Comment on “Novel Superfluidity in a Trapped Gas of Fermi Atoms with Repulsive Interaction Loaded on an Optical Lattice”

In a recent Letter [1] (referred to as I below), Machida et al. made the exciting claim that in a one-dimensional (1D) trapped gas of fermions with repulsive interactions a superfluid phase appears around the Mott insulator (MI) at the center of the trap (COT). Their claim is based on a negative binding energy ($E_b$) and a large weight for a singlet formed by particles located at opposite sides of the MI. We show here that the observed effects are not related to superfluidity.

After a MI forms at large $U$, two particles with opposite spins added to the trap prefer to sit beyond the two ends of the MI phase in order to avoid double occupancy. Hence, the large weight of the singlet [Eq. (3)] in Fig. 4 of I can be understood to be a simple consequence of the density distribution and the antiferromagnetic character of the MI state; i.e., it does not signal superfluidity.

We then focus on the origin of the negative $E_b$ observed in I. Most of the results in I exhibit a nonzero density at the borders of the trap; i.e., they depend on the boundary conditions. We thus recalculated two cases depicted in Fig. 1(a) of I, keeping the same curvature of the trap and conditions. We thus recalculated two cases depicted in I. Most of the results in I exhibit a nonzero density at the center of the trap (COT). Therefore, the negative $E_b$ causes the MI to disappear. Both negative and positive $E_b$ arise in the latter doped case for different boundary conditions [5].

The dashed line in Fig. 1 corresponds to ED results of the 1D Hubbard model without trap, at half-filling, and open boundary conditions (OBC). Here $E_b$ is calculated by adding a site when adding a particle, for OBC, in order to simulate the MI in the middle of the trap without the metallic wings. The results obtained are practically indistinguishable from the $E_b$ obtained for trapped systems after the MI appears in the COT. Therefore, the negative $E_b$ is due to the MI region and does not signal superfluidity in the wings of the MI. Moreover, in the inset in Fig. 1 we show that the negative $E_b$ in the MI is due to an even-odd effect. There we have plotted the ground-state energy $E_G$ for MI systems without the trap, and OBC, vs the number of particles ($N_f$). The even-odd effect is evident and becomes smaller with increasing system size. Additionally, consistent with the results above, we find that: (i) displacing the COT from the middle of two lattice points, as selected in I, leads to positive values of $E_b$. Results for the COT on a lattice point are also shown in Fig. 1. (ii) In the trap, similarly to the OBC case, the negative $E_b \rightarrow 0$ almost linearly with increasing system size; i.e., it is a finite size effect.

This work was supported by NSF-DMR-0312261, NSF-DMR-0240918, NSF-ITR-0313390, SFB 382, HLR-Stuttgart, and NIC at FZ Jülich. We thank R.M. Noack for helpful discussions.

M. Rigol,1 S. R. Manmana,2,3 A. Muramatsu,2 R. T. Scalettar,1 R. R. P. Singh,1 and S. Wessel2
1Physics Department
University of California
Davis, California 95616, USA
2Institut für Theoretische Physik III
Universität Stuttgart
70550 Stuttgart, Germany
3Fachbereich Physik
Philippus-Universität Marburg
35032 Marburg, Germany

Received 18 January 2005; published 14 November 2005
DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.95.218901
PACS numbers: 03.75.Ss