n junction that is formed by stacking the hole-doped MoS_2 layer (p-type) with an undoped layer (n-type), which showed gate tunable current rectification. The p-doped MoS_2 is achieved through substitutional degenerate p-type doping of MoS_2 by incorporating niobium (Nb) to replace Mo atoms *via* a chemical vapor transport (CVT) method, in which stable doping is realized by covalent bonding in the crystal lattice. A similar approach was taken, but utilizing the surface charge transfer method, to form a vdW p-n junction. Here, the BV and $AuCl_3$ were used as n- and p-type dopants, respectively, to make MoS_2 behave as n- and p-type semiconductor materials (Figure 6b).[224] The hole-doping was enabled by spin-coating a $AuCl_3$ solution which is commonly used in graphene doping due to its large positive reduction potential where $AuCl_4^-$ in solution receives electrons from MoS_2

through surface charge transfer to form Au nanoaggregates.[227,228] Furthermore, a lateral MoS_2 p-n junction with a strong photo response was also demonstrated. By degenerately hole-doping partially masked MoS_2, the junction was formed at an interface between the doped and undoped crystal regions.[138] The partial masking of the MoS_2 surface was conducted by transfer of a hBN layer to protect the MoS_2 area underneath from doping.

The chemical and molecular modification of TMDs can also be utilized as a strategy to reduce both sheet and contact resistances of field effect transistors (FETs), providing a simple strategy to further optimize the performance of the devices utilizing 2D semiconductor layers. Du *et al.*[219] adopted amine-rich polyethyleneimine (PEI, Figure 6c) as n-type dopants for multilayer MoS_2 FETs and showed that a 2.6 times reduction in sheet resistance and 1.2 times reduction in contact resistance have been achieved with a negative shift of the threshold voltage confirming n-type doping upon exposure to a PEI solution (Figure 6d). Doping schemes using metal atoms *via* surface charge transfer are also applicable to TMDs. In their work, Fang *et al.*[229] used K atoms to degenerately n-dope the source/drain contact regions of few-layer MoS_2 and WSe_2 nanosheets and achieved low contact resistances in their FET devices. Moreover, the work shows that n-type WSe_2 FETs can be enabled with high mobility comparable to those of previously reported p-type WSe_2 FETs by simply doping the contacts accordingly. However, this approach lacks air stability, limiting applicability of the method. K atoms become highly reactive upon exposure to ambient air and water molecules, leading to immediate oxidation of K, that the vacuum process is required.[229] Cl is also used to n-dope few-layer WS_2 and MoS_2. The exfoliated WS_2 or MoS_2 flakes were soaked in undiluted 1, 2 dichloroethane (DCE) at room temperature for more than 12 h and high doping density of 6.0×10^{11} cm^{-2} and 9.2×10^{12} cm^{-2} were obtained, respectively.[230] A possible mechanism suggests that the doping may have been realized through the replacement of S vacancy with Cl atom.

In addition to the enhancement realized by the prior examples of degenerate chemical doping of TMDs, the development of robust and controllable nondegenerate doping schemes without crystal damage is crucial for designing TMDs-based electronic and optoelectronic devices, allowing for wide-range charge carrier density modulation. For this purpose Lin *et al.*[217] reported nondegenerate n-doping of monolayer MoS_2 *via* surface functionalization using cesium carbonate (Cs_2CO_3) (Figure 6d), which has previously been adopted as an electron injection material in organic light-emitting devices (OLEDs) and can induce n-type doping for organic semiconductors.[231,232] A controllable nondegenerate p-type doping technique was demonstrated on few-layer and bulk forms of WSe_2 by adjusting the concentration of octadecyltrichlorosilane (OTS).[233] This p-doping effect arises from the methyl ($-CH_3$) functional groups in OTS, which exhibit a positive dipole and consequently reduce the electron density in a WSe_2 crystal as the charge carriers are accumulated at the interface between OTS and WSe_2. The doping concentration achieved with varying OTS concentration ranged from 1.6×10^{10} to 3.0×10^{11} cm^{-2}, which is in the nondegenerate regime.

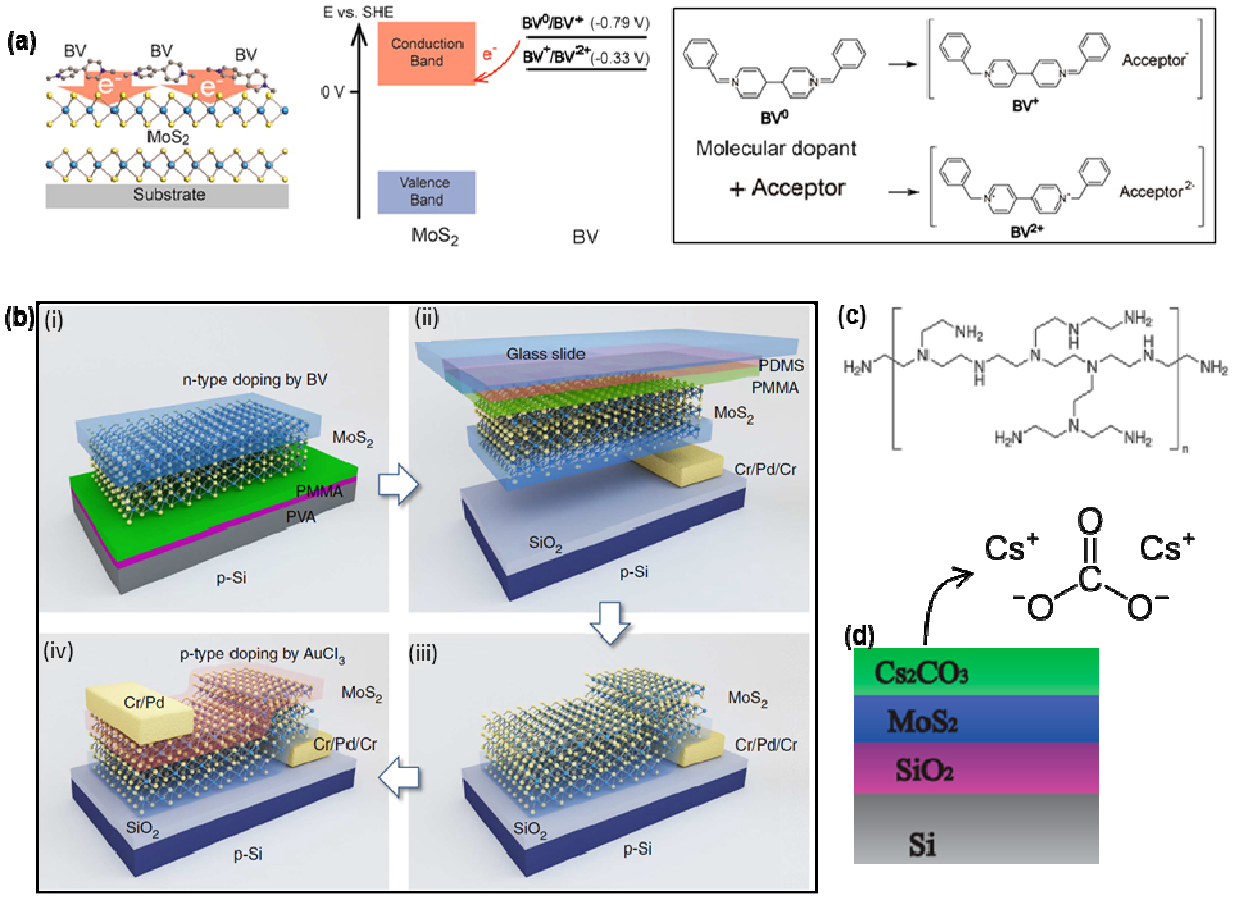

Figure 6: **(a)** Schematic of BV surface doping of MoS_2, an energy band diagram of MoS_2 and BV redox states, and redox reactions of the BV molecule when adsorbed on an acceptor material, MoS_2. (Adapted with permission from Ref[223]) **(b)** Fabrication of chemically doped vertical p–n homogeneous junction in a few-layer MoS_2 flake. (i) A MoS_2 flake was transferred on a PMMA/PVA/Si substrate, and then BV-doped and annealed. (ii) After dissolving the PVA layer in deionized water, the PMMA film supporting a MoS_2 flake was transferred to a PDMS/glass substrate. (iii) The MoS_2 flake was stamped on the SiO_2/Si substrate, and the n-doped surface was aligned with the Cr/Pd/Cr bottom electrode prepared in advance. (iv) After $AuCl_3$ doping and annealing, the vertical p–n junction in the MoS_2 flake was formed, followed by the deposition of a Cr/Pd top electrode. (Adapted with permission from Ref[224]) **(c)** Structure of amine-rich PEI as n-type dopants for multilayer MoS_2 FETs (Adapted with permission from Ref[219]) **(d)** Schematic illustration of the MoS_2 FET layout with Cs_2CO_3 film on top. (Adapted with permission from Ref[217,229])

Raman spectroscopy of semiconducting transition metal dichalcogenides (STMDs)

Raman spectroscopy plays an important role in the characterization of STMDs since it is not destructive and provides useful information about the structure of monolayers, number of layers, stacking and defects. MoS_2, $MoSe_2$, WS_2, WSe_2 share the same trigonal prismatic (or 2H) structure belonging to the same space group P63/mmc (D_{6h}^4 in Shöenflies notation). However, for few layer STMDs the structure possesses a different symmorphic space group depending on the number of layers. For odd numbers of layers the point group symmetry in the unit cell is D_{3h} and for even numbers of layers it becomes D_{3d}. The symmetry considerations mentioned above are useful to perform theoretical Raman spectroscopy of STMDs from first principles using density functional perturbation theory DFPT[234,235] and compare with the experimental results. The Raman spectrum of bulk trigonal prismatic STMDs exhibits three active signals at high frequencies named E_{1g}, E^1_{2g} and A_{1g}. The polarization tension corresponding to E_{1g} renders this mode invisible in the commonly used backscattering geometry.[236,237] The E_{1g} and E^1_{2g} are in-plane modes and the A_{1g} is an out-of-plane mode. These three modes become E", E' and A'_1 for a system with odd number of layers, and E^2_g, E^1_g and A_{1g} for an even number of layers, respectively[238]. As the number of layers increase the in-plane modes shift to lower frequencies and the out of plane modes shift to higher frequencies[239], this behavior has been confirmed theoretically in trigonal TMDs[238,240]. Interestingly, a second-order Raman resonance process has been identified in monolayer WS_2 with a laser excitation of 514.5 nm involving the longitudinal acoustic mode (LA) at the M point in the Brillouin zone LA(M), allowing the clear differentiation of monolayer and few layer systems. Here also the theoretical approach based on first principles calculations agrees with the experiment[241]. Moreover, DFPT simulations demonstrate that few layered STMDs exhibit an additional first order Raman out of plane mode, which it is not active in the monolayer and bulk, that involves the vibration of the transition metal atom and is named A'^2_1, or A^2_{1g} depending on whether the layers are odd or even.[238] Figure 7 shows the experimental Raman spectra for few layered WSe_2, including the bulk, in which a new Raman active mode appears around 310 cm^{-1}, confirming the theoretical results obtained from DFPT.

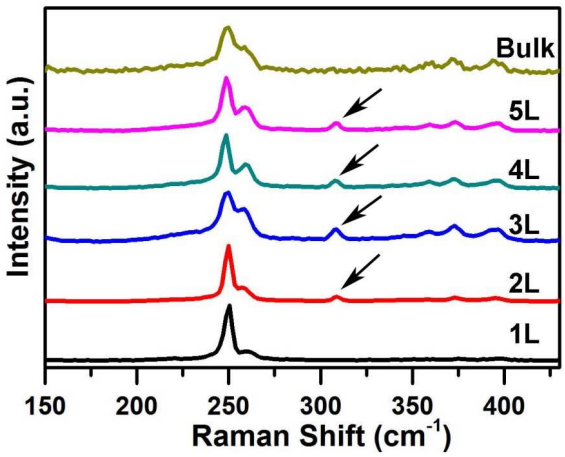

Figure 7: Experimental Raman spectra of WSe_2 with different layers (N=1 to 5) including bulk taken with 514.5 nm excitation wavelength. The black arrows show a new Raman active mode, which appears in few layer materials but is not present in the monolayer nor in bulk. (Adapted with permission from Ref [238]).

In addition to the high-frequency intralayer modes discussed above, low-frequency interlayer modes have recently begun to attract increasing attention. For high-frequency intralayer modes, which involve vibrations from the intralayer chemical bonds, the restoring forces are dominated by the strength of these intralayer chemical bonds instead of the interlayer vdW interactions. Consequently, there are great limitations for them as unambiguous thickness indicators. In stark contrast, low-frequency interlayer modes (including in-plane shear modes and out-of-plane breathing modes) correspond to layer-layer vibrations with each layer moving as a whole unit, and hence their frequencies are solely determined by the interlayer vdW restoring forces. Both experimental and theoretical works have demonstrated their promising potential as effective indicators of layer thickness of 2-D crystals, including STMDs.[77–84] Furthermore, a recent work using ultra-low-frequency Raman spectroscopy and first principles Raman simulations revealed that low-frequency interlayer Raman modes also could be fingerprints of the layer-

layer stacking configurations for bilayer and trilayer $MoSe_2$ and WSe_2.[235] The results could be extended to other family members of STMDs.

Theoretical methods have gone beyond simply providing understanding by not only explaining observations already made, but by predicting the behavior of possible new 2D arrangements such as heterolayer systems composed of sandwiching different STMDs; this is the case for heterostructures of MoS_2 and WS_2, which actually have been synthesized[242]. The Raman simulations reveal that depending on the stacking order of the layers, the Raman spectrum exhibits unique features in both frequency and intensity that can be used for identification.[243] There are unresolved challenges that need further experimental and theoretical efforts to resolve, including the role of the different defects in the Raman spectrum of STMDs. In this context, recently an exfoliated MoS_2 monolayer has been exposed to Mn^+ ions to generate defects, finding that the LA(M) signal increases as the density of defects increases, thus showing an analogy of the LA(M) peak to the D peak in graphene[244].

Scanning Transmission Electron Microscopy (STEM) of TMDs

Perhaps one of the most powerful techniques to probe the electronic, chemical, and structural properties of 2D materials is scanning transmission electron microscopy (STEM). Instead of using a broad stationary beam as in TEM, STEM uses a highly focused electron beam for imaging and analysis, where the e-beam can be rastered across the sample or parked precisely at selected positions. Several STEM based techniques have proven useful for 2D materials characterization. Annular dark field (ADF) imaging, also known as Z-contrast imaging, reveals atomic-scale structural information with atomic number contrast.[245,246] Electron energy-loss spectroscopy (EELS) can provide chemical, bonding and electronic structure information and can be used to measure local optical properties of the material.[247]

Importantly, one must consider that electron beam-sample interactions can trigger transformations and transition dynamics in 2D crystals. Although triggered by the electrons, such transition dynamics reveal the atomistic mechanisms by which crystals can evolve, and defects and edges can be created and transformed in a variety of 2D structures such as graphene[248–253] and hBN[254–258]. These studies show interplay of knock-on damage and ionization damage taking place in 2D crystals under the electron beam. Thus, a low accelerating voltage (30-120 keV) is often necessary to minimize knock-on damage, and low-dose analysis is usually preferred. Fortunately, with the latest aberration-corrected STEM capabilities, the above-mentioned imaging and spectroscopy analysis can all be performed at atomic resolution with single atom sensitivity even at low accelerating voltage.[259–262]

The main advantages of STEM over TEM are: (i) multiple imaging and spectroscopy signals can be acquired simultaneously, allowing for direct correlation of the structural and spectroscopic information[247,263–267]; (ii) the atomic number contrast information in ADF images provides a feasible way to perform image-based atom-by-atom chemical analysis[268] and to quantify the thickness of the 2D TEM samples[269]; and (iii) the ability to precisely control the position of the electron beam enables local spectroscopic analysis from individual atoms and controllable structural modification/manipulation of the material at designated regions.

While detailed image simulation is often necessary for quantitative interpretation of HRTEM images, the interpretation of STEM ADF images is straightforward: the bright atoms in the ADF image always correspond to atoms in the thin sample. This important feature has enabled direct identification of all the carbon atom positions in bilayer graphene, which in turn defines the stacking order and the structure of stacking boundaries in bilayer graphene[245,246]. More importantly, the ADF image intensity, to a first approximation, is proportional to the square of the atomic number, *i.e.* heavier atoms display higher image intensity. By quantifying the ADF image intensity at each atomic position, atom-by-atom chemical analysis has been first demonstrated on monolayer h-BN with carbon and oxygen impurities[268], and soon became one of the most powerful tools for characterizing defects in 2D materials. For example, using quantitative STEM-ADF imaging, Zhou *et al.* reported the first systematic study of intrinsic structural defects in CVD-grown monolayer MoS_2, including point defects (vacancies, anti-site defects, and ad-

atoms, Fig. 8a), grain boundaries, and edges[269]. This study verified some of the theoretically proposed grain boundary configurations[270,271], and also identified two types of 60° grain boundaries with predicted metallic behavior, as shown in Figures 8b-c. Similar structural defects were also observed in other TMD monolayers[167], and the relative population of different point defects is sensitive to the growth method for MoS_2 monolayers[272]. Furthermore, dopant distributions in W-doped and Se-doped MoS_2 monolayers can be automatically mapped out with almost 100% detection efficiency, by applying atom-finding scripts to atomically resolved ADF images and filtering out distinct intensity ranges due to the presence of dopant atoms (Figs. 8d,e)[133,170]. In bilayer MoS_2, the dopant distribution can even be mapped out layer-by-layer[170]. Such analysis serves as a highly efficient and accurate measurement of the local composition for electron-beam sensitive TMD layers. Atom-by-atom chemical analysis *via* STEM-ADF imaging has also helped to study the structural epitaxy and chemical intermixing at lateral WS_2/MoS_2 heterostructure interfaces[173,175], and impurity configurations in monolayer graphene[265,273–275].

Even though the temporal resolution is lower than TEM imaging, the chemical information contained in the ADF images has made sequential STEM imaging a particularly powerful method for exploring defect dynamics at the atomic scale *via* energy transfer from the electron beam. By combining *in-situ* heating and electron irradiation, Suenaga and coworkers have observed the phase transformation between the semiconducting 2H and metallic 1T phases in monolayer MoS_2 at the atomic scale (Fig. 8f), and they showed that the size of the 1T domains in the 2H matrix can be controlled by adjusting the electron dose[267]. In a more recent study, Lin *et al.* showed that electron irradiation can generate Se vacancies in monolayer $MoSe_2$, and the segregation of Se vacancies under energy transfer from the electron beam can subsequently trigger the nucleation and growth of inversion domains in $MoSe_2$, connecting to the pristine lattice *via* conductive 60° grain boundaries (Fig. 8g)[276]. Such *in-situ* defect dynamics studies can help to understand the structural evolution of the material under external excitation, *e.g.* energy transfer *via* thermal annealing.

By controlling the electron-sample interaction, the electron beam in STEM can also be used to create new nanostructures at designated regions in the sample. In a recent study, Lin *et al.* used the focused electron beam in STEM to generate holes at pre-selected regions in TMD monolayers, and demonstrated that under continuous electron irradiation the nanoribbons confined by two adjacent holes can eventually collapse into sub-nm-wide highly stable metallic MX nanowires with robust self-adapted junctions to the TMD monolayers (Figs. 8h-j)[277]. Such ultra-small MX nanowires can be fabricated across a wide range of TMD monolayer systems, and patterning these nanowires or creating complex nanowire junctions were also demonstrated *via* precise control of the e-beam position on the samples. This study points to a promising possibility that multiple devices may be fabricated in a single TMD monolayer and that a focused e-beam system could subsequently be applied to sculpt these MX nanowires to produce lateral interconnects between different devices.

The recent development of monochromatic STEM-EELS instrumentation has made it possible to measure phonon modes from 2D materials[278] and to map out excitons at a lateral TMD heterostructure with sub-wavelength spatial resolution[279]. Besides EELS, cathodoluminescence (CL) can also serve as a low-background technique to probe properties such as bandgap and plasmon resonances. SEM-CL has conventionally been used in several light-emitting interfaces and materials such as GaN, GaAs, and GaAlAs[280,281]. Recently, BN nanostructures were characterized with CL and showed a strong luminescence peak at 5.33 eV, confirming a UV bandgap[282]. Given advances in detection and collection schemes, STEM-CL is now possible and much remains to be unraveled about the local bandgap variations in 2D materials.

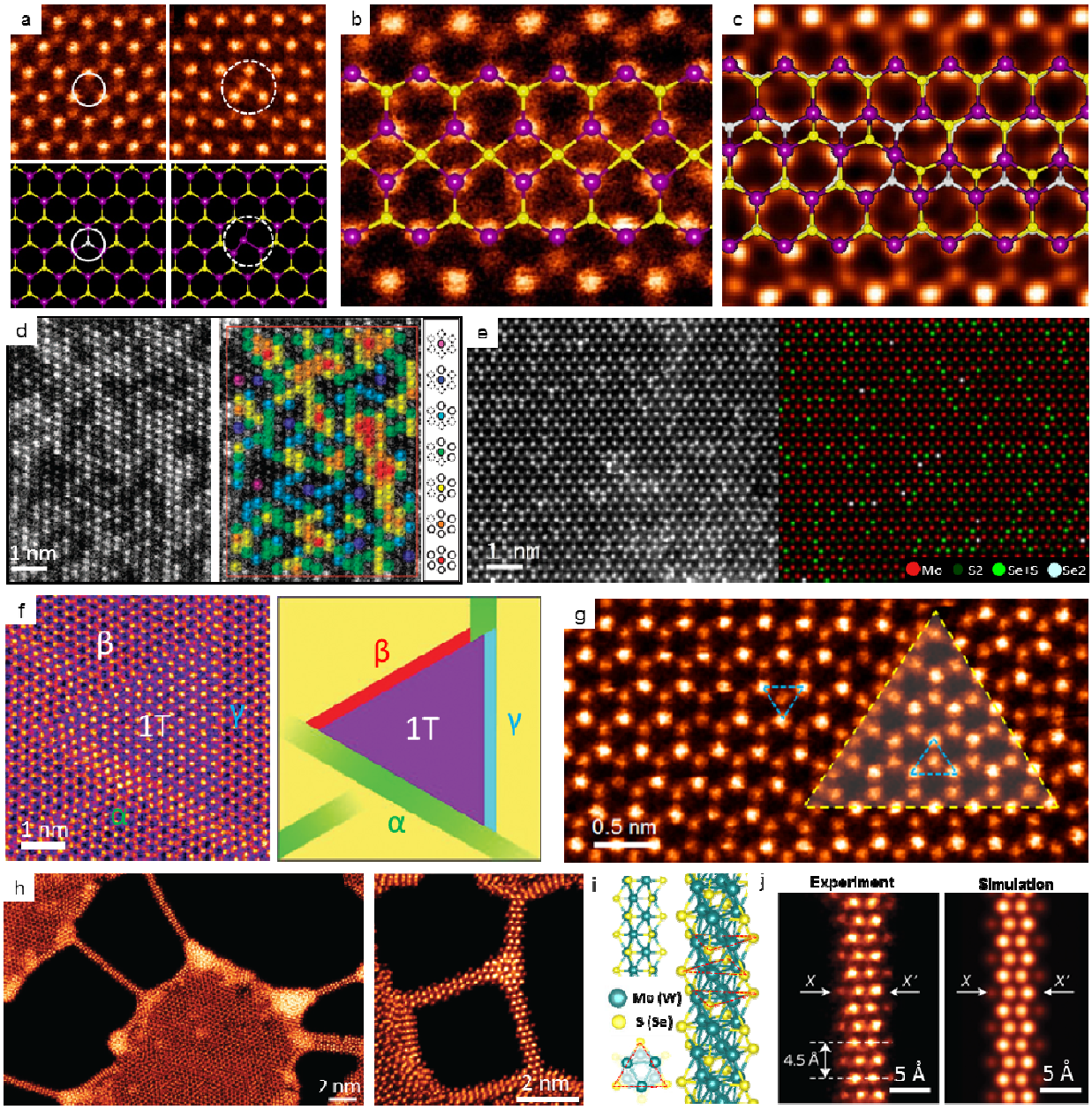

Figure 8: Characterization and engineering of defects in TMD atomic layers. (a) STEM ADF images and the corresponding atomic models of S vacancy and MoS_2 antisite defect in monolayer MoS_2(Adapted with permission from Ref [269]). (b,c) ADF images of two types of 60° grain boundaries in monolayer MoS_2 with structural models overlaid(Adapted with permission from Ref[269]). (d) ADF image and the corresponding doping behavior analysis of a W-doped MoS_2 monolayer(Adapted with permission from Ref [133]). (e) ADF image and the corresponding dopant distribution map of a Se-doped MoS_2 monolayer (Adapted with permission from Ref [170]). (f) ADF image and a schematic of a 1T domain in a 2H MoS_2 monolayer, induced by the electron beam under *in-situ* heating (Adapted with permission from Ref [267]). (g) ADF image of an inversion domain in a 2H $MoSe_2$ monolayer induced by the electron beam (Adapted with permission from Ref [276]). (h) Sub-nm MoSe nanowire array and junctions created within a $MoSe_2$ monolayer using an electron beam. (i) The atomic structure model of the MX nanowire. (j) Comparison of the experimental and simulated ADF images of the MoSe nanowire created by electron beam (Adapted with permission from Ref [277]).

2D Electronics and Optoelectronics

2D materials are being extensively investigated as the channel materials for next generation FETs owing to their ultra-thin body nature that allows aggressive scaling down to atomic dimensions. One of the major challenges that needs to be resolved in this context is the source/drain contact formation since it limits the ultimate performance of these 2D FETs.[283–287] Note that in conventional Si FETs a substitutional doping scheme is adopted in order to minimize the contact resistance and tune the carrier type (electron or hole). However, the absence of a sustainable doping scheme for 2D materials necessitates the use of metals with different work functions to achieve the same objective. Since metal-2D contacts are characterized by Schottky barriers (SBs), one has to minimize the height and width of the SB to improve the current transmission. This was achieved through Sc[285] and MoO_x [284]contacts for n-type and p-type MoS_2 FETs, respectively, whereas graphene contacts were used for WSe_2 FETs[283,286] since the Fermi level of graphene can be tuned through electrostatic gating. As noted previously in the "Doping and Functionalization of TMDs" section, various routes have been explored for chemical doping of the TMDs to achieve improved device performance. In addition, recently phase engineering was applied to selectively induce the metallic 1T phase at the source and the drain contact regions of a MoS_2 FET,[287,288] which showed significant performance improvement. In general, MoS_2 and $MoSe_2$ FETs [8,289,290] have been found to be dominated by electron transport whereas WS_2 and WSe_2 FETs [291–293] are mostly ambipolar (presence of both electron and hole branches in the current transport). This observation is related to the pinning of metal Fermi levels close to a certain energy in the bandgap of the channel material irrespective of the work functions of the metals.[294] For Mo-based chalcogenides the pinning occurs near the conduction band edge whereas for W-based chalcogenides the pinning occurs close to the midgap. FETs based on several other metal chalcogenides like SnS_2, $HfSe_2$, GaS, In_2Se_3 and many more have also been demonstrated.[295–298]

Benchmarking the carrier mobility (Figure 9a) of various 2D materials provides evidence that the TMDs exhibit only a modest mobility compared to phosphorene and graphene.[299] The relatively low mobility values of the STMDs point to a high density of midgap localized states caused by disorder.[293] Potential candidates are metal and chalcogen vacancies, divacancies, dislocations, and molecules and atoms bonded or adsorbed onto the exfoliated sheets.[269,300–302] However, it is encouraging to note that the FETs based on various 2D materials are being implemented in different components of an integrated circuit like the digital inverters[182,303,304] (Figure 9b), analog amplifiers[305–307] (Figure 9c) and memory transistor.[308] 2D materials also show promise for thin film transistor (TFT) technologies.[299] The two most desirable features of the TFTs - mechanical flexibility and optical transparency – are naturally inherited by the 2D materials owing to their vdW epitaxy and atomically-thin body. In fact, high performance TFTs based on MoS_2, WSe_2, and black phosphorous (Figure 9d and 9e) have already been demonstrated.[150,286,307,309] In particular, flexible black phosphorous FETs can endure many thousands, perhaps millions, of bending cycles that is only limited by the substrate, gate dielectric and contact interface. Figure 9e shows robust black phosphorous FET electrical properties at the measurement limit of 5000 bending cycles at 1% strain. Finally, the high surface to volume ratio of the 2D materials makes them ideal for sensor and detector applications as well. For example, MoS_2 and WS_2 FETs have been successfully employed for toxic gas sensing, protein and pH sensing and label free detection of biomolecules (Figure 9f).[310–312] The extraordinary light absorption capability and current conversion efficiency of the 2D materials also pave their way as energy harvesting devices.[313]

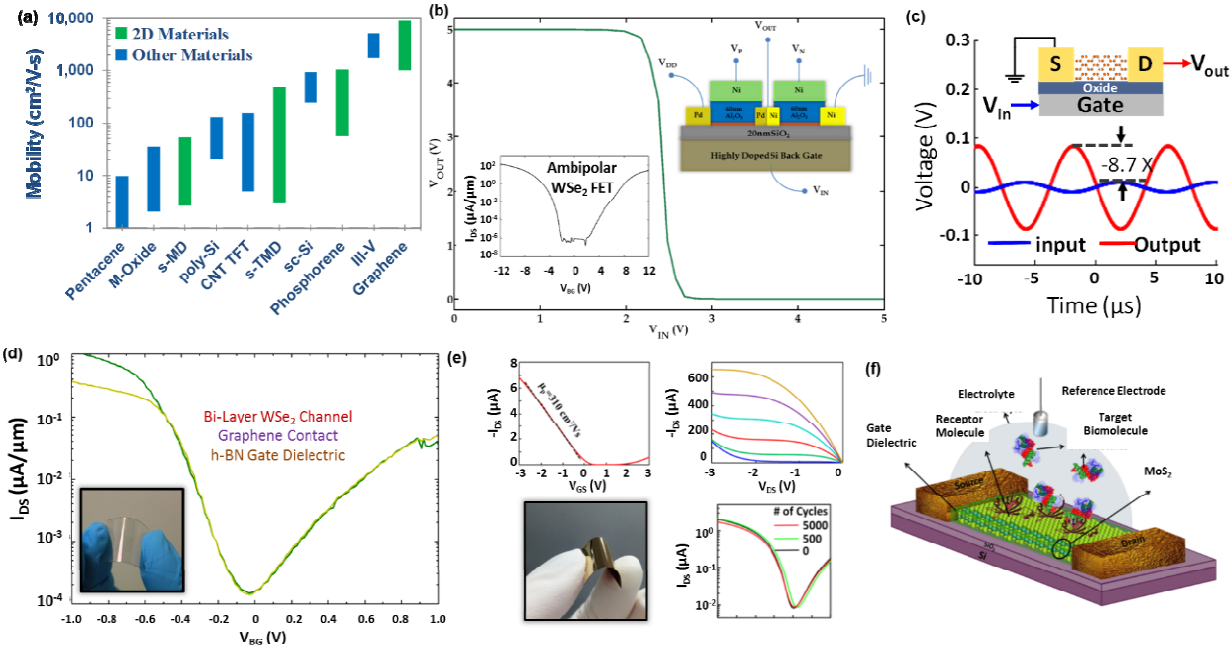

Figure 9: Potential Applications for 2D Materials. **(a)** Room temperature experimental mobility benchmarking for different semiconducting materials (Adapted with permission from Ref [299]). **(b)** A high gain digital inverter based on WSe_2 ambipolar FET (Adapted with permission from Ref [303,304,314]). **(c)** An analog small signal amplifier based on black phosphorous FET (Adapted with permission from Ref [305–307]). **(d)** An all 2D thin film transistor for flexible electronics (Adapted with permission from Ref [286]). **(e)** A flexible BP FET showing robust performance at 5000 bending cycles at 1.5% strain (Adapted with permission from Ref [150,307,309]). **(f)** A biosensor based on MoS_2 FET (Adapted with permission from Ref [310–312]).

2D materials also provide an enormous scope to study the fundamental principles of light absorption and emission in atomically thin materials with the ultimate goal to realize high performance optoelectronic devices like light emitting diodes (LEDs), photodetectors, lasers, and optical cavities, among others.[146,148,315–319] The first generation of 2D phototransistors demonstrated photo-responsivity on the order of ~120 mA/W in spite of being severely limited by the contact resistance.[317] This issue was resolved in low contact resistance monolayer WSe_2 phototransistors resulting in photo-responsivity as high as ~1.8×10^5 A/W.[319] Finally, by combining high mobility graphene with high photo-responsive MoS_2 in a hybrid graphene-MoS_2 phototransistor, record high room temperature photo-responsivity of ~5×10^8 A/W was obtained.[146] WSe_2 p-n photodiodes having two local bottom gates with different gate dielectrics produced photo-detection efficiencies up to 320 mA/W, which is comparable to state of the art commercial silicon photodetectors for green light.[148]

2D layered-material optoelectronic devices are likely to leverage integration with optical cavities and other photonic architectures as well.[320] In a solar cell or photodetector, for instance, it is crucial to absorb large fractions of light in potentially atomically thick materials. The simplest such architectures are based on the "Salisbury screen" concept and comprise an absorbing layered material placed a quarter wavelengths from a reflecting ground plane. Such cavities can indeed support perfect absorption even at monolayer thicknesses, but only in a narrow wavelength band defined by a Fabry-Perot resonance.[321] More broadband enhancement of light absorption in ultra-thin films is possible in plasmonic[322] or dielectric gap-mode[323] architectures. In applying these concepts to 2D layered-materials, however, one must be careful to consider the presence of optical anisotropies. Both plasmonic and dielectric gap-mode

architectures predominantly exhibit enhancement of out-of-plane oriented electric fields.[324] This anisotropy in field enhancements stems from a fundamental property of electromagnetics: the difference between continuity conditions for parallel ($E_{\parallel,1} = E_{\parallel,2}$) and perpendicular ($\varepsilon_{\perp,1}E_{\perp,1} = \varepsilon_{\perp,2}E_{\perp,2}$) electric fields. As a result, many photonic architectures are incompatible with layered materials, which typically exhibit absorption only for in-plane (i.e. parallel) oriented electric fields.[325] Similar anisotropies were recently demonstrated in photoluminescence from MoS_2 excitons[326] and must be taken into account when designing photonic architectures for enhancing light emission.[327–330] In other cases, optical anisotropies in layered materials can enable novel optical phenomena. For instance, boron nitride anisotropies lead to naturally occurring hyperbolic dispersion[331,332], the basis of many metamaterial technologies.[333]

Beyond TMDs: Monoelemental 2D Materials: Group III, IV, and V "…enes"

Among the elemental 2D layered materials, the most famous is, of course, graphene (monolayer of graphitic carbon). But there are a host of other elemental 2D materials that have also gained interest in recent years. These include borophene, silicene, germanene, stanene, and phosphorene, which are the monolayer versions of boron, silicon, germanium, tin, and black phosphorous, respectively. While borophene (Figure 10a) was only proposed very recently[334], Wen *et al.*[335] systematically investigated main group IV structures in 1D, 2D, and 3D using DFT and concluded that carbon is the only group IV element to form sp^2 hybrid orbitals due to the adequate overlap between neighboring p orbitals. It is therefore not surprising that atomically flat structures made of Si, Ge, Sn, or Pb are not stable and have never been observed in nature. However, Cahangirov[336] reported stable 2D, slightly buckled (beta-type) honeycomb structures of silicene and germanene. In spite of this clear departure from graphene chemistry, other atomic layer structures are named in a way similar to that used for carbon sp^2 layers: Si, Ge, and Sn forming structures known as silicene, germanene, and stanene (or tinene) (Figure 10a). Quite remarkably, the atomic corrugation preserves the presence of linearly crossing electron bands at the Fermi energy, indicating that electrons in silicene and germanene behave as massless Fermions, similar to electrons in graphene.

Planar allotropes of C, Si, Ge, and Sn follow the hexagonal honeycomb structure of graphene.[337] However, in contrast to graphene which features sp^2 hybridization, Si, Ge, and Sn tend to favor sp^3 bonding, thereby leading to buckled structures.[338,339] However, in each case, the monolayer structures are, in their stable configurations, made up of hexagons in an exactly 3-fold binding configuration. The hexagons can be found in a number of three-dimensional configurations, with a preference for a chair-like arrangement,[339] and a specific buckling parameter δ varies from 0.0 (C), 0.045 nm (Si), 0.069 nm (Ge), and 0.029 nm (Sn), according to a first-principles study [340]

Silicene, germanene, and stanene do not form bulk layered structures, thereby barring the possibility of using exfoliation methods to isolate their single layer structures. Therefore, synthesis methods must rely on other techniques such as epitaxial surface growth. This way, monolayers of silicene on Ag (110) and (111) were recently reported (Figure 10b).[69,341–343] In addition, experimental evidence for germanene have been provided recently by Davila *et al.*[344] while Bampoulis *et al.*[345] reported an experimental study of germanene growth on Ge(110) to show the hexagonal lattice to have a 0.02 nm corrugation in the vertical direction (Figure 10c). This corrugation is significantly smaller than the theoretical one reported for single layers, as could be expected for a structure overlaid on a substrate. Note that other techniques were developed to synthesize germanene on a variety of substrates, such as Au[346] and GaAs[347]

Experimental evidence indicates that silicene overlaid on silver presents Fermi velocities similar to that of graphene and low energy electrons behave as massless Dirac Fermions.[348,349] Germanene and stanene are predicted to possess massless Dirac fermion and a behavior similar to that of silicene.[350,351] While silicene, germanene, and stanene present a massless Dirac fermion behavior similar to graphene, they also present significant and noteworthy spin orbit (SO) coupling.[337,352] The larger ionic mass of Si compared to that of C renders SO coupling more marked compared to graphene, leading to an experimentally observable SO band gap of 1.55 meV. [353] Further, the even more massive Ge's SO band gap is predicted to be as high

23.9 meV.[353] This large SO coupling make these structures potentially very attractive for applications such as the quantum spin Hall effect (QSHE).

Tin-based atomic monolayers have been studied less broadly than their Si and Ge counterpart. The name of the pristine layer based on one monolayer of tin atoms is not unique. Some authors employ the English-based name 'tin' while other sticks to the conventional Latin root 'stannum'. In each case, the root is combined with the usual suffix used in graphene[338,340,354] It follows, therefore, that the literature on Sn atomic layer materials includes reference to both “stanene” or “stanene” and “tinene”. However, it seems that the accepted convention of using Latin etymology tends to favor the former over the latter. Single layer stanene has been recently grown epitaxially by molecular beam epitaxy as confirmed by atomic and electronic characterization using scanning tunneling microscopy and angle-resolved photoemission spectroscopy[355]. In addition, while experiments have not been able to confirm it yet, first-principles calculations predict that two-dimensional tin films are QSH insulators with sizable SO bulk gap of 0.3 eV, sufficiently large for practical applications at room temperature (Figure 10d).[338]

Moving one column over from the group IV elements, we find phosphorous. Recently, black phosphorus (or “phosphorene” at the monolayer limit) (Figure 10a) has attracted significant attention as an emerging 2D material due to its unique properties compared with well-explored graphene and TMDs such as MoS_2 and WSe_2.[356–360] In bulk form, this monoelemental layered structure is a semiconductor with a bandgap of 0.3 eV[361] that is highly anisotropic,[361] leading to distinctively different optical and electronic properties along different crystalline directions.[359,360,362] Black phosphorous also follows a similar scaling rule as most other semiconducting 2D materials, where the electronic (optical) bandgap increases from 0.3 eV in bulk to 1.3 eV at the monolayer limit (Figure 10e).[243,363] Moreover, as in other 2D materials, excitons dominate the optical responses in mono- and few-layer black phosphorus; however, light emission from excitons is linearly polarized along the light effective mass direction (x-direction)[363–365]. The large energy tuning range and highly anisotropic properties may be utilized to construct photonic devices such as photodetectors, modulators, and polarizers in a broad wavelength range from mid-infrared to visible. Another interesting property of black phosphorus is its high carrier mobility,[366] making it promising for high frequency electronics applications.[367] Due to its anisotropic band structure, the measured mobility along light effective mass (x-direction) is usually around two times larger than that in heave effective mass (y-direction)[359,360]. Theoretical investigations show that the intrinsic hole mobility of few-layer (1 to 5 layers) black phosphorus can exceed 5000 cm^2/Vs even at room temperature while the electron mobility of few-layer black phosphorus is around 1000 cm^2/Vs [362]. Reported carrier mobility of few-layer black phosphorus is much lower[359,360]. Development of surface protection scheme utilizing atomic layer deposition (ALD) oxide or layered hBN may ultimately lead to high mobility, few-layer black phosphorus suitable for electronic applications[368].

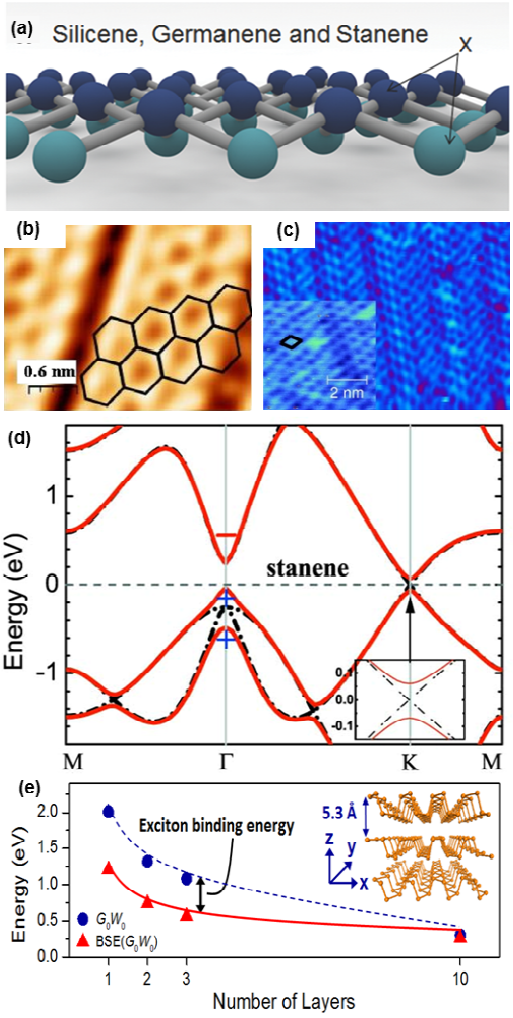

Figure 10: (a) Crystal structure model showing buckled hexagonal 2D sheets composed of a single element of Si, Ge, or Sn. False colors are used to indicate atomic planes at different heights. (Adapted with permission from Ref [337]) (b) STM image of silicon nanoribbons with the honeycomb structural model overlaid (Adapted with permission from Ref [341]) (c) STM image of Germanene, a novel two-dimensional germanium allotrope akin to graphene and silicene. The inset shows a zoomed-in image with a unit cell of a modulated supercell marked by a black diamond (Adapted with permission from Ref [345]). (d) Calculated band structure of Stanene[338]. (Large-gap quantum spin hall insulators in tin films) (e) Calculated electronic [G0W0] and optical [BSE(G0W0)] bandgap of black phosphorus as a function of layer number. The energy difference represents the exciton binding energy (Adapted with permission from Ref from Ref.[363,416]).

Beyond TMDs: MXenes

Another developing class of 2D materials is based on the transition metal carbides or carbon nitrides, described as "MXenes"[369,370,371]. MXenes are produced usually by etching out a layer (A) from a 3D structure consisting of MAX, where M is an early transition metal, A is a group III or IV element, and X is carbon or nitrogen[372–374]. Several techniques to selectively remove "A" include heating under vacuum[375], heating in molten salts[376,377] and molten metals, and selective etching using strong etchants such as Cl_2[378,379] and HF[380]. MXenes synthesized to date include Ti_3C_2, Ti_2C, Nb_2C, V_2C, $Ti_3C_2T_x$, Ti_2CT_x, V_2CT_x, Nb_2CT_x, $Nb_4C_3T_x$, and $Ta4C_3T_x$, where T_x represents surface functional groups (O, OH and F)[370,373,374]. Most of the MXenes have a layer thickness of less than 1 nm, which can be used to form 3D structures of tens of microns. The distance between the MXene sheets can be controlled by carefully choosing the starting MAX compound and the cations. Generally, MXenes are mechanically strong materials as these are composed of mostly M-C or M-N bonds, which are some of the strongest bonds known[381]. These MXenes have been effectively used as electrode materials for supercapacitors[382], fuel cell applications[383,384], and energy storage applications[385,386] (Li-,Na- and K- batteries) because of the low metal diffusion barrier at the surface and the high metallic conductivity.

What's Next?

Even though remarkable and extraordinary advances in 2D materials research continues to emerge, there is still much to learn about controlling defects, understanding the impact of substrate, and developing means for controlled doping, which underpin future technologies. Continued advancement in the main

themes of this review –theory, synthesis, characterization, and devices – will be critical as we move forward in 2D materials science and technology.

Theory. Two significant gaps must be addressed to enable more rapid progress for designing low-dimensional materials with desired opto-electronic, magnetic, multi-ferroic, and other properties. First, there is an urgent need for reliable computational techniques that accurately (and rapidly) address the complex functionalities, that provide the precision necessary for discriminating between closely competing behaviors, and that are capable of achieving the length scales necessary to bridge across features such as grain boundaries and composition gradients. The large length and time scales, as well as finite temperatures, make even DFT calculations for investigating materials under device-relevant conditions prohibitively expensive. Grain boundaries, extended defects and complex heterostructures further complicate this issue. Second, there is a need to take full advantage of all of the information contained in experimental data to provide input into computational methods, which ultimately will help to predict new materials and understand their behavior. Such efforts include integrating data efficiently from different characterization techniques to provide a more complete perspective on materials structure and function.

Synthesis. Synthetic efforts ultimately must lead to the combination of atomic-level precision with wafer-level scalability during materials growth. For the synthesis of individual 2D TMDs, CVD conditions should be optimized and controlled to grow large crystalline grains (ideally, only single-crystalline grains) with minimum defect concentration on technologically relevant length scales. With these achievements, the electrical properties of chemically-synthesized 2D TMDs should become comparable to those of their mechanically exfoliated analogues. For the growth of 2D TMD heterostructures, new approaches must be developed to enable the rational and scalable integration of multiple 2D TMDs while maintaining atomically seamless hetero-interfaces. Such atomic-level control of structural and compositional variations would promise exciting new quantum physics and would also open up opportunities for a wide range of unconventional applications in electronics, optics and opto-electronics. Ultimately, the large-scale synthesis of 2D TMDs with tailored materials properties has the potential to enable the production of novel integrated circuits based on the electronic devices at the ultimate size limit, which function in highly predicted manners. Beyond TMDs, significant efforts must be undertaken for mono-elemental 2D materials synthesis to facilitate large-area growth on insulating substrates, with *in-situ* capping capabilities. Currently, most mono-elemental layers are grown on conducting substrates, which requires subsequent transfer processes; the environmental sensitivity of these materials has hindered the speed of their advancement relative to graphene or the TMDs, even though they could be better suited for specific electronic applications.

Bio-functionalization. Bio-functionalization of graphene was a major focus for a variety of applications,[387] and the integration of non-graphene 2D materials is expected to benefit various biochemical, biological, and biomedical applications due to their capability to exhibit wide band gaps for applications ranging from FETs to light emissive quantum platelets. Recent work from Banerjee *et al.*[311] demonstrated MoS_2 FET based biomolecular detection and contrasted its sensing performance to a graphene FET. However, there are numerous challenges ahead for effectively interfacing the emerging 2D materials with biomolecules and operating the bio-functionalized 2D materials devices in biological fluids, such as buffer, serum, sweat, saliva, *etc*. First and foremost, chemical stability, specifically the air, moisture, and oxidation stability, should be explored to ensure the integrity of 2D materials throughout the interfacing process with biomolecules. Second, the plasmonic characteristics of 2D materials should be investigated thoroughly to provide for SPR-, LSPR-, and SERS-based optical pathway in investigating bio-2D materials interaction as well as its use as a plasmonic sensing platform. Third, increasing the number of 2D materials material formulations and processing conditions is required. For example, graphene exhibits unparalleled processing methods originating from its abundance in chemical/physical growth, exfoliation, oxidation, and reduction. The resulting hydrophobicity, water solubility, organic phase, and separation methods enables one to investigate the feasibility of graphene in many applications

including 3D printing ink for tissue engineering scaffolds,[388] localized reduction of fluorinated graphene to form nano stripped graphene channel,[389] and encapsulating membrane for *in-situ* monitoring of DNA-DNA hybridization in real time.[390] Further bandgap engineering tools, bio/chemical reactivity, nanosized patterning, and selective atomistic passivation for the 2D materials can be additional challenges that need to be addressed to aid in advancing their biological/biomedical applications.

Characterization. It will be important to continue pushing the limit of low-voltage low-dose STEM imaging for 2D materials that are sensitive to the electron beam. A growing effort that combines high-resolution STEM analysis with *in-situ* microscopy techniques is enabling researchers to study the structural changes of materials under external excitations or under relevant working conditions. Future studies will provide valuable insights into understanding the failure mechanisms of 2D devices under extreme working conditions or due to aging.[391] Efforts should also be made to correlate atomic-scale structural information obtained from electron microscopy studies with optical spectroscopy characterization and device performance, enabled by performing all studies on the same regions of the samples or ultimately on a working device. As instrument stability and collection performance improves, correlated STEM-CL, EELS and conventional PL studies of 2D materials will unravel fascinating properties, in particular at the edges, boundaries, and interfaces. In parallel, interesting work will continue to emerge on exploring new defect structures and 2D nanostructures[277,392,393] using the electron beam as an energy source to excite the 2D material specimen[394].

Surface sensitive characterization technique such as time of flight secondary ion mass spectroscopy (TOF-SIMS) is a recently emerging tool for identifying impurities of 2D materials at the atomic level, especially with its high sensitivity of ~ppb-level detection. Recently, TOF-SIMS demonstrated unprecedented ability to depth profile graphene/hBN heterostructures, clearly showing the interfacial carbonaceous materials that result from the mechanical stacking process[395], as well as delineating dopant locations in Mn-doped MoS_2 monolayers[174]. As a result, TOF-SIMS should be given serious consideration for nanoscale chemical analysis of these materials. Another technique, scanning tunneling microscopy (STM), has proven to be one of the most powerful research tools, enabling investigations of the morphology and local properties of novel 2D materials, such as silicene, germanene, and TMDs[336,353]. For 2D materials on solid surfaces, complicated superstructures due to modification from the substrate lattice are often present, and STM imaging is very effective in identifying such superstructures *via* Moire patterns. The height profiles of STM images can be further used to reveal the vertical corrugation of buckled 2D atomic layers[69,396]. Recent studies have also been focused on epitaxial growth of MX_2 materials on metal substrates inside the UHV STM chamber and *in-situ* STM analysis of the geometric features of the as-grown epitaxial MX_2 atomic layers. Future STM efforts on 2D materials could include continuity of 2D sheets at step edges of the substrates and the local element-doping or defects at the atomic scale, as well as related quantum interference. STM combined with other techniques (such as excitation sources from external optical, magnetic, electric field) will be very powerful for investigating the fundamental properties of these materials as well as substrate-modified new phenomena.

Devices. One of the highly promising future directions for electronic and optoelectronic devices based on 2D materials emerges from the vertical stacking of different 2D systems[190,397–399]. Such heterojunction devices already exhibit novel tunneling phenomena[149,187], diode rectification[400], tunable photovoltaic effect[141], significantly enhanced photosensitivity[146], superior light emission[318] and decent quantum efficiency[313]. Piezotronics is an equally promising field of research for 2D materials given recent breakthroughs. For example, a finite and zero piezoelectric response was observed in MoS_2 when the layer number was switched between odd and even, respectively; this is in sharp contrast to bulk piezoelectric materials.[401] This oscillation is due to the breaking and recovery of the inversion symmetry of the 2D crystal. A piezoelectric coefficient of $e_{11} = 2.9 \times 10^{-10}$ C m^{-1} has been reported for free standing monolayer MoS_2. 2D materials also provide a platform to replace charge-based devices. In this context, valleytronics is a recent development requiring that the conduction/valence bands of a material have two or more minima at equal energies but at different positions in momentum space. Monolayer MoS_2, which

has two energy-degenerate valleys at both the conduction and valence band edges, is a promising material for valleytronics.[402,403] It has been experimentally demonstrated that optical pumping with circularly polarized light can achieve a valley polarization of 30% in pristine monolayer MoS_2[403].

2D Magnets. Since the initial discovery of graphene, the family of 2D materials has grown considerably with new additions such as hBN and TMDs. Conspicuously missing in the current material line up are 2D magnets, crucial for the development of spintronic applications. Furthermore, the successful fabrication of a 2D magnet would significantly advance our understanding of low-dimensional magnetism. There have been various theoretical proposals on how to realize 2D magnets, which generally fall into three categories. The first is to dope transition metal elements into a nonmagnetic parent compound. For example, it was predicted that in graphene/transition-metal hybrid systems the exchange interaction between metal clusters strongly depends on gate voltage, opening up the exciting possibility for achieving strong and reproducible magnetoelectric effects.[404] Doping transition metals into dichalcogenides has also been recently experimentally studied,[174] but the predicted Curie temperature is well below room temperature[404]. Another interesting possibility is intercalated compounds[405,406] such as $Cr_{1/3}NbS_2$, a helical magnet in its bulk form[407]. The second route is to explore the strong van Hove singularity often found in 2D materials, which could lead to a Stoner-type magnetic instability. In monolayer GaSe, hole doping could induce tunable ferromagnetism and half metallicity, and the averaged electron spin magnetic moment can be as large as close to 1.0 μ_B/carrier[408,409]. The third route is *via* layered vdW crystals which are intrinsically magnetic. In this regard, transition metal trichalcogenides such as CrI_3[68] and $CrSiTe_3$[410,411] constitute an attractive family of materials. These materials are known to exhibit a large variety of magnetic phases in their bulk form[412], making them ideal candidates for exfoliated 2D magnets. Interesting properties such as coupled spin and valley degrees of freedom have also been predicted for monolayers of these materials[413]. Furthermore, it was shown that strain can be an effective knob for tuning the magnetic properties of these compounds[414,415]. With so many possible options, the race to realize the first 2D magnet will surely bring new and exciting opportunities to the fast expanding field of 2D materials.

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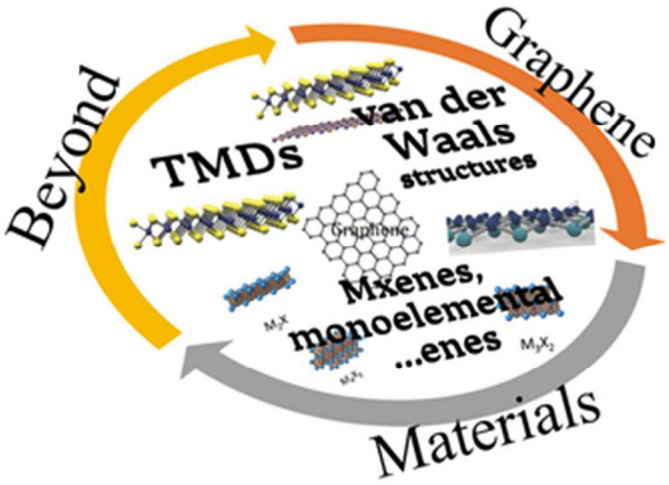

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