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(54) **FINFET DEVICE WITH HIGH-K METAL GATE STACK**

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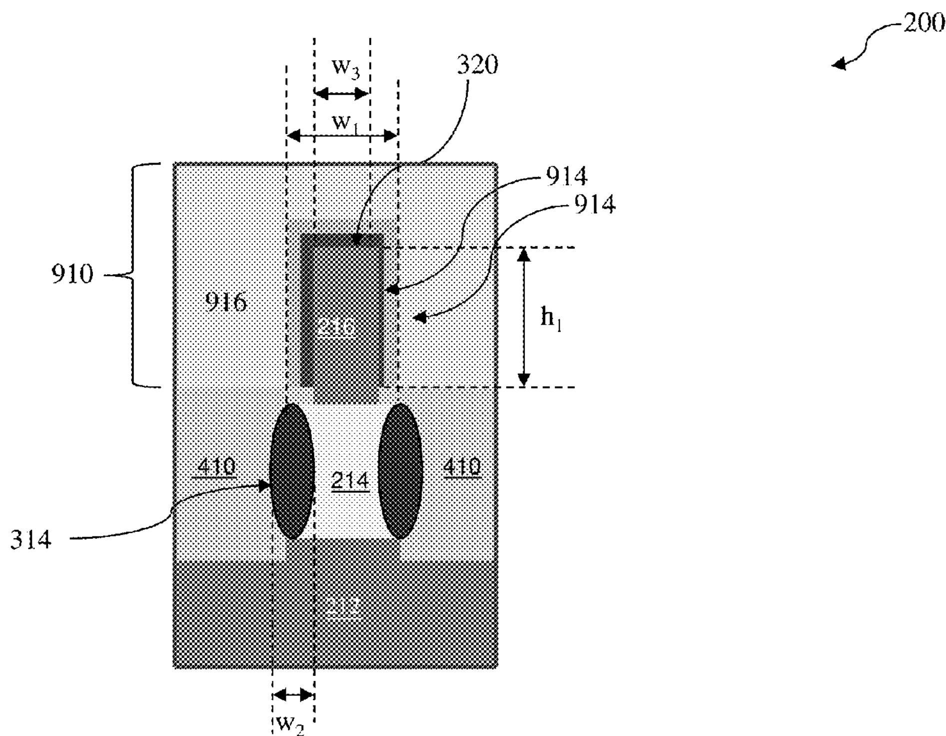
(57) **ABSTRACT**

Methods are disclosed herein for forming fin-like field effect transistors (FinFETs) that maximize strain in channel regions of the FinFETs. An exemplary method includes forming a fin having a first width over a substrate. The fin includes a first semiconductor material, a second semiconductor material disposed over the first semiconductor material, and a third semiconductor material disposed over the second semiconductor material. A portion of the second semiconductor material is oxidized, thereby forming a second semiconductor oxide material. The third semiconductor material is trimmed to reduce a width of the third semiconductor material from the first width to a second width. The method further includes forming an isolation feature adjacent to the fin. The method further includes forming a gate structure over a portion of the fin, such that the gate structure is disposed between source/drain regions of the fin.



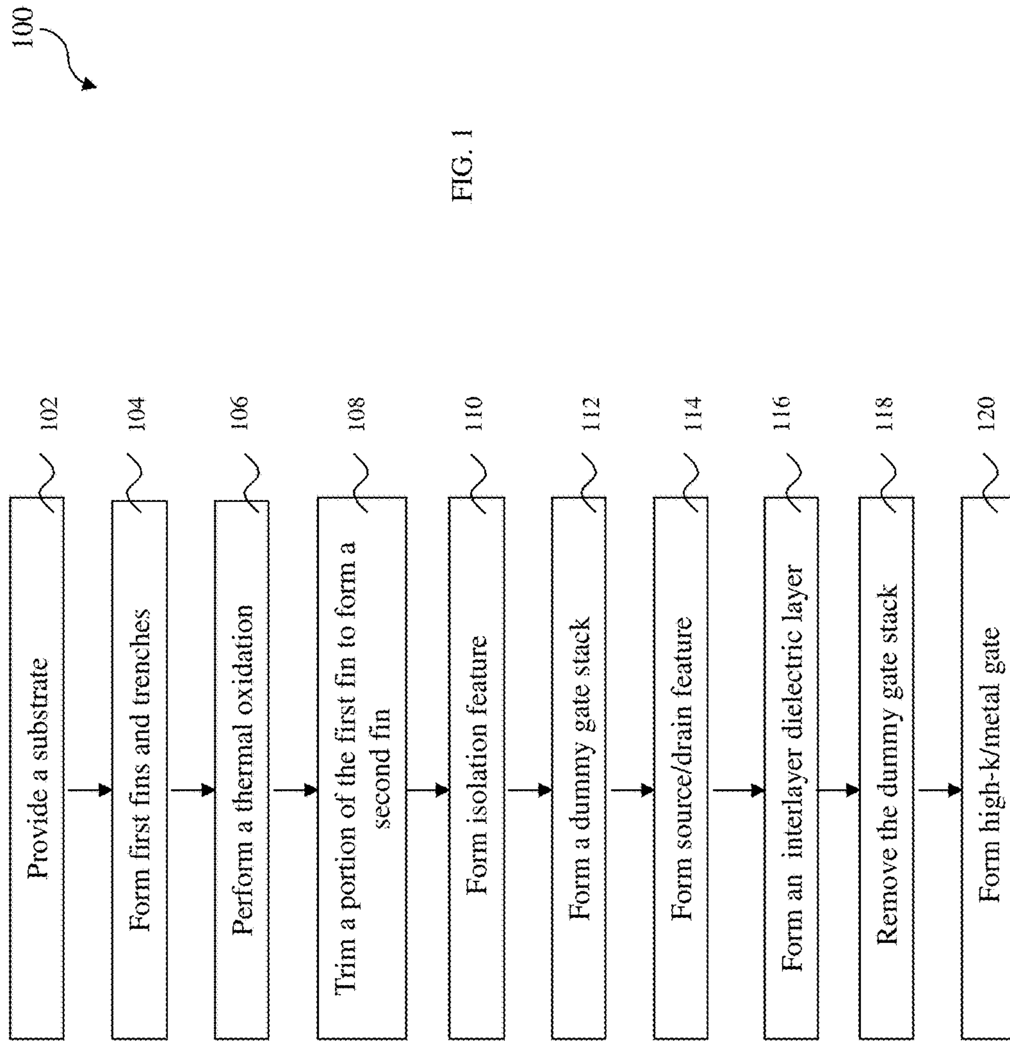


FIG. 1

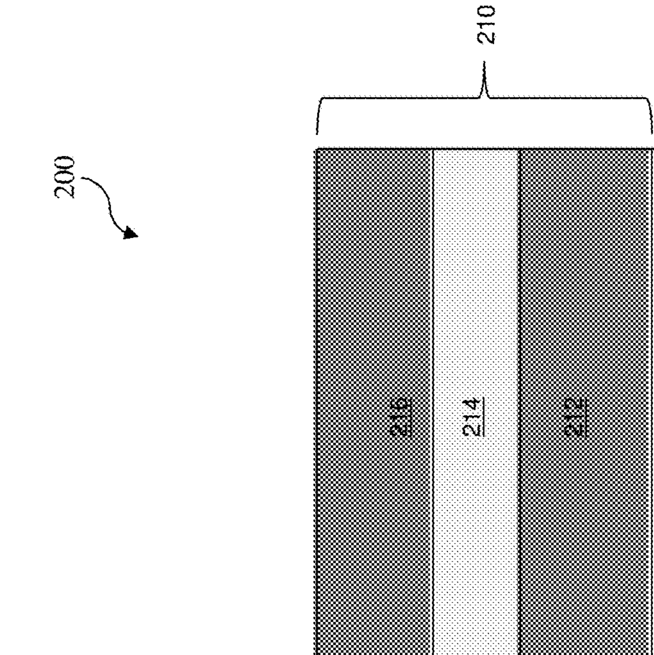


FIG. 2B

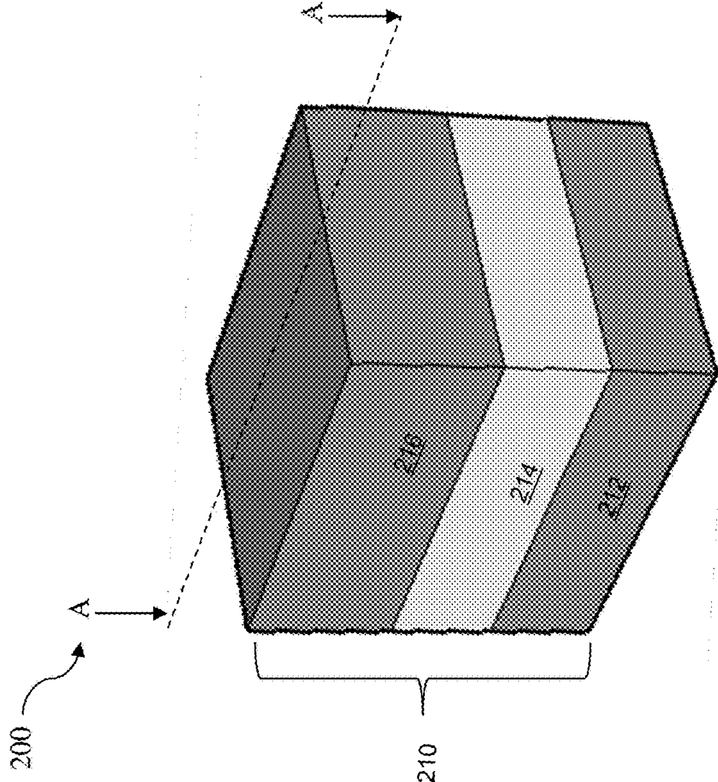


FIG. 2A

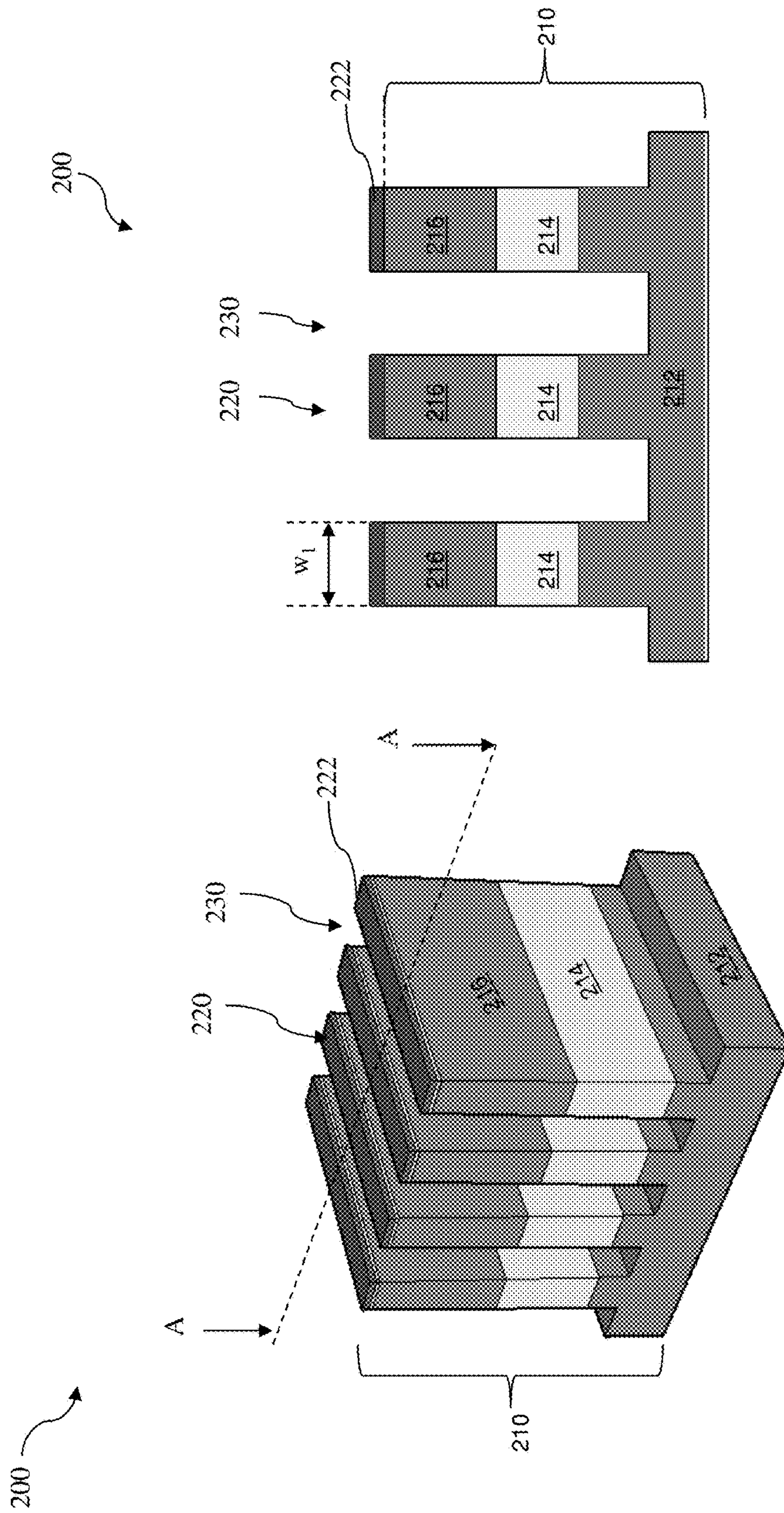


FIG. 3A

FIG. 3B

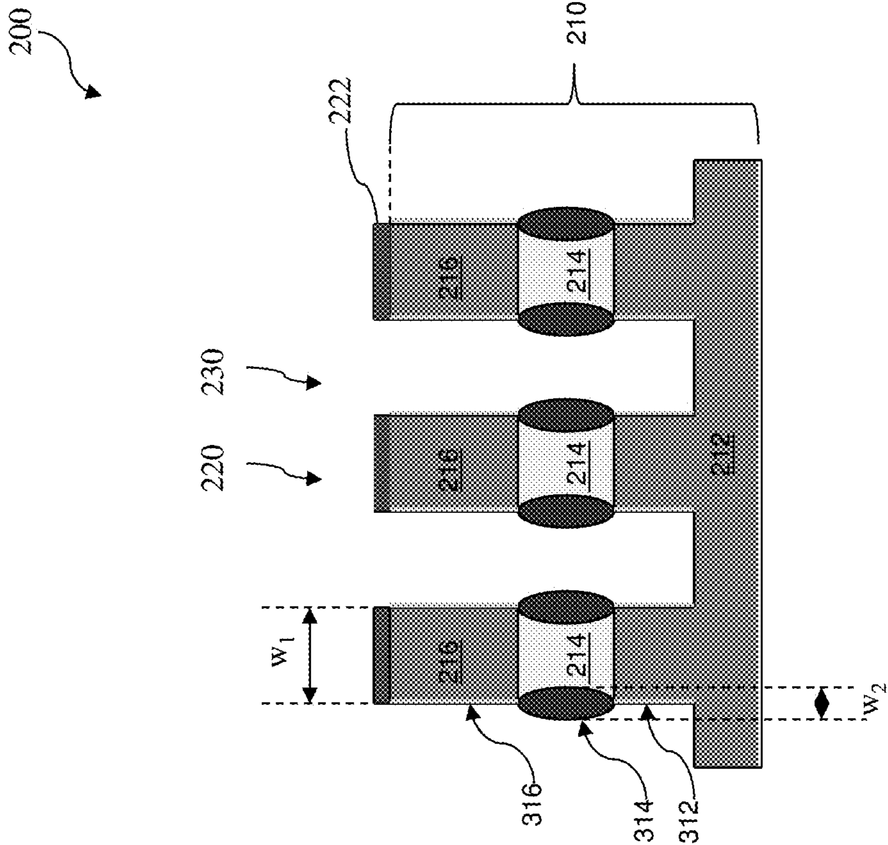
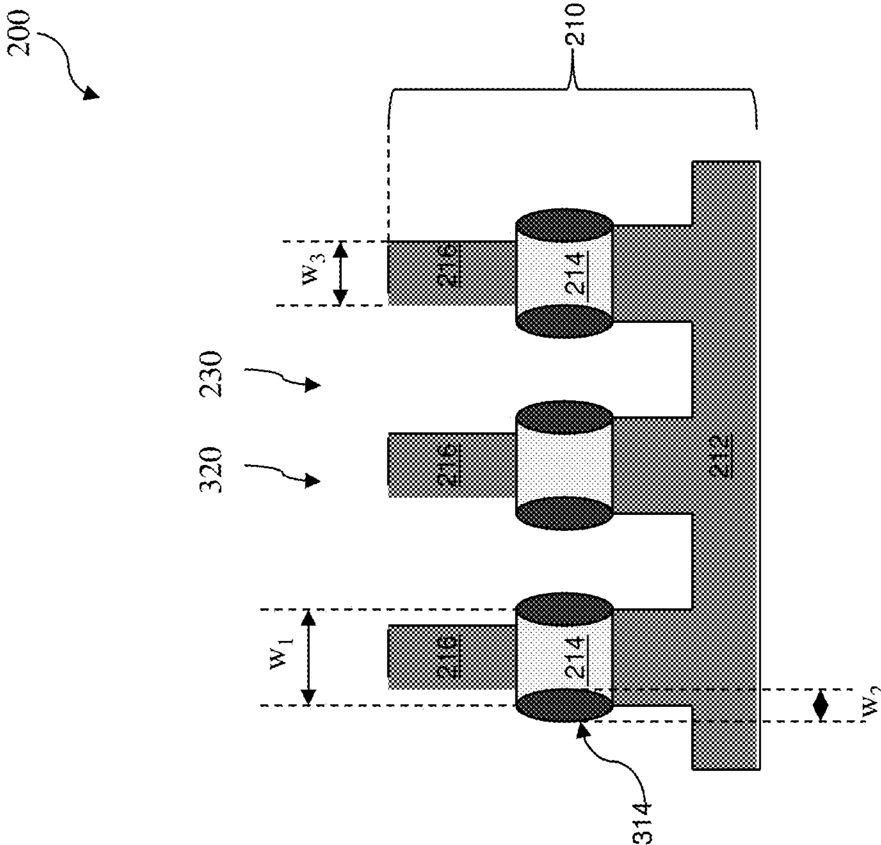


FIG. 4


200
210
230
320
216
214
212
314
W3
W1
W2
FIG. 5

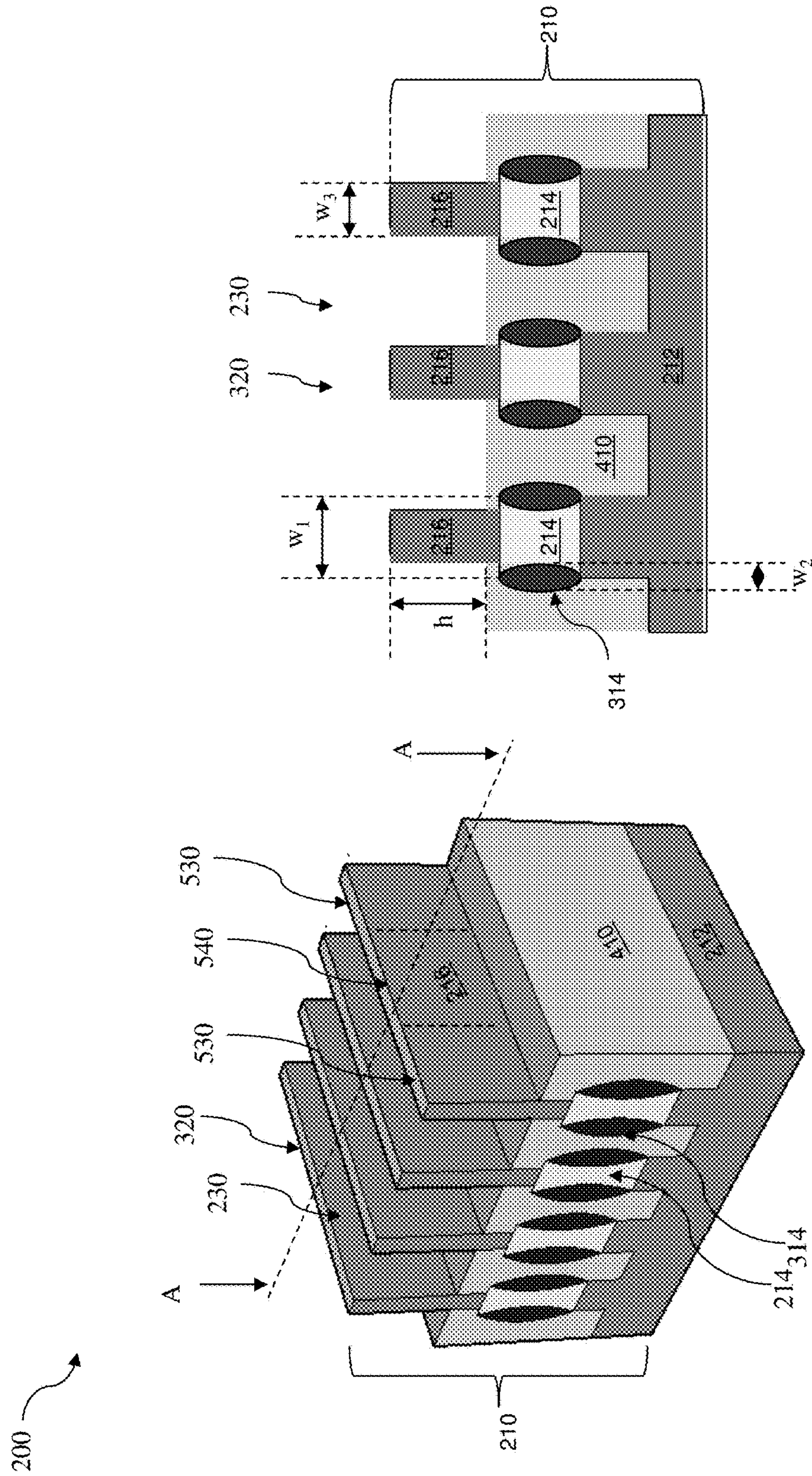


FIG. 6A

FIG. 6B

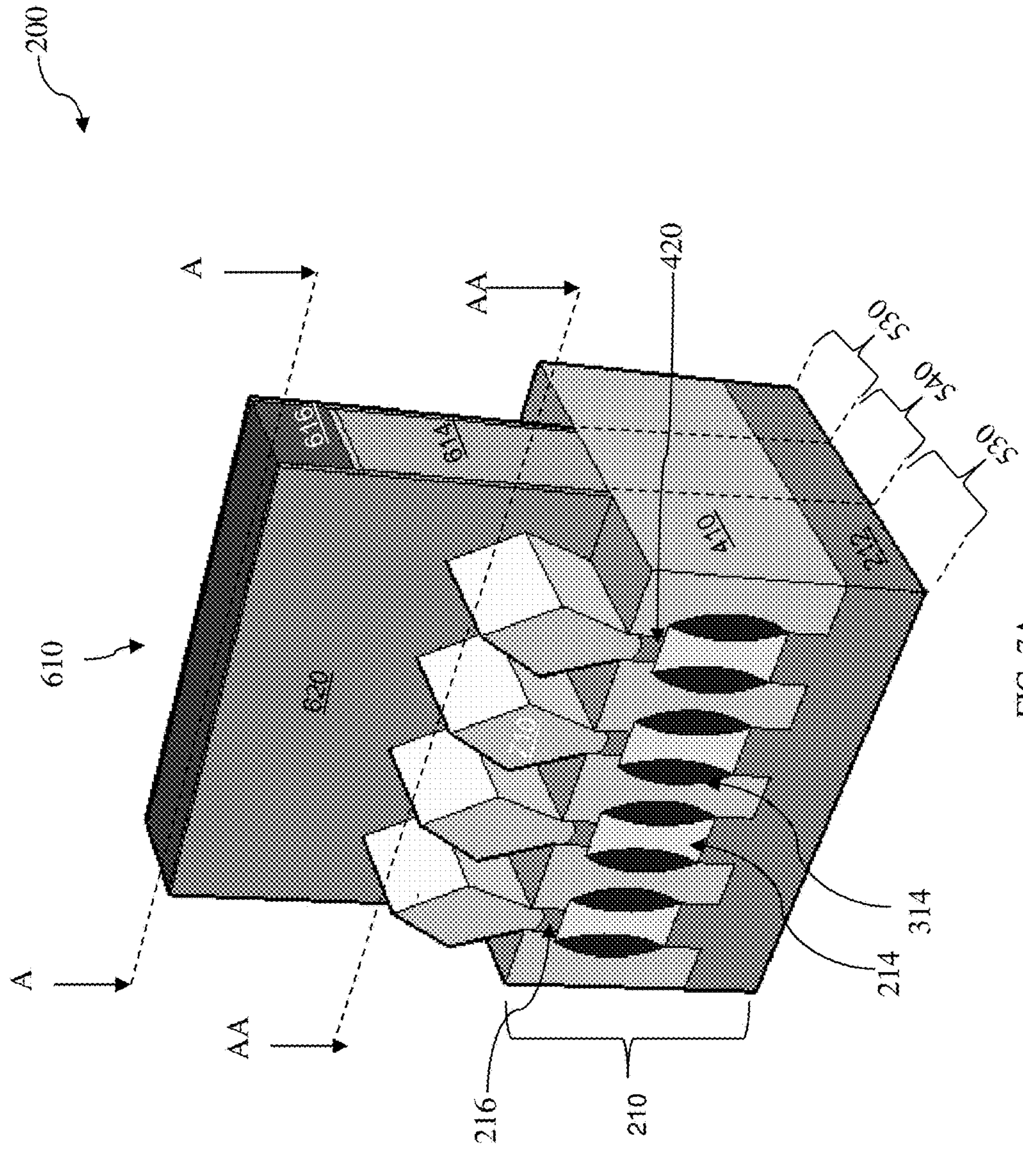


FIG. 7A

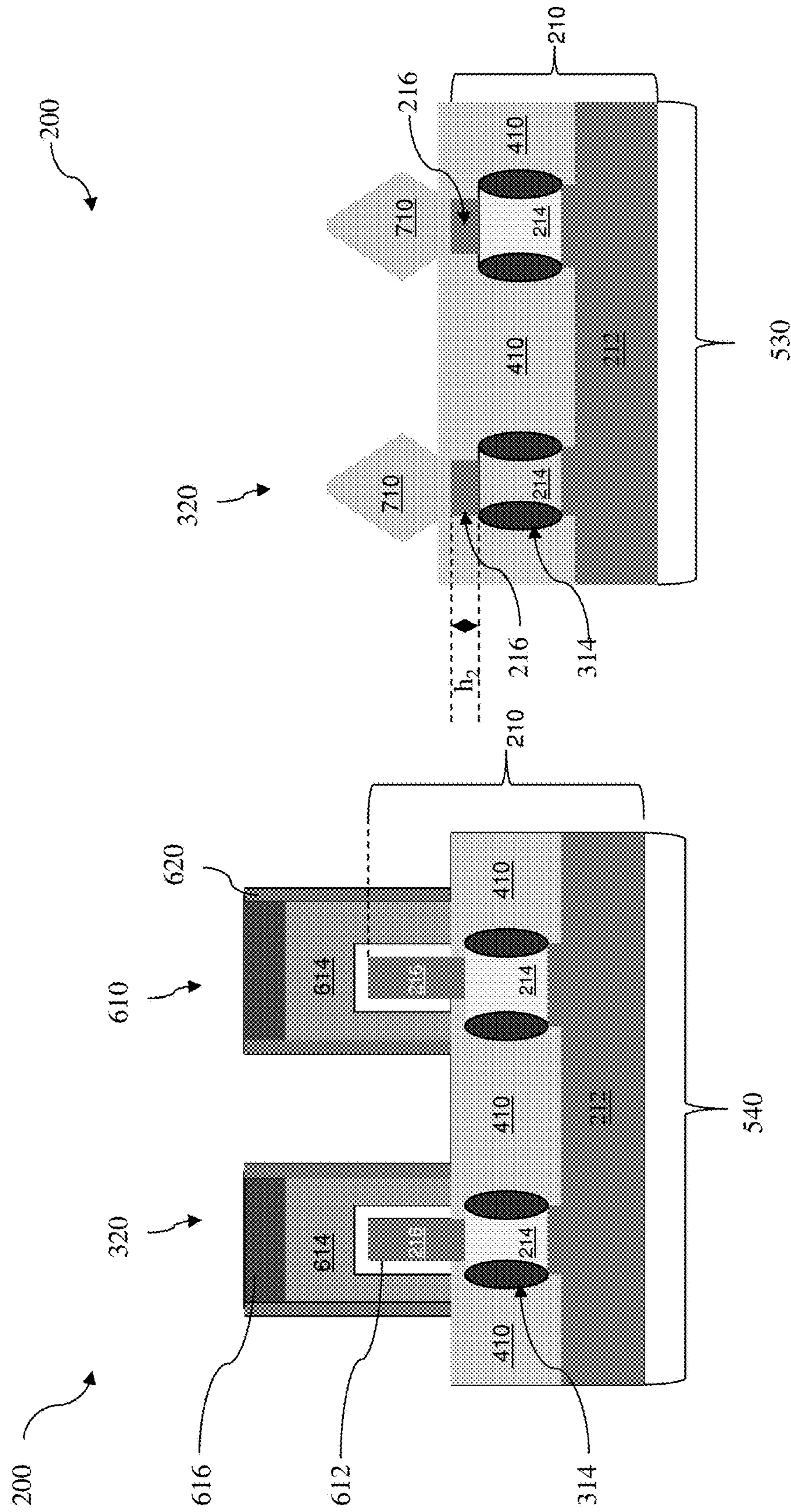


FIG. 7B

FIG. 7C

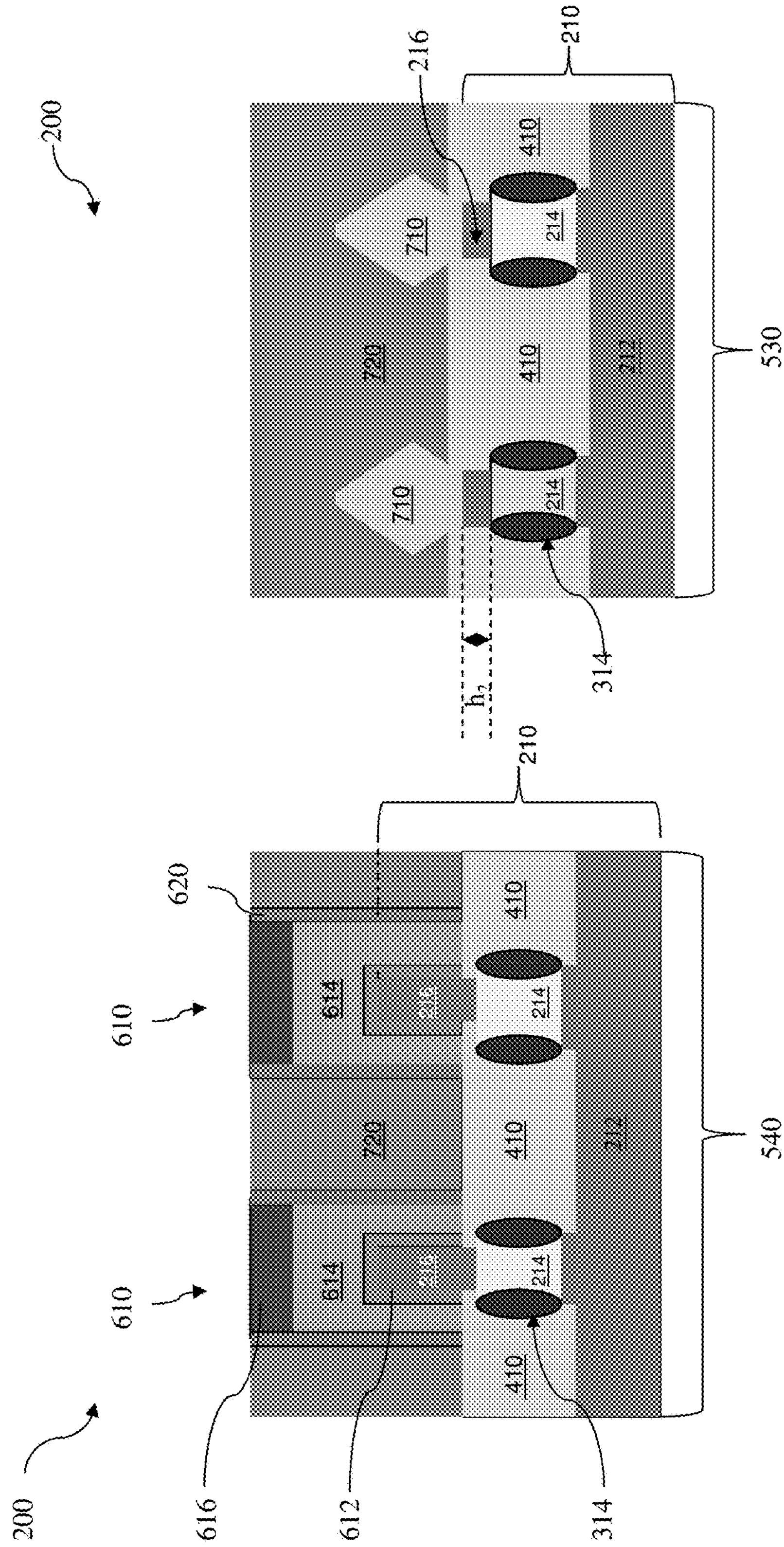


FIG. 8A

FIG. 8B

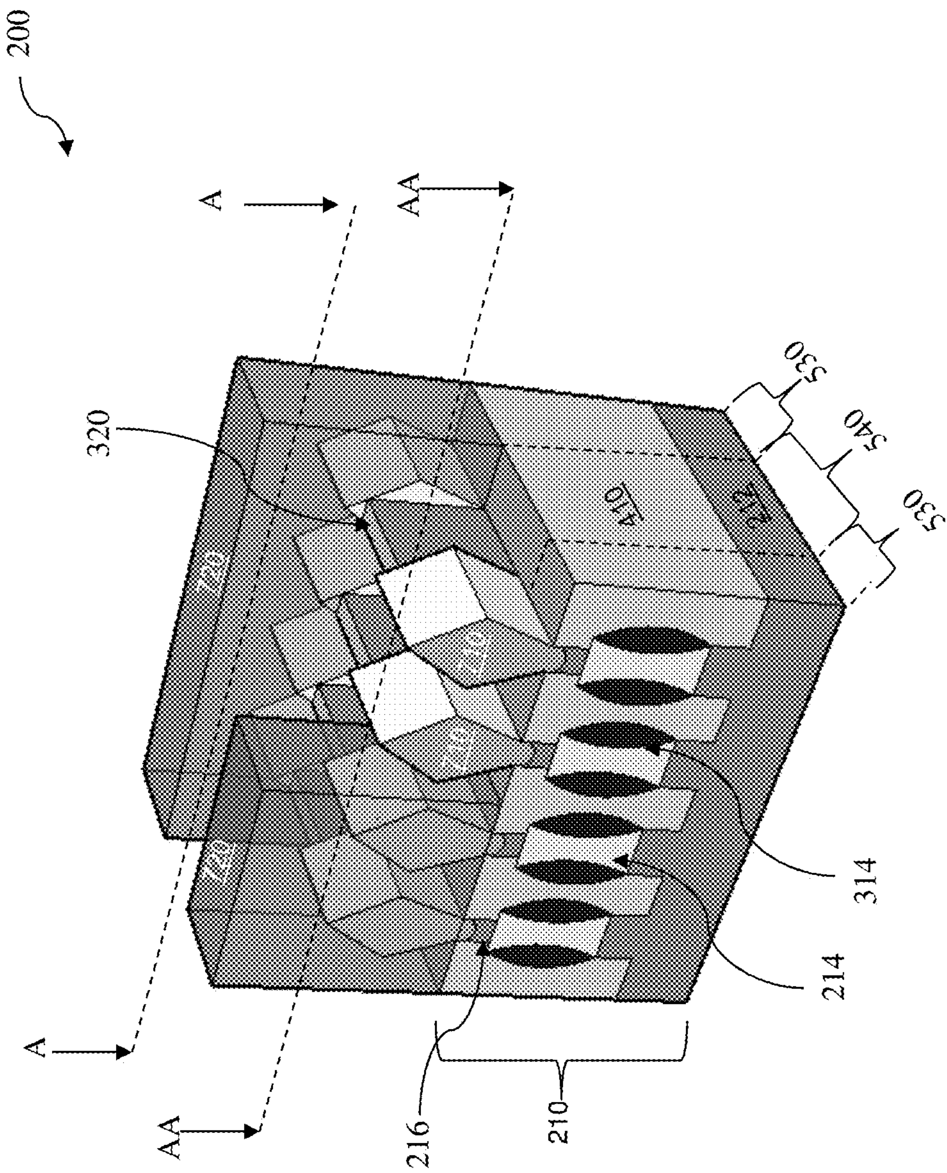


FIG. 9A

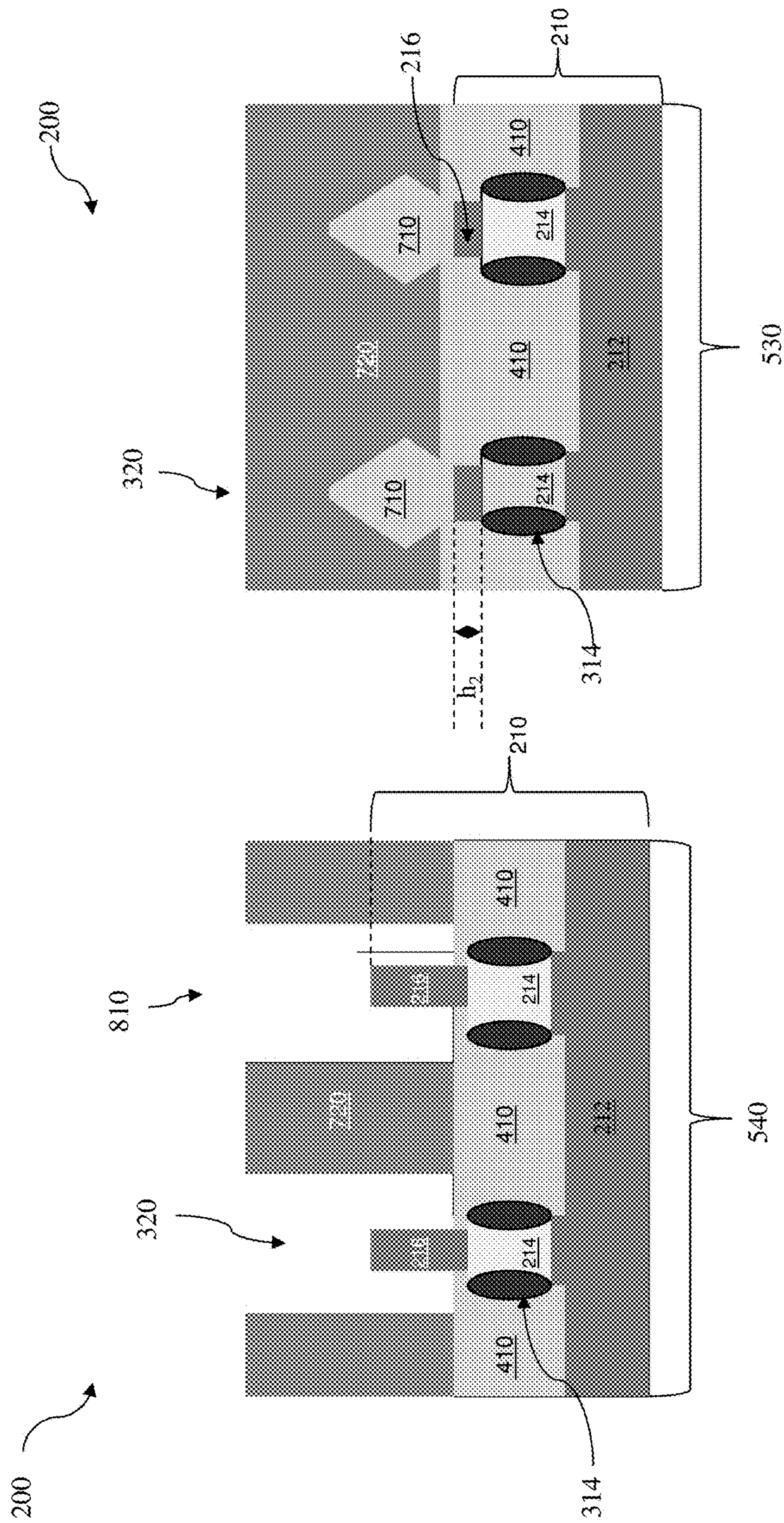


FIG. 9B

FIG. 9C

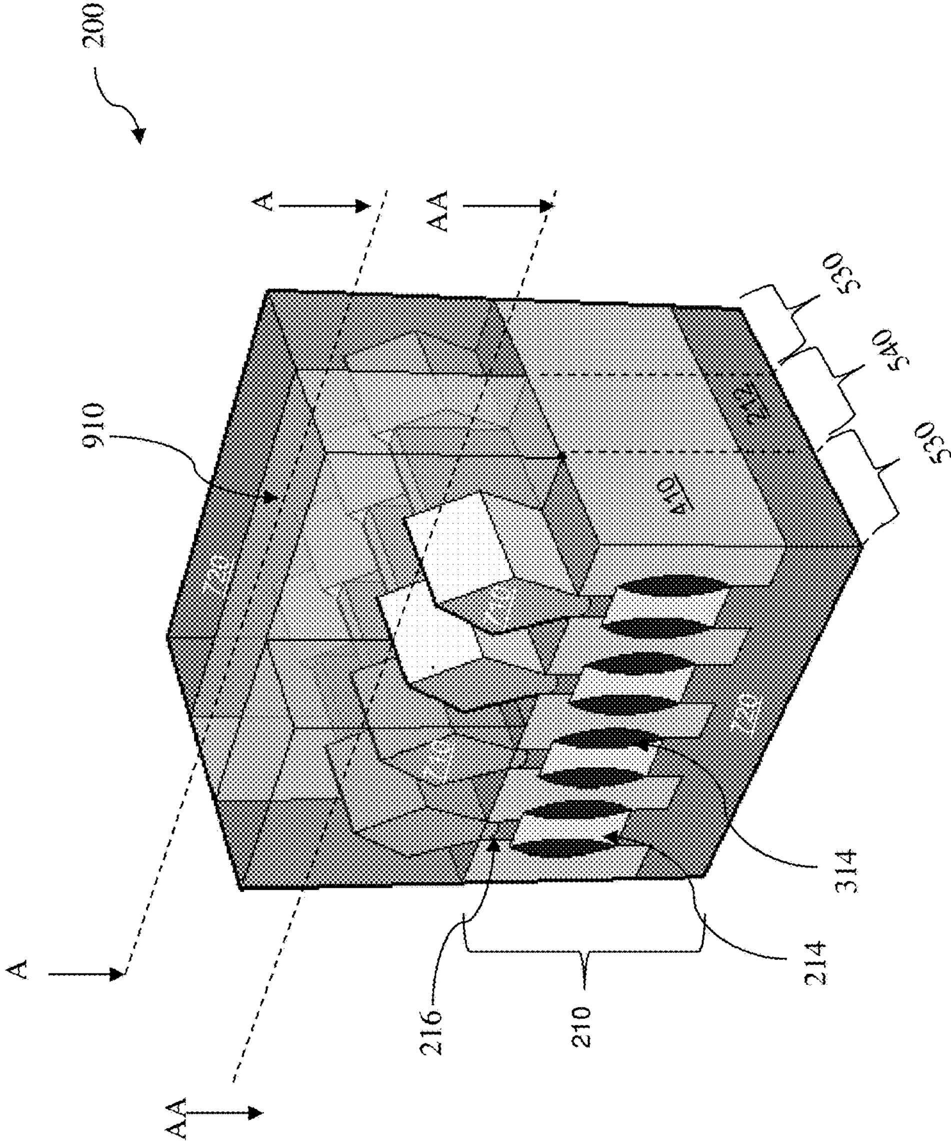


FIG. 10A

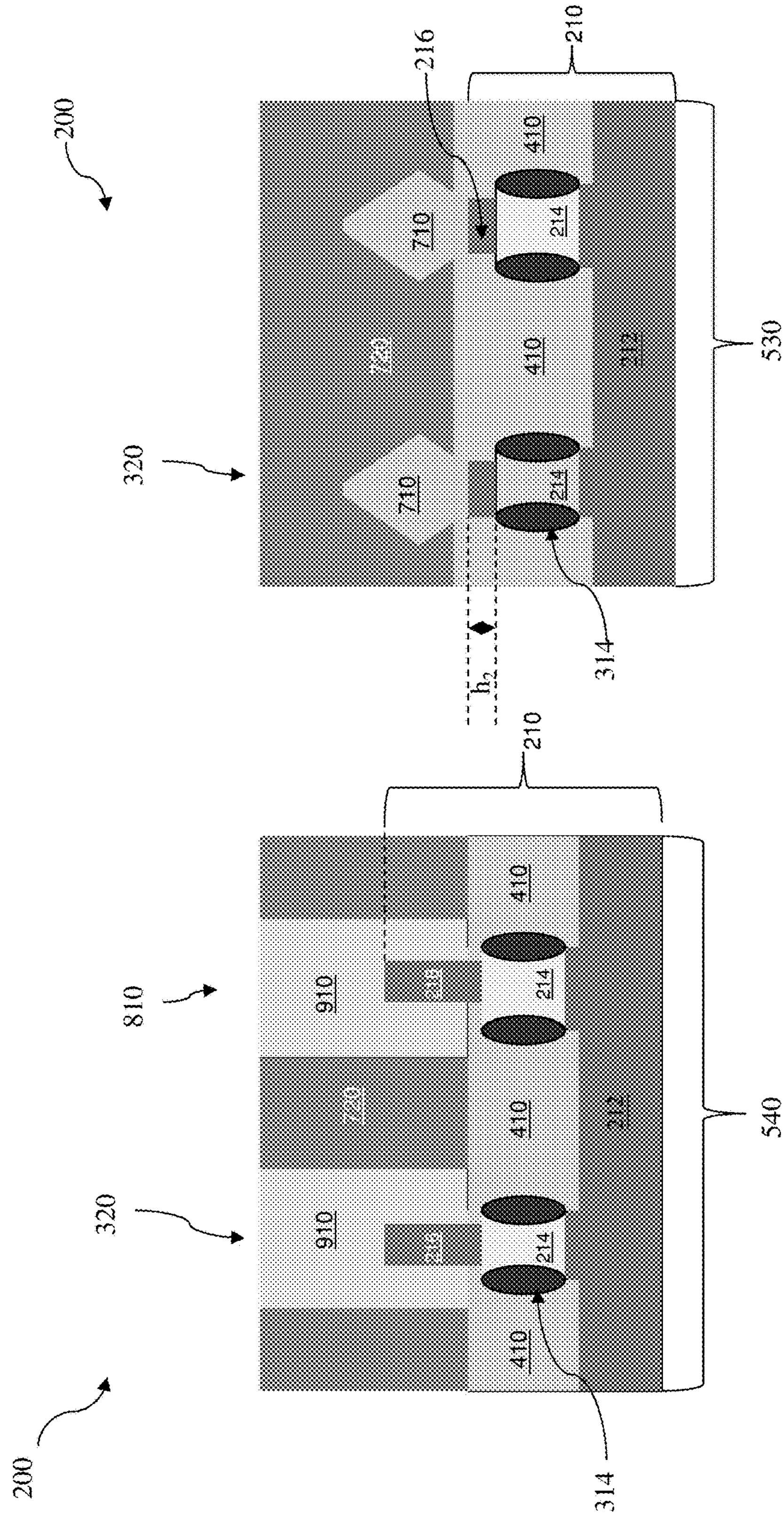


FIG. 10B

FIG. 10C

200

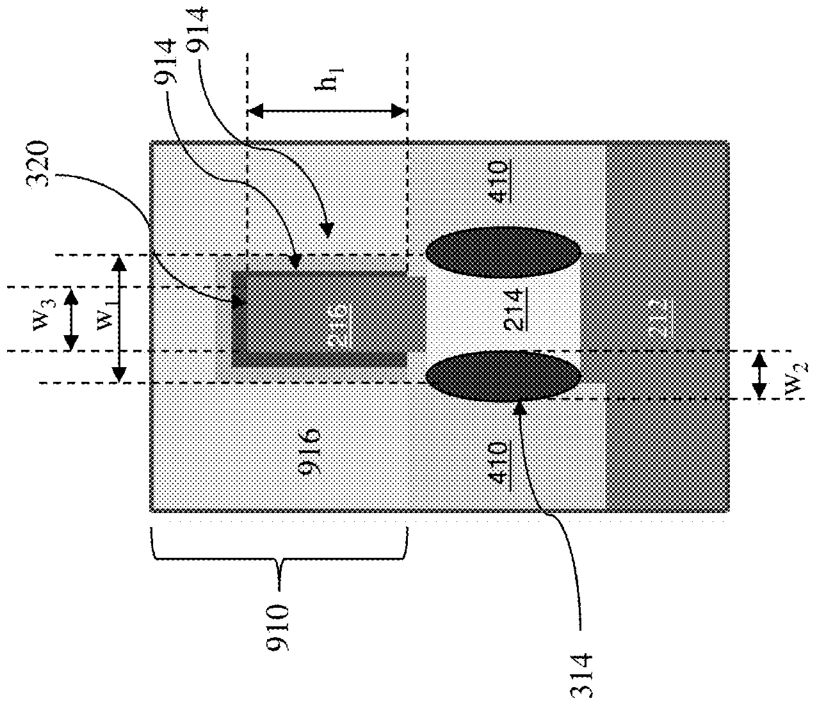


FIG. 11

FINFET DEVICE WITH HIGH-K METAL GATE STACK

[0001] This is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/254,035, filed Apr. 16, 2014, the entire disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0002] This application is related to the following patent applications: U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/740,373, filed Jan. 14, 2013, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/902,322, filed May 24, 2013, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/934,992, filed Jul. 3, 2013, and U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/155,793, filed Jan. 15, 2014, the entire disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0003] The semiconductor integrated circuit (IC) industry has experienced exponential growth. Technological advances in IC materials and design have produced generations of ICs where each generation has smaller and more complex circuits than the previous generation. In the course of IC evolution, functional density (i.e., the number of interconnected devices per chip area) has generally increased while geometry size (i.e., the smallest component (or line) that can be created using a fabrication process) has decreased. This scaling down process generally provides benefits by increasing production efficiency and lowering associated costs.

[0004] Such scaling down has also increased the complexity of processing and manufacturing ICs and, for these advances to be realized, similar developments in IC processing and manufacturing are needed. For example, a three dimensional transistor, such as a fin-like field-effect transistor (FinFET), has been introduced to replace a planar transistor. Although existing FinFET devices and methods of fabricating FinFET devices have been generally adequate for their intended purposes, they have not been entirely satisfactory in all respects.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] Aspects of the present disclosure are best understood from the following detailed description when read in association with the accompanying figures. It is noted that, in accordance with the standard practice in the industry, various features in drawings are not drawn to scale. In fact, the dimensions of illustrated features may be arbitrarily increased or decreased for clarity of discussion.

[0006] FIG. **1** is a flow chart of an example method for fabricating a semiconductor structure in accordance with some embodiments.

[0007] FIG. **2**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0008] FIG. **2**B is cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **2**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0009] FIG. **3**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0010] FIG. **3**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **3**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0011] FIGS. **4** and **5** are cross-sectional views of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **3**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0012] FIG. **6**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0013] FIG. **6**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **6**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0014] FIG. **7**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0015] FIG. **7**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure alone the line A-A in FIG. **7**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0016] FIG. **7**C is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along a line AA-AA in FIG. **7**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0017] FIG. **8**A is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **7**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0018] FIG. **8**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line AA-AA in FIG. **7**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0019] FIG. **9**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0020] FIG. **9**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **9**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0021] FIG. **9**C is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line AA-AA in FIG. **9**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0022] FIG. **10**A is a diagrammatic perspective view of a semiconductor structure undergoing processes in accordance with some embodiments.

[0023] FIG. **10**B is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line A-A in FIG. **10**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0024] FIG. **10**C is a cross-sectional view of an example semiconductor structure along the line AA-AA in FIG. **10**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method of FIG. **1**.

[0025] FIG. **11** is portions of the semiconductor structure of FIG. **10**A in details.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0026] The following disclosure provides many different embodiments, or examples, for implementing different features of the invention. Specific examples of components and arrangements are described below to simplify the present disclosure. These are, of course, merely examples and are not intended to be limiting. For example, the formation of a first feature over or on a second feature in the description that follows may include embodiments in which the first and

second features are formed in direct contact, and may also include embodiments in which additional features may be formed between the first and second features, such that the first and second features may not be in direct contact. In addition, the present disclosure may repeat reference numerals and/or letters in the various examples. This repetition is for the purpose of simplicity and clarity and does not in itself dictate a relationship between the various embodiments and/or configurations discussed.

[0027] The present disclosure is directed to, but not otherwise limited to, a fin-like field-effect transistor (FinFET) device. The FinFET device, for example, may be a complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor (CMOS) device including a P-type metal-oxide-semiconductor (PMOS) FinFET device and an N-type metal-oxide-semiconductor (NMOS) FinFET device. The following disclosure will continue with a FinFET example to illustrate various embodiments of the present invention. It is understood, however, that the application should not be limited to a particular type of device, except as specifically claimed.

[0028] FIG. **1** is a flowchart of a method **100** for fabricating a semiconductor structure **200** (particularly including a FinFET structure having one or more FinFET devices) in accordance with some embodiments. FIGS. **2**A, **3**A and **6**A are side-perspective views of the semiconductor structure **200** manufactured according to the method **100**. FIGS. **2**B, **3**B, **4**, **5** and **6**B are cross-section views of the semiconductor structure **200** along the line A-A of FIGS. **2**A, **3**A and **6**A at fabrication stages constructed according to the method **100**. FIG. **7**A is a side-perspective view of the semiconductor structure **200** manufactured according to the method **100**. FIGS. **7**B and **8**A are cross section views of the semiconductor structure **200** along the line A-A of FIG. **7**A. FIGS. **7**C and **8**B are cross section views of the semiconductor structure **200** along the line AA-AA of FIG. **7**A. FIGS. **9**A and **10**A are side-perspective views of the semiconductor structure **200** manufactured according to the method **100**. FIGS. **9**B and **10**B are cross section views of the semiconductor structure **200** along the line A-A of FIGS. **9**A and **10**A. FIGS. **9**C and **10**C are cross section views of the semiconductor structure **200** along the line AA-AA of FIGS. **9**A and **10**A. FIG. **11** is portions of the semiconductor structure of FIG. **10**A in details. It is understood that additional steps may be implemented before, during, and after the method, and some of the steps described may be replaced or eliminated for other embodiments of the method. The semiconductor structure **200** and the method **100** making the same are collectively described with reference to various figures.

[0029] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **2**A-**2**B, the method **100** begins at step **102** by providing a substrate **210**. The substrate **210** may include a bulk silicon substrate. Alternatively, the substrate **210** may include an elementary semiconductor, such as silicon or germanium in a crystalline structure; a compound semiconductor, such as silicon germanium, silicon carbide, gallium arsenic, gallium phosphide, indium phosphide, indium arsenide, and/or indium antimonide; or combinations thereof.

[0030] In another embodiment, the substrate **210** has a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) structure with an insulator layer in the substrate. An exemplary insulator layer may be a buried oxide layer (BOX). The SOI substrate may be fabricated using separation by implantation of oxygen (SIMOX), wafer bonding, and/or other suitable methods.

[0031] In the present embodiment, the substrate **210** includes a first semiconductor material layer **212**, a second semiconductor material layer **214** disposed over the first semiconductor material layer **212** and a third semiconductor material layer **216** disposed over the second semiconductor material layer **214**. The second and third semiconductor material layers, **214** and **216**, are different from each other. The second semiconductor material layer **214** has a first lattice constant and the third semiconductor material layer **416** has a second lattice constant different from the first lattice constant. In the present embodiment, the second semiconductor material layer **214** includes silicon germanium (SiGe), and both of the first and the third semiconductor material layers, **212** and **216**, include silicon. In various examples, the first, the second and the third semiconductor material layers, **212**, **214** and **216**, may include germanium (Ge), silicon (Si), gallium arsenide (GaAs), aluminum gallium arsenide (AlGaAs), silicon germanium (SiGe), gallium arsenide phosphide (GaAsP), or other suitable materials. In the present embodiment, the second and the third semiconductor material layers, **214** and **216**, are deposited by epitaxial growth, referred to as a blanket channel epi. In various examples, the epitaxial processes include CVD deposition techniques (e.g., vapor-phase epitaxy (VPE) and/or ultra-high vacuum CVD (UHV-CVD)), molecular beam epitaxy, and/or other suitable processes.

[0032] The substrate **210** may include various doped features depending on design requirements as known in the art. The doped features may be doped with p-type dopants, such as boron; n-type dopants, such as phosphorus or arsenic; or combinations thereof. The doped features may be formed by ion implantations and may include well structures, such as a P-type well, an N-type well, or both.

[0033] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **3**A-**3**B, the method **100** proceeds to step **104** by forming first fins **220** and trenches **230** in the substrate **210**. The first fin **220** has a first width w_1. In one embodiment, a patterned hard mask layer **222** is formed over the substrate **210**. The patterned hard mask layer **222** includes silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, or any other suitable dielectric material. The patterned hard mask layer **212** may include a single material layer or multiple material layers. The patterned hard mask layer **222** may be formed by depositing a material layer by thermal oxidation, chemical vapor deposition (CVD), atomic layer deposition (ALD), or any other appropriate method, forming a patterned photoresist (resist) layer by a lithography process, and etching the material layer through the openings of the patterned photoresist layer to form the patterned hard mask layer **222**.

[0034] An exemplary photolithography process may include forming a photoresist layer, exposing the resist by a lithography exposure process, performing a post-exposure bake process, and developing the photoresist layer to form the patterned photoresist layer. The lithography process may be alternatively replaced by other technique, such as e-beam writing, ion-beam writing, maskless patterning or molecular printing.

[0035] The substrate **210** is then etched through the patterned hard mask layer **222** to form the first fins **220** and the trenches **230** in the substrate **210**. In another embodiment, the patterned photoresist layer is directly used the patterned mask layer **222** as an etch mask of the etch process to form the first fins **220** and the trenches **230** in the substrate **210**. The etching process may include a wet etch or a dry etch. In

one embodiment, the wet etching solution includes a tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH), a HF/HNO3/CH3COOH solution, or other suitable solution. The respective etch process may be tuned with various etching parameters, such as etchant used, etching temperature, etching solution concentration, etching pressure, source power, RF bias voltage, RF bias power, etchant flow rate, and/or other suitable parameters. For example, a wet etching solution may include NH_4OH, KOH (potassium hydroxide), HF (hydrofluoric acid), TMAH (tetramethylammonium hydroxide), other suitable wet etching solutions, or combinations thereof. Dry etching processes include a biased plasma etching process that uses a chlorine-based chemistry. Other dry etchant gasses include CF_4, NF_3, SF_6, and He. Dry etching may also be performed anisotropically using such mechanism as DRIE (deep reactive-ion etching).

[0036] In the present embodiment, the etching depth is controlled such that the third and the second semiconductor material layers, **214** and **216** are exposed but the first semiconductor material layer **212** is partially exposed in the trench **230**. Thus the first fin **220** is formed as a stack of layers, **216**, **214** and **212** (in an order from top to bottom).

[0037] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **4**, the method **100** proceeds to step **106** by performing a thermal oxidation process to the semiconductor structure **200**. In one embodiment, the thermal oxidation process is conducted in oxygen ambient. In another embodiment, the thermal oxidation process is conducted in a combination of steam ambient and oxygen ambient. During the thermal oxidation process, at least outer layers of the first, the second and the third semiconductor material layers, **212**, **214** and **216**, in the trench **230** convert to a first, a second and a third semiconductor oxide features **312**, **314** and **316**, respectively. In the present embodiment, the thermal oxidation process is controlled such that the second semiconductor material layer **214** oxidizes much faster than the first and third semiconductor material layers, **212** and **216**. In another words, comparing to the second semiconductor oxide feature **314**, the first and third semiconductor oxide features, **312** and **316**, are quite thin. As an example, the thermal oxidation process to the semiconductor structure **200** is performed in a H_2O reaction gas with a temperature ranging from about 400° C. to about 600° C. and under a pressure ranging from about 1 atm. to about 20 atm. After the oxidation process, a cleaning process is performed to remove the first and the third semiconductor oxide features, **312** and **316**. The cleaning process may be performed using diluted hydrofluoric (DHF) acid.

[0038] In the present example, the second semiconductor oxide features **314** extends in the vertical direction with a horizontal dimension varying from the top surface to the bottom surface of the second semiconductor material layer **214**. In furtherance of the present example, the horizontal dimension of the second semiconductor oxide features **314** reaches its maximum, referred to as a second width w_2, and decreases to close to zero when approaches to the top and bottom surfaces of the second semiconductor oxide features **314**, resulting in an olive shape in a cross-sectional view. By tuning of the thermal oxidation process, selecting a composition and thickness of the second semiconductor material layer **214** and tuning the oxidation temperature, it achieves a target second width w_2 of the second semiconductor oxide feature **314** to apply an adequate stress to the third semiconductor material layer **216** in the first fin **220**, where a gate channel is to be defined underlying a gate region, which will be described later.

[0039] In one embodiment, the second semiconductor material layer **214** includes silicon germanium ($SiGex_1$) and both of the first and the third semiconductor material layers, **212** and **216**, include silicon (Si). The subscript x_1 is a first Ge composition in atomic percent and it may be adjusted to meet a predetermined volume expansion target. In one embodiment, x_1 is selected in a range from about 20% to about 80%. An outer layer of the $SiGex_1$ layer **214** is oxidized by the thermal oxidation process, thereby forming the silicon germanium oxide (SiGeOy) feature **324**, where subscript y is oxygen composition in atomic percent. The second width w_2 of the SiGeOy feature **324** is achieved in a range of about 10%-about 30% of the first width w_1 to apply an adequate stress to the third semiconductor material layer **216** in the first fin **220**. A center portion of the $SiGex_1$ layer **214** changes to a second Ge composition x_2, which is much higher than x_1. A size and shape of the center portion of $SiGex_2$ layer **214** vary with process conditions, such as thermal oxidation temperature and time. Also the second Ge composition x_2 in the center portion is higher than other portions, such as a top portion, a bottom portion, a left side portion and a right side portion. As an example, the composition x_2 of Ge in the center portion is about 5% to about 30% higher than other portions.

[0040] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **5**, the method **100** proceeds to step **108** by trimming the third semiconductor material layer **126** to a smaller width, a third width w_3. In the present embodiment, the third width w_3 is substantially smaller than the first width w_1. With an adequate difference between the third width w_3 and the first width w_1, it will enhance a stress applying to the third semiconductor material layer **216** in the first fin **220**, where a transistor channel is to be defined underlying a gate region, which will be described later. As an example, the third width w_3 is less than about 75% of the first width w_1. In one embodiment, the hard mask layer **222** and the third semiconductor oxide layer **316** is removed from the first fin **220** first and then the third semiconductor material layer **216** is trimmed. The third semiconductor material layer **216** may be selectively trimmed by a wet etch, a dry etch, or a combination thereof. In one embodiment, the wet etching solution includes a tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH), a HF/HNO3/CH3COOH solution, or other suitable solution. After trimming the third semiconductor material layer **126** to the third width w_3, the first fin **220** converts to a second fin **320**. The second fin **320** has the third semiconductor material layer **216** as its upper portion and the second semiconductor material layer **214**, having a second semiconductor oxide layer **314** as its outlier, as its lower portion. In one embodiment, the second fin **320** has Si layer **216** as the upper portion and SiGe **214**, having the SiGeO as its outer layer, as its lower portion.

[0041] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **6A-6B**, the method **100** proceeds to step **110** by forming one or more isolation features **410** on the substrate **210**, including in the trench **230**. In the present embodiment, the isolation features **410** are shallow trench isolation (STI) features. The isolation features **410** may include silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride, other suitable materials, or combinations thereof. The STI features **410** are formed by any suitable procedure including deposition, photolithography, and/or

etching processes. In one embodiment, the STI features **410** are formed by filling in the trenches **230** with one or more dielectric material (such as silicon oxide), performing a chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) process to remove excessive dielectric material and planarize the top surface and followed by selectively recessing the dielectric material to expose a portion of the upper portion of the second fin **320**, a portion the third semiconductor material layer **216**. The recessing process is controlled such that the third semiconductor material layer **216** is exposed with a first height h_1, which is selected to be adequate for a transistor channel to be defined underlying a gate region, which will be described later. In one embodiment, the first height h_1 is in a range of 50%-90% of a whole thickness of the third semiconductor material layer **216**. As an example, the first height h_1 is in a range of 20 nm-40 nm.

[0042] In some embodiments, the second **320** include source/drain regions **530** and a gate region **540**. In furtherance of the embodiment, one of the source/drain regions **530** is a source region, and another of the source/drain regions **530** is a drain region. The source/drain regions **530** are separated by the gate region **540**. Therefore, during previous steps (step **106** and step **108**), a proper strain is induced to the second fin **320**, including the gate region **540** and it will enhance mobility in a channel region in the gate region **540** of the semiconductor structure **200**.

[0043] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **7A-7C**, the method **100** proceeds to step **112** by forming a gate stack **610** and sidewall spacers **620** on sidewalls of the gate stack **610**, in the gate region **540**. In one embodiment using a gate-last process, the gate stack **610** is a dummy gate and will be replaced by the final gate stack at a subsequent stage. Particularly, the dummy gate stack **610** is to be replaced later by a high-k dielectric layer (HK) and metal gate electrode (MG) after high thermal temperature processes, such as thermal annealing for source/drain activation during the sources/drains formation. The dummy gate stack **610** is formed on the substrate **210** and is partially disposed over the gate region **540** in the second fin **320**. In one embodiment, the dummy gate stack **610** includes a dielectric layer **612**, an electrode layer **614** and a gate hard mask **616**. The dummy gate stack **610** is formed by a suitable procedure including deposition and patterning. The patterning process further includes lithography and etching. In various examples, the deposition includes CVD, physical vapor deposition (PVD), ALD, thermal oxidation, other suitable techniques, or a combination thereof. The lithography process includes photoresist (or resist) coating (e.g., spin-on coating), soft baking, mask aligning, exposure, post-exposure baking, developing the photoresist, rinsing, drying (e.g., hard baking), other suitable processes, and/or combinations thereof. The etching process includes dry etching, wet etching, and/or other etching methods (e.g., reactive ion etching).

[0044] The dielectric layer **612** includes silicon oxide. Alternatively or additionally, the dielectric layer **612** may include silicon nitride, a high-k dielectric material or other suitable material. The electrode layer **614** may include polycrystalline silicon (polysilicon). The third hard mask **616** includes a suitable dielectric material, such as silicon nitride, silicon oxynitride or silicon carbide.

[0045] The sidewall spacers **620** may include a dielectric material such as silicon oxide, silicon nitride, silicon carbide, silicon oxynitride, or combinations thereof. The sidewall spacers **620** may include a multiple layers. Typical formation methods for the sidewall spacers **620** include depositing a dielectric material over the gate stack **610** and then anisotropically etching back the dielectric material. The etching back process may include a multiple-step etching to gain etch selectivity, flexibility and desired overetch control.

[0046] Referring again to FIGS. **1** and **7A-7C**, the method **100** proceeds to step **114** by forming source/drain features **710** in the source/drain regions **530**. The source/drain features **710** may be formed by recessing a portion of the upper portion of the second fin **320**, in the source/drain regions **530**. In present embodiment, the recessing process is controlled to leave the remaining third semiconductor material layer **216** have a second height h_2 for gaining process integration flexibility. The third semiconductor material layer **216** is recessed to form source/drain recessing trenches and epitaxially growing a fourth semiconductor material layer in the sources/drains recessing trenches. The fourth semiconductor material layer includes Ge, Si, GaAs, AlGaAs, SiGe, GaAsP, or other suitable material. The source/drain features **710** may be formed by one or more epitaxy or epitaxial (epi) processes. The source/drain features **710** may be in-situ doped during the epi process. For example, the epitaxially grown SiGe source/drain features **710** may be doped with boron; and the epitaxially grown Si source/drain features **710** may be doped with carbon to form Si:C source/drain features, phosphorous to form Si:P source/drain features, or both carbon and phosphorous to form SiCP source/drain features. In one embodiment, the source/drain features **710** are not in-situ doped, an implantation process (i.e., a junction implant process) is performed to dope the source/drain features **710**.

[0047] The steps **112** and **114** may be implemented collectively in one procedure to form dummy gate stacks **610** and the source/drain features **710**. One embodiment of the procedure is described below. The dummy gate stacks **610** are first formed by deposition and patterning. For example, the dielectric layer **612** includes silicon oxide and is formed by a suitable technique, such as in-situ steam growth (ISSG). The electrode layer **614** includes polysilicon and is deposited by a suitable technique, such as CVD. A hard mask layer **616** includes a suitable dielectric material (such as silicon nitride) and is deposited by a suitable technique, such as CVD. Then the hard mask layer **616** is patterned by a lithography process and an etch process, thereby forming various openings in the hard mask layer, exposing the underlying dummy gate materials within the openings. Another etch process is applied to the dummy gate materials through the openings of the hard mask layer using the hard mask as an etch mask, thereby forming the gate stacks **610**. Thereafter, an etch process is applied to recess a portion of the second fin **420**, in the source/drain regions **530** to form source/drain recessing trenches and epitaxially growing a fourth semiconductor material layer in the sources/drains recessing trenches. A first ion implantation process with a first doping dose is applied to the semiconductor structure **200**, thereby forming light doped drain (LDD) features. Alternatively, LDD features are formed by in-situ doping. Spacers **620** are formed thereafter by deposition and anisotropic etch. Afterward, a second ion implantation process with a second doping dose greater than the first doping dose is applied to the semiconductor structure **200**, thereby forming heavily doped source and drain features that are offset from the LDD features by the spacers **620**. The LDD

features and heavily doped source and drain features collectively constitute the source and drain features **710**.

[0048] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **8**A-**8**B, the method **100** proceeds to step **116** by forming an interlayer dielectric (ILD) layer **720** on the substrate **210** between the gaps of the dummy gate stacks **610**. The ILD layer **720** includes silicon oxide, silicon oxynitride, low k dielectric material or other suitable dielectric materials. The ILD layer **720** may include a single layer or alternative multiple layers. The ILD layer **720** is formed by a suitable technique, such as CVD, ALD and spin-on (SOG). A chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) process may be performed thereafter to remove excessive ILD layer **720** and planarize the top surface of the semiconductor structure **200**.

[0049] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **9**A-**9**C, the method **100** proceeds to step **118** by removing the dummy gate stacks **610** to form one or more gate trench **810**. The upper portion of the second fin **320** and the isolation features **410** in the gate trench **810** remain. The dummy gate stacks **610** are removed by an etch process (such as selective wet etch or selective dry etch) designed to have an adequate etch selectivity with respect to the third semiconductor material layer **216**. The etch process may include one or more etch steps with respective etchants. The gate hard mask layer **616** and the spacers **620** are removed as well. Alternatively, the dummy gate stack **610** may be removed by a series of processes including photolithography patterning and etching process.

[0050] Referring to FIGS. **1** and **10**A-**10**C, the method **100** proceeds to step **120** by forming metal gate stacks (MG) **910** over the substrate **210**, including wrapping over a portion of the second fins **320** in the gate region **540**. The metal gate stacks **910** include gate dielectric layer and gate electrode on the gate dielectric. In one embodiment, the gate dielectric layer includes a dielectric material layer having a high dielectric constant (HK dielectric layer-greater than that of the thermal silicon oxide in the present embodiment) and the gate electrode includes metal, metal alloy or metal silicide. The formation of the metal gate stacks **910** includes depositions to form various gate materials and a CMP process to remove the excessive gate materials and planarize the top surface of the semiconductor structure **200**.

[0051] The semiconductor structure **200** is further illustrated in FIG. **11**, in a sectional fragmental view. Particularly, a portion of the semiconductor structure **200** is zoomed in for clarity. In one embodiment, the gate dielectric layer includes an interfacial layer (IL) **912** is deposited by a suitable method, such as atomic layer deposition (ALD), CVD, thermal oxidation or ozone oxidation. The IL **912** includes oxide, HfSiO and oxynitride. A HK dielectric layer **914** is deposited on the IL **912** by a suitable technique, such as ALD, CVD, metal-organic CVD (MOCVD), physical vapor deposition (PVD), other suitable technique, or a combination thereof. The HK dielectric layer **914** may include LaO, AlO, ZrO, TiO, Ta2O5, Y2O3, SrTiO3 (STO), BaTiO3 (BTO), BaZrO, HfZrO, HfLaO, HfSiO, LaSiO, AlSiO, HfTaO, HfTiO, (Ba,Sr)TiO3 (BST), Al2O3, Si3N4, oxynitrides (SiON), or other suitable materials.

[0052] The gate dielectric layers, **912** and **914**, wrap over the upper portion of the second fins **320** in the gate region **540**, where a gate channel will be formed during operating the semiconductor structure **200**. Therefore the strain induced by the lower portion of the second fin **320**, with the outer layer of the second semiconductor oxide layer **314**, and enhanced by the width difference between the first width w_1 and the third width w_3, increases mobility in the channel region.

[0053] A metal gate (MG) electrode **916** may include a single layer or alternatively a multi-layer structure, such as various combinations of a metal layer with a work function to enhance the device performance (work function metal layer), liner layer, wetting layer, adhesion layer and a conductive layer of metal, metal alloy or metal silicide). The MG electrode **916** may include Ti, Ag, Al, TiAlN, TaC, TaCN, TaSiN, Mn, Zr, TiN, TaN, Ru, Mo, Al, WN, Cu, W, any suitable materials or a combination thereof. The MG electrode **916** may be formed by ALD, PVD, CVD, or other suitable process. The MG electrode **916** may be formed separately for the N-FET and P-FFET with different metal layers. A CMP process may be performed to remove excessive MG electrode **916**.

[0054] The semiconductor structure **200** may undergo further CMOS or MOS technology processing to form various features and regions known in the art. For example, subsequent processing may form various contacts/vias/lines and multilayers interconnect features (e.g., metal layers and interlayer dielectrics) on the substrate **210**, configured to connect the various features to form a functional circuit that includes one or more FinFET field-effect transistors. In furtherance of the example, a multilayer interconnection includes vertical interconnects, such as vias or contacts, and horizontal interconnects, such as metal lines. The various interconnection features may implement various conductive materials including copper, tungsten, and/or silicide. In one example, a damascene and/or dual damascene process is used to form a copper related multilayer interconnection structure.

[0055] Additional operations may be implemented before, during, and after the method **100**, and some operations described above may be replaced or eliminated for other embodiments of the method.

[0056] Based on the above, the present disclosure offers a semiconductor device with a strain gate channel using techniques of volume expansion and trimming an upper portion to induce an efficient strain to the gate channel to improve device performance.

[0057] Thus, the present disclosure provides one embodiment of a semiconductor structure. The semiconductor structure includes a substrate, a first fin structure over the substrate. The first fin structure includes a first semiconductor material layer, having a semiconductor oxide layer as its outer layer, as a lower portion of the first fin structure. The first semiconductor has a first width and the semiconductor oxide layer has a second width. The first fin structure also includes a second semiconductor material layer as an upper portion of the first fin structure. The second semiconductor material layer has a third width, which is substantially smaller than the first width. The semiconductor structure also includes a gate region formed over a portion of the first fin and a high-k (HK)/metal gate (MG) stack on the substrate including wrapping over a portion of the first fin structure in the gate region.

[0058] The present disclosure also provides another embodiment of a semiconductor structure. The semiconductor structure includes a substrate, a gate region in the substrate, source and drain (S/D) regions separated by the gate region. The semiconductor structure also includes a first fin structure in a gate region. The first fin structure includes

a silicon germanium (SiGex) layer as a lower portion, having a silicon germanium oxide (SiGeOy) layer as its outer layer, where x is Ge composition in atomic percent and y is oxygen composition in atomic percent. The SiGex layer has a first width and the SiGeOy has a second width. The first fin also includes a Si layer as an upper portion, wherein the Si layer has a third width, which is smaller than the first width. The semiconductor structure also includes a second fin structure in S/D regions. The second fin structure include a silicon germanium (SiGex) layer as a lower portion, having a silicon germanium oxide (SiGeOy) layer as its outer layer and the Si layer as an upper portion. The semiconductor structure also includes source/drain features on top of the upper portion of the second fin structure in the source and drain regions and a high-k/metal gate (HKMG) over the substrate including wrapping over a portion of the first fin structure.

[0059] The present disclosure also includes an embodiment of a method fabricating a semiconductor structure. The method includes providing a substrate, epitaxially growing a first semiconductor material layer over the substrate and epitaxially growing a second semiconductor material layer on top of the first semiconductor material layer. The method also includes etching the second and the first semiconductor material layers to form a first fin and a trench in the substrate. The first fin has a first width. The method also includes applying a thermal oxidation process to second semiconductor material layers of the first fin in the trench to convert an outer portion of the exposed first semiconductor to a semiconductor oxide. The semiconductor has a second width. The method also includes trimming the second semiconductor material layer in the first fin to a third width to form a second fin. The second fin has a gate region, source and drain regions separated by the gate region. The method also includes forming an isolation feature in the trench, forming a dummy gate stack over the substrate, including wrapping over the second fin in the gate region, recessing a portion of the second semiconductor material layer in the source and drain region of the second fins, epitaxially growing a third semiconductor material on the recessed second fins to form a source/drain feature, removing the dummy gate stack to form a gate trench and forming a high-k/metal gate (HK/MG) stack in the gate trench, including wrapping over a portion of the second fin.

[0060] The foregoing outlines features of several embodiments so that those skilled in the art may better understand the aspects of the present disclosure. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that they may readily use the present disclosure as a basis for designing or modifying other processes and structures for carrying out the same purposes and/or achieving the same advantages of the embodiments introduced herein. Those skilled in the art should also realize that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure, and that they may make various changes, substitutions, and alterations herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present disclosure.

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

forming a fin having a first width over a substrate, wherein the fin includes a first semiconductor material, a second semiconductor material disposed over the first semiconductor material, and a third semiconductor material disposed over the second semiconductor material;

oxidizing a portion of the second semiconductor material, thereby forming a second semiconductor oxide material;

trimming the third semiconductor material to reduce a width of the third semiconductor material from the first width to a second width;

forming an isolation feature adjacent to the fin; and

forming a gate structure over a portion of the fin, such that the gate structure is disposed between source/drain regions of the fin.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the oxidizing the portion of the second semiconductor material further includes oxidizing a portion of the third semiconductor material and a portion of the first semiconductor material, thereby forming a third semiconductor oxide material and a first semiconductor oxide material.

3. The method of claim **2**, further comprising removing the third semiconductor oxide material and the first semiconductor oxide material.

4. The method of claim **1**, wherein the oxidizing the portion of the second semiconductor material includes tuning a thermal oxidation process to achieve a desired maximum width of the second semiconductor oxide material.

5. The method of claim **1**, wherein the second width is less than or equal to about 75% of the first width.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the forming the isolation feature includes:

depositing a dielectric material in a trench disposed adjacent to the fin; and

recessing the dielectric material, such that a portion of the third semiconductor material extends from a top surface of the isolation feature.

7. The method of claim **6**, wherein a height of the portion of the third semiconductor material extending from the top surface of the isolation feature is equal to about 50% to about 90% of a total height of the third semiconductor material.

8. The method of claim **6**, wherein the recessed dielectric material covers the second semiconductor oxide material.

9. A method comprising:

forming a fin over a substrate, wherein the forming the fin includes:

etching the substrate to form a semiconductor layer that extends from the substrate, wherein the semiconductor layer includes a first silicon portion, a silicon germanium portion disposed over the first silicon portion, and a second silicon portion disposed over the silicon germanium portion,

converting an outer portion of the silicon germanium portion to a silicon germanium oxide portion, and

reducing a width of the second silicon portion, such that the width of the second silicon portion is less than a width of the first silicon portion and a width of the silicon germanium portion.

10. The method of claim **9**, wherein the forming the fin further includes converting an outer portion of the first silicon portion to a first silicon oxide portion and an outer portion of the second silicon portion to a second silicon oxide portion.

11. The method of claim **10**, wherein the forming the fin further includes performing a cleaning process to remove the first silicon oxide portion and the second silicon oxide portion before reducing the width of the second silicon portion.

12. The method of claim **10**, wherein a width of the first silicon oxide portion and a width of the second silicon oxide portion are each less than a width of the silicon germanium oxide portion.

13. The method of claim **9**, wherein the etching the substrate to form the semiconductor layer includes:

forming a patterned hard mask layer over the substrate; and

removing portions of the substrate exposed by the patterned hard mask layer.

14. The method of claim **13**, further comprising removing the patterned hard mask layer before reducing the width of the second silicon portion.

15. The method of claim **9**, further comprising forming an isolation feature that covers the first silicon portion, the silicon germanium oxide portion, the silicon germanium portion, and a portion of the second silicon portion.

16. A method comprising:

etching a substrate to form trenches and fins having a first width, wherein the fins include a first semiconductor layer, a second semiconductor layer disposed over the first semiconductor layer, and a third semiconductor layer disposed over the second semiconductor layer;

performing a thermal oxidation process to form a semiconductor oxide feature from the second semiconductor layer, wherein the semiconductor oxide feature has a second width that is less than the first width;

performing a trimming process to modify the third semiconductor layer to have a third width that is less than the first width;

partially filling the trenches with a dielectric material, thereby forming isolation features that separate the fins;

forming source/drain features in source/drain regions of the fins; and

performing a gate replacement process to form a gate structure that spans channel regions of the fins, wherein the channel regions are disposed between the source/drain regions of the fins.

17. The method of claim **16**, wherein the thermal oxidation process is tuned to achieve the second width equal to about 10% to about 30% of the first width.

18. The method of claim **16**, wherein the trimming process is tuned to achieve the third width less than or equal to about 75% of the first width.

19. The method of claim **16**, wherein the forming the source/drain features in the source/drain regions of the fins includes:

recessing the third semiconductor layer in the source/drain regions of the fins; and

epitaxially growing a fourth semiconductor layer from the recessed third semiconductor layer.

20. The method of claim **16**, wherein the performing the gate replacement process to form the gate structure includes:

forming a dummy gate stack that spans the channel regions of the fins;

forming spacers along sidewalls of the dummy gate stack; and

replacing the dummy gate stack with a metal gate stack.

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