

Sensitivity of Multigate MOSFETs to Process Variations—An Assessment Based on Analytical Solutions of 3-D Poisson's Equation

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Abstract—This paper investigates the sensitivity of multigate MOSFETs to process variations using analytical solutions of 3-D Poisson's equation verified with device simulation. FinFET and Tri-gate with both heavily doped and lightly doped channels have been examined regarding their immunity to process-induced variations and dopant number fluctuation. Our study indicates that lightly doped FinFET has the smallest threshold voltage (V_{th}) dispersion caused by process variations and dopant number fluctuation. For heavily doped devices, dopant number fluctuation may become the dominant factor in the determination of overall V_{th} variation. The V_{th} dispersion of Tri-gate may therefore be smaller than that of FinFET because of its better immunity to dopant number fluctuation.

Index Terms—3-D Poisson's equation, FinFET, multigate MOSFETs, Tri-gate, variation.

I. INTRODUCTION

DUe to its better gate control, multigate structure is an important candidate for CMOS scaling [1]–[3]. Dependent on the aspect ratio (AR), FinFET (AR > 1) and Tri-gate (AR = 1) are two main options in the multigate device design. Whether there is an optimum choice between the two options merits investigation.

For nano-CMOS device design, the challenge lies in dispersions [4]. They are mainly due to process variations and dopant fluctuation that result in the dispersion of threshold voltage, and are closely related to the device electrostatics [4]. In other words, electrostatics and variability are crucial in assessing the feasibility of various multigate options. In this paper, we tackle these issues using theoretical calculations. We conduct a comprehensive comparison of sensitivity to process variations between FinFET and Tri-gate based on their electrostatics using analytical solutions of 3-D Poisson's equation.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section II, we derive an analytical potential distribution for a multigate device structure. The threshold voltage (V_{th}) can then be determined based on the potential solution. In Section III, we investigate the V_{th}

sensitivity to process variations for FinFET and Tri-gate based on our theoretical calculation. The conclusions will be drawn in Section IV.

II. POTENTIAL SOLUTION AND V_{th} CALCULATION

An analytical potential solution is crucial to the derivation of device subthreshold characteristics such as V_{th} . Fig. 1(a) shows the schematic sketch of a multigate SOI structure. The Si-fin body covered by gate insulator is a cuboid with six faces, and each face is connected to a voltage bias. In the subthreshold regime, the Si-fin body is fully depleted with negligible mobile carriers. Therefore, the potential distribution $\phi(x, y, z)$ satisfies the Poisson's equation

$$\frac{\partial^2 \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial z^2} = -\frac{qN_a}{\epsilon_{si}} \quad (1)$$

where N_a is the doping concentration of the Si-fin. The required boundary conditions can be described as

$$\phi(W_{fin}, y, z) + t_{i,f} \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} \frac{\partial \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial x} \Big|_{x=W_{fin}} = V_{fg} - V_{fb} \quad (2a)$$

$$\phi(0, y, z) - t_{i,b} \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} \frac{\partial \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial x} \Big|_{x=0} = V_{bg} - V_{fb} \quad (2b)$$

$$\phi(x, y, H_{fin}) + t_{i,t} \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} \frac{\partial \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial z} \Big|_{z=H_{fin}} = V_{tg} - V_{fb} \quad (2c)$$

$$\phi(x, y, 0) - t_{ox,u} \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_{ox}} \frac{\partial \phi(x, y, z)}{\partial z} \Big|_{z=0} = V_{ug} - V_{fb} \quad (2d)$$

$$\phi(x, 0, z) = -\phi_{ms} \quad (2e)$$

$$\phi(x, L_{eff}, z) = -\phi_{ms} + V_{DS} \quad (2f)$$

where ϵ_{si} , ϵ_i and ϵ_{ox} are dielectric constants of the Si-fin, gate dielectric and oxide, respectively. W_{fin} , H_{fin} , and L_{eff} are defined as fin width, fin height, and channel length, respectively. $t_{i,t}$, $t_{i,f}$, $t_{i,b}$, and $t_{ox,u}$ are thicknesses of top gate dielectric, front gate dielectric, back gate dielectric, and buried oxide, respectively. V_{fg} , V_{bg} , V_{tg} , V_{ug} , and V_{DS} are the voltage biases of front gate, back gate, top gate, buried gate, and drain terminal, respectively. V_{fb} is the flat-band voltage for these gate terminals. ϕ_{ms} is the built-in potential of the source/drain to the channel.

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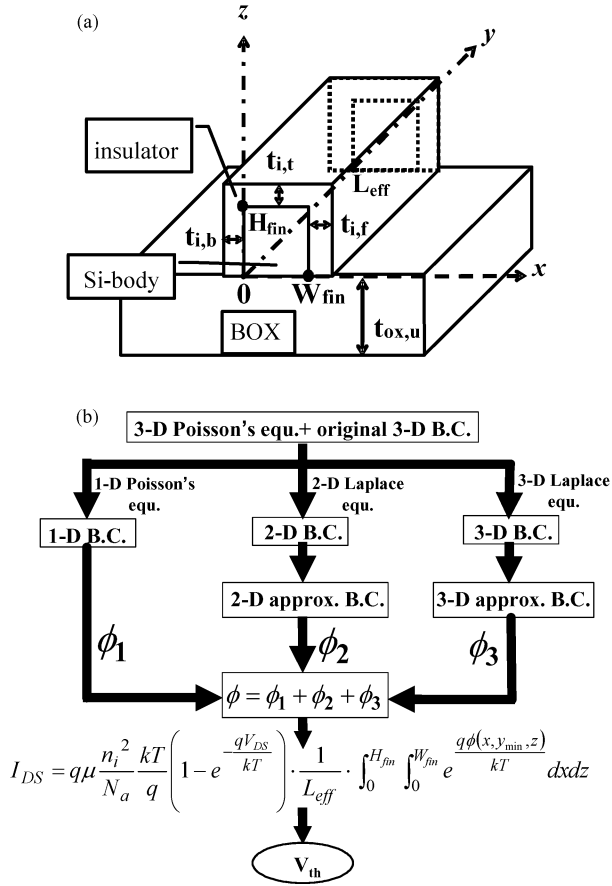


Fig. 1. (a) Schematic sketch of the multigate device structure investigated in this study. (b) Flow chart demonstrating the V_{th} calculation of multigate devices. Approximation was made to simplify the 2-D and 3-D boundary conditions (B.C.) to obtain a simplified channel potential solution form.

Fig. 1(b) shows the flow chart of the V_{th} calculation by solving the 3-D boundary value problem. This 3-D boundary value problem can be divided into three sub-problems, including 1-D Poisson's equation, 2-D, and 3-D Laplace equation. Using the superposition principle, the complete potential solution is $\phi = \phi_1 + \phi_2 + \phi_3$, where ϕ_1 , ϕ_2 , and ϕ_3 are solutions of the 1-D, 2-D, and 3-D sub-problems, respectively. The 1-D solution ϕ_1 can be expressed as

$$\phi_1(z) = -\frac{qN_a}{2\epsilon_{si}}z^2 + az + b \quad (3a)$$

$$a = \frac{(V_{tg} - V_{fb}) - (V_{ug} - V_{fb}) + (qN_a / (2\epsilon_{si})) (H_{fin}^2 + 2(\epsilon_{si} / \epsilon_i) t_{i,t} H_{fin})}{H_{fin} + (\epsilon_{si} / \epsilon_i) t_{i,t} + (\epsilon_{si} / \epsilon_{ox}) t_{ox,u}} \quad (3b)$$

$$b = \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_{ox}} t_{ox,u} a + (V_{ug} - V_{fb}) \quad (3c)$$

In solving the 2-D and 3-D sub-problems, approximation was made to avoid the numerical iterations required in finding the eigenvalues [5] and to simplify the solution form. The boundary conditions [(2a)–(2d)] are simplified by converting the gate dielectric thickness to $(\epsilon_{si} / \epsilon_i)$ times and replacing the gate dielectric region with an equivalent Si region [6]. The electric field discontinuity across the gate dielectric and Si-fin interface can

thus be eliminated. In other words, the Si-fin body and the gate dielectric region are treated as a homogeneous silicon cuboid with an effective width W_{eff} and an effective height H_{eff} given by (4) and (5), respectively.

$$W_{eff} = W_{fin} + \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} (t_{i,f} + t_{i,b}) \quad (4)$$

$$H_{eff} = H_{fin} + \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} t_{i,t} + t_{ox,u} \quad (5)$$

The 2-D solution ϕ_2 can be obtained using the method of separation of variables

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_2(x, z) = & \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \left[c_i \sinh \left(\frac{i\pi}{H_{eff}} \left(x + \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} t_{i,b} \right) \right) \right. \\ & \left. + c'_i \sinh \left(\frac{i\pi}{H_{eff}} \left(W_{eff} - \left(x + \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} t_{i,b} \right) \right) \right) \right] \\ & \times \sin \left(\frac{i\pi}{H_{eff}} (z + t_{ox,u}) \right) \end{aligned} \quad (6a)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} c_i = & \frac{1}{\sinh(i\pi(W_{eff}/H_{eff}))} \left[2(V_{fg} - V_{fb} - b) \frac{1 - (-1)^i}{i\pi} \right. \\ & + 2a \left(\frac{t_{ox,u}}{i\pi} + \frac{(H_{eff} - t_{ox,u})(-1)^i}{i\pi} \right) \\ & + \frac{qN_a}{\epsilon_{si}} \left(\frac{(t_{ox,u})^2}{i\pi} - \frac{(H_{eff} - t_{ox,u})^2(-1)^i}{i\pi} \right. \\ & \left. \left. + 2H_{eff}^2 \frac{(-1)^i - 1}{(i\pi)^3} \right) \right] \end{aligned} \quad (6b)$$

$$\begin{aligned} c'_i = & \frac{1}{\sinh(i\pi(W_{eff}/H_{eff}))} \left[2(V_{bg} - V_{fb} - b) \frac{1 - (-1)^i}{i\pi} \right. \\ & + 2a \left(\frac{t_{ox,u}}{i\pi} + \frac{(H_{eff} - t_{ox,u})(-1)^i}{i\pi} \right) \\ & + \frac{qN_a}{\epsilon_{si}} \left(\frac{(t_{ox,u})^2}{i\pi} - \frac{(H_{eff} - t_{ox,u})^2(-1)^i}{i\pi} \right. \\ & \left. \left. + 2H_{eff}^2 \frac{(-1)^i - 1}{(i\pi)^3} \right) \right]. \end{aligned} \quad (6c)$$

Similarly, the 3-D solution ϕ_3 can also be obtained and expressed as

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_3(x, y, z) = & \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} [e_{m,n} \sinh(k_y y) + e'_{m,n} \\ & \times \sinh(k_y (L_{eff} - y))] \cdot \sin \left(\frac{m\pi}{W_{eff}} \left(x + \frac{\epsilon_{si}}{\epsilon_i} t_{i,b} \right) \right) \\ & \times \sin \left(\frac{n\pi}{H_{eff}} (z + t_{ox,u}) \right) \end{aligned} \quad (7a)$$

where

$$k_y = \sqrt{\left(\frac{m\pi}{W_{\text{eff}}}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{n\pi}{H_{\text{eff}}}\right)^2} \quad (7b)$$

$$\begin{aligned} e_{m,n} = & \frac{1}{\sin(k_y L_{\text{eff}})} \left\{ \left[(-\phi_{\text{ms}} + V_{\text{DS}} - b) \frac{1 - (-1)^m}{m\pi} \right. \right. \\ & + \frac{qN_a}{2\varepsilon_{\text{si}}} \left(-\frac{(W_{\text{eff}} - (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b})^2 (-1)^m - ((\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b})^2}{m\pi} \right. \\ & + \left. \left. \frac{2W_{\text{eff}}^2 ((-1)^m - 1)}{(m\pi)^3} \right) \right. \\ & + \left. \left. a \left(\frac{(W_{\text{eff}} - (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b}) (-1)^m + (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b}}{m\pi} \right) \right] \right. \\ & \times \frac{4(1 - (-1)^n)}{n\pi} \\ & + 2c_m \frac{((-1)^n / n\pi) \sinh(m\pi(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))}{1 + ((m/n)(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))^2} \\ & \left. - 2c'_m \frac{(1/n\pi) \sinh(m\pi(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))}{1 + ((m/n)(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))^2} \right\} \quad (7c) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} e'_{m,n} = & \frac{1}{\sin(k_y L_{\text{eff}})} \left\{ \left[(-\phi_{\text{ms}} - b) \frac{1 - (-1)^m}{m\pi} \right. \right. \\ & + \frac{qN_a}{2\varepsilon_{\text{si}}} \left(-\frac{(W_{\text{eff}} - (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b})^2 (-1)^m - ((\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b})^2}{m\pi} \right. \\ & + \left. \left. \frac{2W_{\text{eff}}^2 ((-1)^m - 1)}{(m\pi)^3} \right) \right. \\ & + \left. \left. a \left(\frac{(W_{\text{eff}} - (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b}) (-1)^m + (\varepsilon_{\text{si}}/\varepsilon_i)t_{i,b}}{m\pi} \right) \right] \right. \\ & \times \frac{4(1 - (-1)^n)}{n\pi} \\ & + 2c_m \frac{((-1)^n / n\pi) \sinh(m\pi(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))}{1 + ((m/n)(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))^2} \\ & \left. - 2c'_m \frac{(1/n\pi) \sinh(m\pi(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))}{1 + ((m/n)(H_{\text{eff}}/W_{\text{eff}}))^2} \right\}. \quad (7d) \end{aligned}$$

Our potential solution has been verified by 3-D device simulation [11]. Fig. 2(a) and (b) compares the derived channel potential distribution with device simulation (at $V_{\text{GS}} = -0.2$ V) for heavily doped devices and lightly doped devices, respectively. Note that a smaller equivalent oxide thickness (EOT) is used in the lightly doped case to sustain the electrostatic integrity [3]. Fig. 2(c) compares the potential distribution for lightly doped device at another gate bias ($V_{\text{GS}} = 0$ V). It can be seen that our model shows satisfactory accuracy.

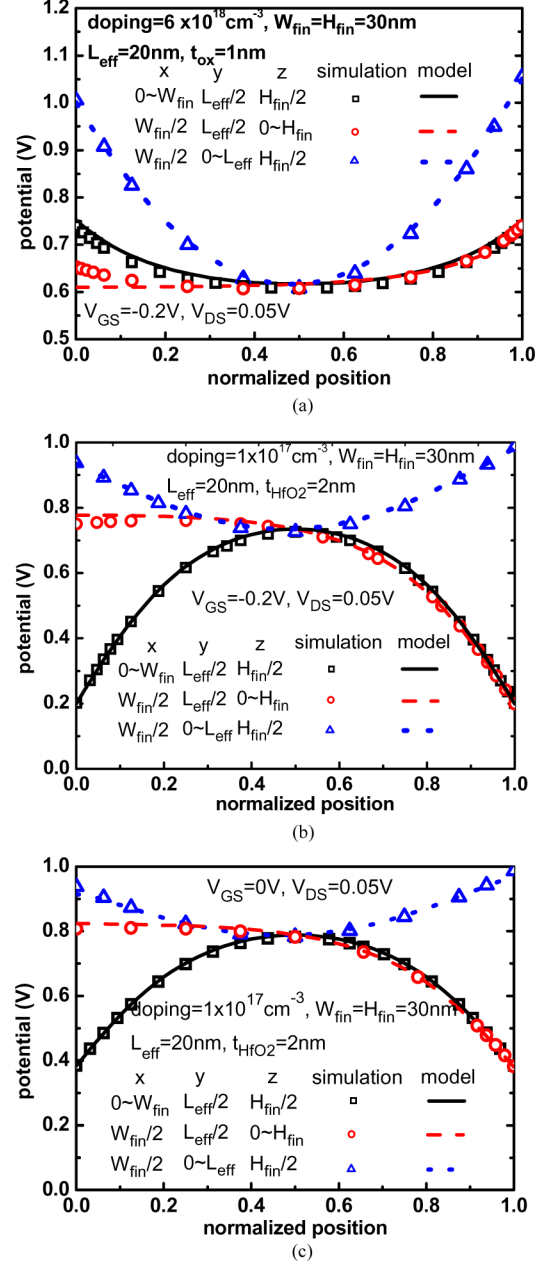


Fig. 2. Analytical potential distribution compared with the result of 3-D device simulation. For the lightly doped case, a midgap work function is used (4.7 eV).

After deriving the channel potential solution, the subthreshold current can be calculated by [7]

$$\begin{aligned} I_{\text{DS}} = & q\mu \frac{n_i^2}{N_a} \frac{kT}{q} \left(1 - e^{-(qV_{\text{DS}}/kT)} \right) \frac{1}{L_{\text{eff}}} \\ & \times \int_0^{H_{\text{fin}}} \int_0^{W_{\text{fin}}} e^{q\phi(x, y_{\text{min}}, z)/kT} dx dz \quad (8) \end{aligned}$$

where $\phi(x, y_{\text{min}}, z)$ is the minimum potential (i.e., the highest barrier for carrier flow) along the y (channel length) direction [8]. For devices biased in the linear region, the minimum potential occurs at $y_{\text{min}} = L_{\text{eff}}/2$ due to the nearly symmetrical potential distribution along the channel. We define the V_{th} as the gate voltage at which the calculated subthreshold current $I_{\text{DS}} =$

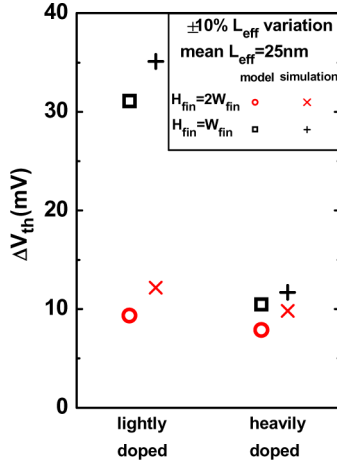


Fig. 3. Comparison of ΔV_{th} caused by L_{eff} variation between FinFET (AR = 2) and Tri-gate (AR = 1). Both heavily doped and lightly doped channels are considered.

$300 \text{ nA} \times W_{total}/L_{eff}$ [9], where $W_{total} = 2H_{fin} + W_{fin}$ is the total width of the multigate device.

Compared with the technology computer-aided design (TCAD) device simulation, our methodology shows higher efficiency in determining the V_{th} of a multigate device. For TCAD simulation, the CPU time needed for a single V_{th} is about tens of minutes, while in our calculation, only several seconds is needed. More importantly, this theoretical framework provides more scalable and predictive results than experimental or TCAD simulation does.

III. SENSITIVITY OF MULTIGATE MOSFETS TO PROCESS VARIATIONS

To assess the sensitivity of multigate devices to process variations, we assume that the device parameters such as channel length (L_{eff}), fin width (W_{fin}), and doping level vary by $\pm 10\%$, and the corresponding V_{th} variation can be calculated as $\Delta V_{th} = |V_{th}(+10\%) - V_{th}(-10\%)|/2$ [10]. In addition, the impact of dopant number fluctuation is also crucial to V_{th} variation. In this paper, we assess the V_{th} sensitivity to dopant number fluctuation using our analytical model. We assume that the channel dopant number follows the Poisson distribution [10] and the standard deviation (σ) of the dopant number is $n_a^{1/2}$, where n_a is the average dopant number in the Si-body. The V_{th} variation for dopant number fluctuation can be calculated as $\Delta V_{th} = |V_{th}(+3\sigma) - V_{th}(-3\sigma)|/2$.

To compare the multigate devices with various ARs (AR = H_{fin}/W_{fin}), we focus on the FinFET (AR = 2) and Tri-gate (AR = 1) structures. The total width ($W_{total} = 2H_{fin} + W_{fin}$) of FinFET and Tri-gate are both equal to 75 nm to make fair comparison. Devices with various channel doping are considered in this study. For heavily doped devices, the channel doping is equal to $6 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. For lightly doped channel, the channel doping is $1 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$. Besides, gate oxide ($t_{ox} = 1 \text{ nm}$) is used for heavily doped devices, while high k dielectric ($t_{HfO_2} = 2 \text{ nm}$ and the dielectric constant of HfO_2 is 25) is used for lightly doped ones to sustain the device electrostatics [3].

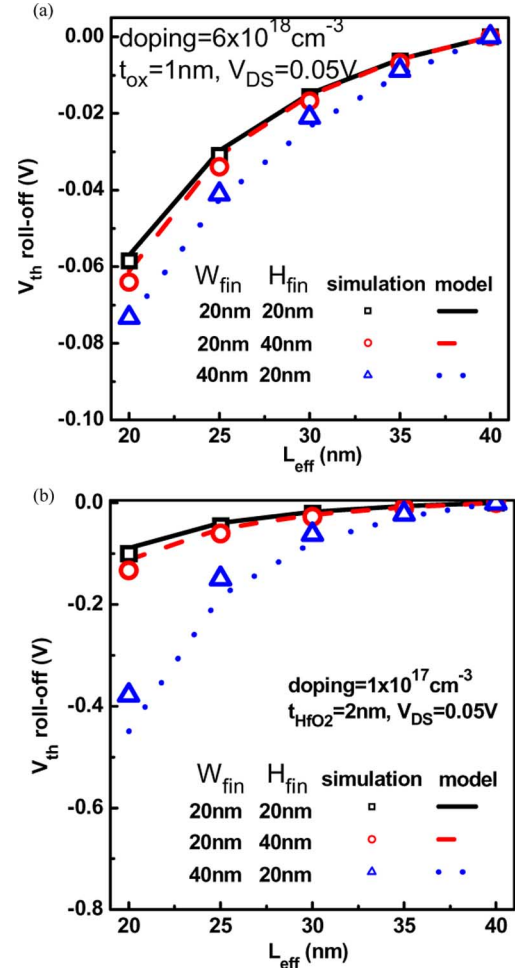


Fig. 4. Impact of W_{fin} scaling and H_{fin} scaling on the V_{th} roll-off behaviors. (a) Heavily doped channel. (b) Lightly doped channel with high k dielectric.

Fig. 3 shows the calculated ΔV_{th} caused by L_{eff} variation, and the results are verified with device simulation [11]. In both lightly and heavily doped cases, FinFET shows superior V_{th} variation immunity than Tri-gate. Besides, the discrepancy of ΔV_{th} between FinFET and Tri-gate for lightly doped channel is larger as compared with that of heavily doped channel. The ΔV_{th} due to L_{eff} variation is determined by the V_{th} roll-off characteristics. Fig. 4 demonstrates that W_{fin} scaling is more effective than H_{fin} scaling in the suppression of V_{th} roll-off, especially for lightly doped case. Therefore, the V_{th} variation for narrower W_{fin} devices like FinFET is smaller. To reduce the ΔV_{th} caused by L_{eff} (i.e. V_{th} roll-off) in Tri-gate, corner rounding can be used. Fig. 5 demonstrates that the Tri-gate lightly doped devices with corner rounding exhibit improved V_{th} roll-off characteristic.

Fig. 6 shows the calculated ΔV_{th} caused by W_{fin} variation. It indicates that for heavily doped case, the ΔV_{th} of FinFET is larger than that of Tri-gate. For lightly doped case, however, the ΔV_{th} of Tri-gate is significantly larger than that of FinFET. This can be explained by the W_{fin} dependence of V_{th} . Fig. 7(a) shows that for heavily doped devices, the V_{th} decreases with W_{fin} because of the reverse narrow width effect. Also shown

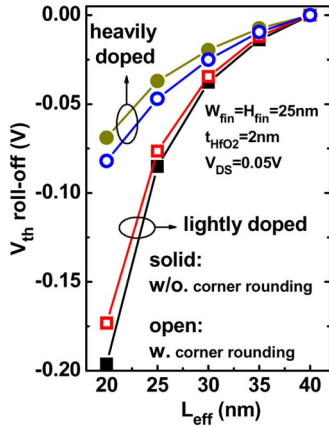


Fig. 5. Impact of corner rounding on the V_{th} roll-off for Tri-gate structure. The results are from TCAD simulation.

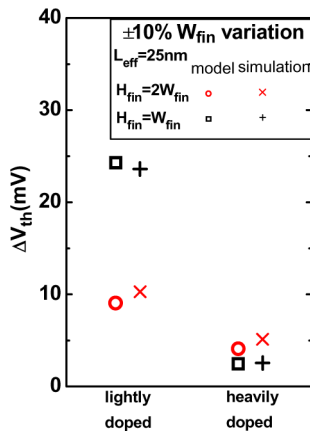


Fig. 6. Comparison of ΔV_{th} caused by W_{fin} variation between FinFET and Tri-gate.

in Fig. 7(a) is that the V_{th} sensitivity to W_{fin} , $|dV_{th}/dW_{fin}|$, is larger for devices with narrower W_{fin} . Therefore, FinFET with its inherently narrower W_{fin} shows larger ΔV_{th} as W_{fin} varies. Fig. 7(b) shows that for lightly doped devices, the V_{th} increases as W_{fin} decreases because of smaller V_{th} roll-off in narrower devices. Also shown in Fig. 7(b) is that the V_{th} sensitivity to W_{fin} is larger for devices with wider W_{fin} . Therefore, Tri-gate with its inherently wider W_{fin} shows larger ΔV_{th} as W_{fin} varies. It should be noted that in our comparison, the W_{fin} variation (ΔW_{fin}) for FinFET and Tri-gate is not identical (± 1.5 nm for FinFET and ± 2.5 nm for Tri-gate). For a given ΔW_{fin} , the discrepancy of ΔV_{th} between FinFET and Tri-gate in Fig. 6 will become larger for heavily doped case, and the discrepancy will be smaller for lightly doped case.

Fig. 8 shows the calculated ΔV_{th} caused by doping level variation. The ΔV_{th} difference between FinFET and Tri-gate is not significant. However, the V_{th} sensitivity to doping level variation in heavily doped devices is much higher than the lightly doped case. It can be seen from Fig. 9 that the V_{th} is sensitive to doping level when the doping concentration is beyond $1 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, and remains constant when the channel doping is below $\sim 1 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$.

Besides the doping level variation, dopant number fluctuation is also crucial to the V_{th} dispersion of nanoscale devices.

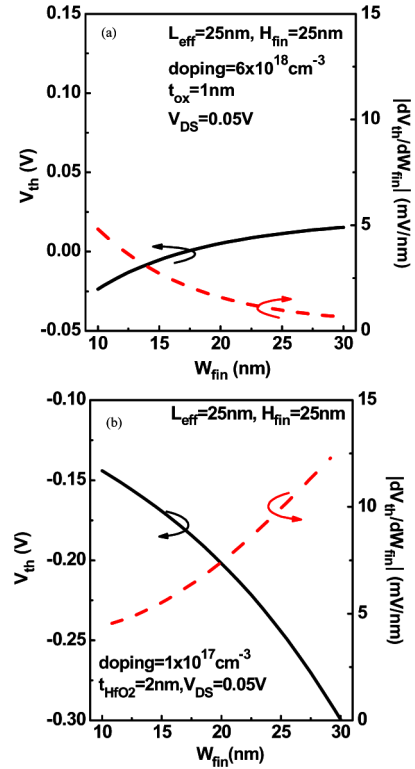


Fig. 7. W_{fin} dependence of V_{th} and $|dV_{th}/dW_{fin}|$. (a) Heavily doped devices. (b) Lightly doped devices.

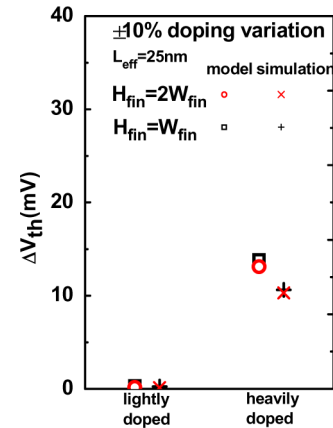


Fig. 8. Comparison of ΔV_{th} caused by doping level variation between FinFET and Tri-gate.

Fig. 10 shows that for heavily doped channel, the ΔV_{th} caused by dopant number fluctuation in FinFET is larger than that of Tri-gate. This is because for a given total width, FinFET possesses smaller channel volume than Tri-gate. It is worth noting that the ΔV_{th} due to dopant number fluctuation is much larger than the ΔV_{th} caused by $\pm 10\%$ doping level variation. For heavily doped devices, the ΔV_{th} caused by dopant number fluctuation is the dominant component in the overall V_{th} variations. Our result is consistent with the experimental data in [12]. In [12], for doped channel, the $\sigma_{V_{th}}$ of the devices with smaller volume is larger than that of the devices with larger volume.

It is worth noting that although lightly doped channel has been proposed [13] to suppress the dopant fluctuation, the V_{th}

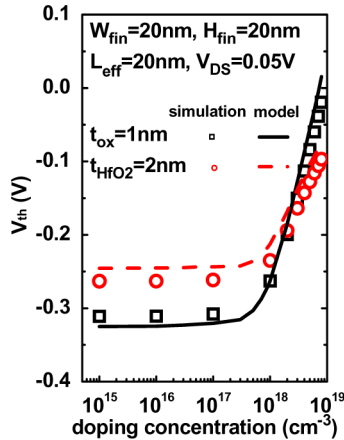


Fig. 9. Doping level dependence of V_{th} in multigate devices.

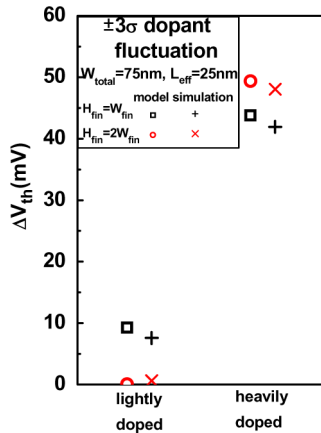


Fig. 10. Comparison of ΔV_{th} caused by dopant number fluctuation between FinFET and Tri-gate. The ΔV_{th} is derived from devices with $\pm 3\sigma$ dopant numbers.

dispersion due to geometry variations and dopant position variation [14]–[16] may become concerns for lightly doped devices (especially Tri-gate). Our result is also consistent with [12], which showed that for undoped channel, the devices with larger W_{fin} show larger σV_{th} .

IV. CONCLUSION

We have investigated the sensitivity of multigate MOSFETs to process variations using analytical solutions of 3-D Poisson's equation verified with device simulation. Lightly doped FinFET shows the smallest V_{th} dispersion caused by process variations and dopant number fluctuation. For heavily doped devices, dopant number fluctuation may become the dominant factor in the determination of overall V_{th} variation. The V_{th} dispersion of Tri-gate may therefore be smaller than that of FinFET because of its better immunity to dopant number fluctuation.

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