

US Patent & Trademark Office

Patent Public Search | Text View

United States Patent	12394661
Kind Code	B2
Date of Patent	August 19, 2025
Inventor(s)	Yang; Chen

Shallow trench isolation spacers

Abstract

Methods, systems, and devices for shallow trench isolation spacers are described. In some examples, shallow trenches may be formed in a silicon wafer and one or more dielectric materials may be formed in the trenches. A portion of the dielectric material may subsequently be removed (e.g., etched) and a spacer material may be formed in the trenches. In some examples, portions of the spacer material may be removed (e.g., etched) and the trenches may be filled with the dielectric material. The resulting trench may include one or more spacers that isolate the dielectric material from a gate oxide or other materials formed above the silicon wafer.

Inventors:	Yang; Chen (Shaanxi, CN)
Applicant:	Micron Technology, Inc. (Boise, ID)
Family ID:	1000008764629
Assignee:	Micron Technology, Inc. (Boise, ID)
Appl. No.:	17/868033
Filed:	July 19, 2022

Prior Publication Data

Document Identifier	Publication Date
US 20240030058 A1	Jan. 25, 2024

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: H10D84/01 (20250101); H01L21/28 (20250101); H01L21/762 (20060101); H10D84/03 (20250101); H10D84/83 (20250101)

U.S. Cl.:

Field of Classification Search

CPC: H10D (84/0151); H10D (84/0188); H01L (21/762-76237)

References Cited

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

Patent No.	Issued Date	Patentee Name	U.S. Cl.	CPC
6114217	12/1999	Park	257/E21.546	H01L 21/76224
6555442	12/2002	Pai	438/424	H01L 21/76235
7061075	12/2005	Babcock	257/E21.549	H01L 21/76224
2006/0043455	12/2005	Batra	257/314	H01L 21/76229
2008/0020544	12/2007	Lee	257/E21.679	H10B 41/49

Primary Examiner: McCall-Shepard; Sonya

Attorney, Agent or Firm: Holland & Hart LLP

Background/Summary

FIELD OF TECHNOLOGY

(1) The following relates to one or more systems for memory, including shallow trench isolation spacers.

BACKGROUND

(2) Memory devices are widely used to store information in various electronic devices such as computers, user devices, wireless communication devices, cameras, digital displays, and the like. Information is stored by programming memory cells within a memory device to various states. For example, binary memory cells may be programmed to one of two supported states, often corresponding to a logic 1 or a logic 0. In some examples, a single memory cell may support more than two possible states, any one of which may be stored by the memory cell. To access information stored by a memory device, a component may read (e.g., sense, detect, retrieve, identify, determine, evaluate) the state of one or more memory cells within the memory device. To store information, a component may write (e.g., program, set, assign) one or more memory cells within the memory device to corresponding states.

(3) Various types of memory devices exist, including magnetic hard disks, random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), dynamic RAM (DRAM), synchronous dynamic RAM (SDRAM), static RAM (SRAM), ferroelectric RAM (FeRAM), magnetic RAM (MRAM), resistive RAM (RRAM), flash memory, phase change memory (PCM), 3-dimensional cross-point memory (3D cross point), not-or (NOR) and not-and (NAND) memory devices, and others. Memory devices may be described in terms of volatile configurations or non-volatile configurations. Volatile memory cells (e.g., DRAM) may lose their programmed states over time unless they are periodically refreshed by an external power source. Non-volatile memory cells (e.g., NAND) may maintain their programmed states for extended periods of time even in the absence of an external power source.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- (1) FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a system that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (2) FIG. 2 illustrates an example of a memory architecture that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (3) FIGS. 3-22 illustrate example process flow diagrams that support shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (4) FIGS. 23 and 24 show flowcharts illustrating a method or methods that support shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- (5) During the fabrication process of some integrated circuits, trenches may be formed to prevent current leakage between adjacent semiconductor components. For example, during a shallow trench isolation (STI) process, trenches may be formed between regions in which transistors will subsequently be formed. The STI process may include etching a pattern of trenches in a silicon wafer, forming one or more dielectric materials within the trenches, and forming a gate oxide above the wafer. In some instances, an etching process may be performed after forming the gate oxide to remove portions of the gate oxide or other materials formed above the silicon wafer. The etching process may inadvertently remove portions of the dielectric material thus forming one or more “divots” in the dielectric material filling the trench. Such divots may result in unwanted breakdown in various regions of the transistor formed from the gate region, and thus it may be desirable to form trenches that do not include divots.
- (6) Methods and corresponding apparatuses for forming trenches having one or more spacers to mitigate the formation of divots are described herein. In some examples, trenches may be formed in a silicon wafer and one or more dielectric materials may subsequently be formed in the trenches. A portion of the dielectric material may subsequently be removed (e.g., etched) and a spacer material may be formed in the trenches. In some examples, portions of the spacer material may be removed (e.g., etched) and the trenches may be filled with the dielectric material. The resulting trench may include one or more spacers that isolate the dielectric material from a gate oxide or other materials formed above the silicon wafer. Accordingly, when the gate oxide or other materials above the wafer are removed (e.g., etched), the spacers may prevent the dielectric material from being etched. That is, the presence of the spacer(s) may prevent the formation of divots in the shallow trenches, thus mitigating a potential cause of breakdown in the transistor including the gate region.
- (7) Features of the disclosure are initially described in the context of systems, devices, and circuits with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2. Features of the disclosure are described in the context of process flow diagrams with reference to FIGS. 3 through 22. These and other features of the disclosure are further illustrated by and described in the context of an apparatus diagram and flowchart that relate to shallow trench isolation spacers with reference to FIGS. 23 and 24.
- (8) FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a memory device **100** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. FIG. 1 is an illustrative representation of various components and features of the memory device **100**. As such, the components and features of the memory device **100** are shown to illustrate functional interrelationships, and not necessarily physical positions within the memory device **100**. Further, although some elements included in FIG. 1 are labeled with a numeric indicator, some other corresponding elements are not labeled, even though they are the same or would be understood to be similar, in an effort to increase visibility and clarity of the depicted features.
- (9) The memory device **100** may include one or more memory cells, such as memory cell **105-a** and memory cell **105-b**. In some examples, a memory cell **105** may be a NAND memory cell, such

as in the blow-up diagram of memory cell **105-a**. Each memory cell **105** may be programmed to store a logic value representing one or more bits of information. In some examples, a single memory cell **105**—such as a memory cell **105** configured as a single-level cell (SLC)—may be programmed to one of two supported states and thus may store one bit of information at a time (e.g., a logic 0 or a logic 1). In some other examples, a single memory cell **105**—such a memory cell **105** configured as a multi-level cell (MLC), a tri-level cell (TLC), a quad-level cell (QLC), or other type of multiple-level memory cell **105**—may be programmed to one of more than two supported states and thus may store more than one bit of information at a time. In some cases, a multiple-level memory cell **105** (e.g., an MLC memory cell, a TLC memory cell, a QLC memory cell) may be physically different than an SLC cell. For example, a multiple-level memory cell **105** may use a different cell geometry or may be fabricated using different materials. In some examples, a multiple-level memory cell **105** may be physically the same or similar to an SLC cell, and other circuitry in a memory block (e.g., a controller, sense amplifiers, drivers) may be configured to operate (e.g., read and program) the memory cell as an SLC cell, or as an MLC cell, or as a TLC cell, etc.

(10) In some NAND memory arrays, each memory cell **105** may be illustrated as a transistor that includes a charge trapping structure (e.g., a floating gate, a replacement gate, a dielectric material) for storing an amount of charge representative of a logic value. For example, the blow-up in FIG. 1 illustrates a NAND memory cell **105-a** that includes a transistor **110** (e.g., a metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) transistor) that may be used to store a logic value. The transistor **110** may include a control gate **115** and a charge trapping structure **120** (e.g., a floating gate, a replacement gate), where the charge trapping structure **120** may, in some examples, be between two portions of dielectric material **125**. The transistor **110** also may include a first node **130** (e.g., a source or drain) and a second node **135** (e.g., a drain or source). A logic value may be stored in transistor **110** by storing (e.g., writing) a quantity of electrons (e.g., an amount of charge) on the charge trapping structure **120**. An amount of charge to be stored on the charge trapping structure **120** may depend on the logic value to be stored. The charge stored on the charge trapping structure **120** may affect the threshold voltage of the transistor **110**, thereby affecting the amount of current that flows through the transistor **110** when the transistor **110** is activated (e.g., when a voltage is applied to the control gate **115**, when the memory cell **105-a** is read). In some examples, the charge trapping structure **120** may be an example of a floating gate or a replacement gate that may be part of a 2D NAND structure. For example, a 2D NAND array may include multiple control gates **115** and charge trapping structures **120** arranged around a single channel (e.g., a horizontal channel, a vertical channel, a columnar channel, a pillar channel).

(11) A logic value stored in the transistor **110** may be sensed (e.g., as part of a read operation) by applying a voltage to the control gate **115** (e.g., to control node **140**, via a word line **165**) to activate the transistor **110** and measuring (e.g., detecting, sensing) an amount of current that flows through the first node **130** or the second node **135** (e.g., via a bit line **155**). For example, a sense component **170** may determine whether an SLC memory cell **105** stores a logic 0 or a logic 1 in a binary manner (e.g., based on a presence or absence of a current through the memory cell **105** when a read voltage is applied to the control gate **115**, based on whether the current is above or below a threshold current). For a multiple-level memory cell **105**, a sense component **170** may determine a logic value stored in the memory cell **105** based on various intermediate threshold levels of current when a read voltage is applied to the control gate **115**, or by applying different read voltages to the control gate and evaluating different resulting levels of current through the transistor **110**, or various combinations thereof. In one example of a multiple-level architecture, a sense component **170** may determine the logic value of a TLC memory cell **105** based on eight different levels of current, or ranges of current, that define the eight potential logic values that could be stored by the TLC memory cell **105**.

(12) An SLC memory cell **105** may be written by applying one of two voltages (e.g., a voltage

above a threshold or a voltage below a threshold) to memory cell **105** to store, or not store, an electric charge on the charge trapping structure **120** and thereby cause the memory cell **105** store one of two possible logic values. For example, when a first voltage is applied to the control node **140** (e.g., via a word line **165**) relative to a bulk node **145** (e.g., a body node) for the transistor **110** (e.g., when the control node **140** is at a higher voltage than the bulk), electrons may tunnel into the charge trapping structure **120**. Injection of electrons into the charge trapping structure **120** may be referred to as programming the memory cell **105** and may occur as part of a write operation. A programmed memory cell may, in some cases, be considered as storing a logic 0. When a second voltage is applied to the control node **140** (e.g., via the word line **165**) relative to the bulk node **145** for the transistor **110** (e.g., when the control node **140** is at a lower voltage than the bulk node **145**), electrons may leave the charge trapping structure **120**. Removal of electrons from the charge trapping structure **120** may be referred to as erasing the memory cell **105** and may occur as part of an erase operation. An erased memory cell may, in some cases, be considered as storing a logic 1. In some cases, memory cells **105** may be programmed at a page level of granularity due to memory cells **105** of a page sharing a common word line **165**, and memory cells **105** may be erased at a block level of granularity due to memory cells **105** of a block sharing commonly biased bulk nodes **145**.

(13) In contrast to writing an SLC memory cell **105**, writing a multiple-level (e.g., MLC, TLC, or QLC) memory cell **105** may involve applying different voltages to the memory cell **105** (e.g., to the control node **140** or bulk node **145** thereof) at a finer level of granularity to more finely control the amount of charge stored on the charge trapping structure **120**, thereby enabling a larger set of logic values to be represented. Thus, multiple-level memory cells **105** may provide greater density of storage relative to SLC memory cells **105** but may, in some cases, involve narrower read or write margins or greater complexities for supporting circuitry.

(14) A charge-trapping NAND memory cell **105** may operate similarly to a floating-gate NAND memory cell **105** but, instead of or in addition to storing a charge on a charge trapping structure **120**, a charge-trapping NAND memory cell **105** may store a charge representing a logic state in a dielectric material between the control gate **115** and a channel (e.g., between a first node **130** and a second node **135**). Thus, a charge-trapping NAND memory cell **105** may include a charge trapping structure **120**, or may implement charge trapping functionality in one or more portions of dielectric material **125**, among other configurations.

(15) In some examples, each page of memory cells **105** may be connected to a corresponding word line **165**, and each column of memory cells **105** may be connected to a corresponding bit line **155** (e.g., digit line). Thus, one memory cell **105** may be located at the intersection of a word line **165** and a bit line **155**. This intersection may be referred to as an address of a memory cell **105**. In some cases, word lines **165** and bit lines **155** may be substantially perpendicular to one another, and may be generically referred to as access lines or select lines.

(16) In some cases, a memory device **100** may include a three-dimensional (3D) memory array, where multiple two-dimensional (2D) memory arrays may be formed on top of one another. In some examples, such an arrangement may increase the quantity of memory cells **105** that may be fabricated on a single die or substrate as compared with 1D arrays, which, in turn, may reduce production costs, or increase the performance of the memory array, or both. In the example of FIG. **1**, memory device **100** includes multiple levels (e.g., decks, layers, planes, tiers) of memory cells **105**. The levels may, in some examples, be separated by an electrically insulating material. Each level may be aligned or positioned so that memory cells **105** may be aligned (e.g., exactly aligned, overlapping, or approximately aligned) with one another across each level, forming a memory cell stack **175**. In some cases, memory cells aligned along a memory cell stack **175** may be referred to as a string of memory cells **105** (e.g., as described with reference to FIG. **2**).

(17) Accessing memory cells **105** may be controlled through a row decoder **160** and a column decoder **150**. For example, the row decoder **160** may receive a row address from the memory

controller **180** and activate an appropriate word line **165** based on the received row address. Similarly, the column decoder **150** may receive a column address from the memory controller **180** and activate an appropriate bit line **155**. Thus, by activating one word line **165** and one bit line **155**, one memory cell **105** may be accessed. Upon accessing, a memory cell **105** may be read (e.g., sensed) by sense component **170**. For example, the sense component **170** may be configured to determine the stored logic value of a memory cell **105** based on a signal generated by accessing the memory cell **105**. The signal may include a current, a voltage, or both a current and a voltage on the bit line **155** for the memory cell **105** and may depend on the logic value stored by the memory cell **105**. The sense component **170** may include various circuitry (e.g., transistors, amplifiers) configured to detect and amplify a signal (e.g., a current or voltage) on a bit line **155**. The logic value of memory cell **105** as detected by the sense component **170** may be output via input/output component **190**. In some cases, a sense component **170** may be a part of a column decoder **150** or a row decoder **160**, or a sense component **170** may otherwise be connected to or in electronic communication with a column decoder **150** or a row decoder **160**.

(18) A memory cell **105** may be programmed or written by activating the relevant word line **165** and bit line **155** to enable a logic value (e.g., representing one or more bits of information) to be stored in the memory cell **105**. A column decoder **150** or a row decoder **160** may accept data (e.g., from the input/output component **190**) to be written to the memory cells **105**. In the case of NAND memory, a memory cell **105** may be written by storing electrons in a charge trapping structure or an insulating layer.

(19) A memory controller **180** may control the operation (e.g., read, write, re-write, refresh) of memory cells **105** through the various components (e.g., row decoder **160**, column decoder **150**, sense component **170**). In some cases, one or more of a row decoder **160**, a column decoder **150**, and a sense component **170** may be co-located with a memory controller **180**. A memory controller **180** may generate row and column address signals in order to activate a desired word line **165** and bit line **155**. In some examples, a memory controller **180** may generate and control various voltages or currents used during the operation of memory device **100**.

(20) In some examples, the memory device **100** may include one or more STI regions. For example, the memory device **100** may include a STI region between each transistor **110** of a memory array. As described herein, when forming the STI regions, one or more dielectric materials may be formed in the trenches. A portion of the dielectric material may subsequently be removed (e.g., etched) and a spacer material may be formed in the trenches. In some examples, portions of the spacer material may be removed (e.g., etched) and the trenches may be filled with the dielectric material. The resulting trench may include one or more spacers that isolate the dielectric material from a gate oxide or other materials formed above the silicon wafer. Accordingly, when the gate oxide or other materials above the wafer are removed (e.g., etched), the spacers may prevent the dielectric material from being etched. That is, the presence of the spacer(s) may prevent the formation of divots in the dielectric material in the trenches, thus mitigating potential breakdown in a transistor formed from the gate region.

(21) FIG. 2 illustrates an example of a memory architecture **200** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. The memory architecture **200** may be an example of a portion of a memory device, such as a memory device **100**. Although some elements of a set of elements (e.g., an array of elements) are included in FIG. 2, some elements may be omitted for the sake of visibility and clarity of the depicted elements. Moreover, although some elements included in FIG. 2 are labeled with reference numbers, some other corresponding elements are not labeled, though they are the same or would be understood by a person having ordinary skill in the art to be similar. Aspects of the memory architecture **200** may be described with reference to an x-direction, a y-direction, and a z-direction of the illustrated coordinate system.

(22) The memory architecture **200** includes a three-dimensional array of memory cells **205**, which

may be examples of memory cells **105** described with reference to FIG. **1** (e.g., transistors **110**, NAND memory cells). In some examples, the memory cells **205** may be connected in a 3D NAND configuration. For example, the memory cells **205** may be included in a block **210**, which may be arranged as a 3D array of m memory cells along the x-direction, n memory cells along the y-direction, and o memory cells along the z-direction. Each memory cell **205** may be located (e.g., addressed) in accordance with an index i along the x-direction, an index j along the y-direction, and an index k along the z-direction (e.g., for locating a memory cell **205-a-ijk**). A memory device **100** may include any quantity of one or more blocks **210** in accordance with examples as disclosed herein, and different blocks **210** may be adjacent along the x-direction, along the y-direction, or along the z-direction, or any combination thereof.

(23) In the example of memory architecture **200**, the block **210** may be divided into a set of pages **215** (e.g., a quantity of o pages **215**) along the z-direction, including a page **215-a-1** associated with memory cells **205-a-111** through **205-a-mn1**. In some examples, each reference to FIG. **1**), which may be coupled with a control gate **115** of each of the memory cells **205** of the page **215**. For example, page **215-a-1** may be associated with a word line **265-a-1**, and other pages **215-a-i** may be associated with a different respective word line **265-a-i** (not shown). In some examples, a word line **265** in accordance with the memory architecture **200** may be implemented as planar conductor (e.g., in an xy-plane) that is coupled with each of the memory cells **205** of the page **215**.

(24) In the example of memory architecture **200**, the block **210** also may be divided into a set of strings **220** (e.g., a quantity of (m×n) strings **220**) in an xy-plane, including a string **220-a-mn** associated with memory cells **205-a-mn1** through **205-a-mno**. In some examples, each string **220** may include a set of memory cells **205** connected in series (e.g., along the z-direction, in which a drain of one memory cell **205** in the string **220** may be coupled with a source of another memory cell **205** in the string **220**). In some examples, memory cells **205** of a string **220** may be implemented along a common channel, such as a pillar channel (e.g., a columnar channel, a pillar of doped semiconductor) along the z-direction. Each memory cell **205** in a string **220** may be associated with a different word line **265**, such that a quantity of word lines **265** in the memory architecture **200** may be equal to the quantity of memory cells **205** in a string **220**. Accordingly, a string **220** may include memory cells **205** from multiple pages **215**, and a page **215** may include memory cells **205** from multiple strings **220**.

(25) In some examples, memory cells **205** may be programmed (e.g., set to a logic 0 value) and read from at a granularity, such as the granularity of the page **215**, but may not be erasable (e.g., reset to a logic 1 value) at the granularity, such as the granularity of the page **215**. For example, NAND memory may instead be erasable at a different (e.g., higher) level of granularity, such as at the level of granularity the block **210**. In some cases, a memory cell **205** may be erased before it may be re-programmed. Different memory devices may have different read, write, or erase characteristics.

(26) In some examples, each string **220** of the block **210** may be coupled with a respective transistor **230** (e.g., a string select transistor, a drain select transistor) at one end of the string **220** (e.g., along the z-direction) and a respective transistor **240** (e.g., a source select transistor, a ground select transistor) at the other end of the string **220**. In some examples, a drain of each transistor **230** may be coupled with a bit line **250** of a set of bit lines **250** associated with the block **210**, where the bit lines **250** may be examples of bit lines **155** described with reference to FIG. **1**. A gate of each transistor **230** may be coupled with a select line **235** (e.g., a string select line, a drain select line). Thus, a transistor **230** may be used to couple a string **220** with a bit line **250** based on applying a voltage to the select line **235**, and thus to the gate of the transistors **230**. Although illustrated as separate lines along the x-direction, in some examples, select lines **235** may be common to all the transistors **230** associated with the block **210** (e.g., a commonly biased string select node). For example, like the word lines **265** of the block **210**, select lines **235** associated with the block **210** may, in some examples, be implemented as a planar conductor (e.g., in an xy-plane) that is coupled

with each of the transistors **230** associated with the block **210**.

(27) In some examples, a source of each transistor **240** associated with the block **210** may be coupled with a source line **260** of a set of source lines **260** associated with the block **210**. In some examples, the set of source lines **260** may be associated with a common source node (e.g., a ground node) corresponding to the block **210**. A gate of each transistor **240** may be coupled with a select line **245** (e.g., a source select line, a ground select line). Thus, a transistor **240** may be used to couple a string **220** with a source line **260** based on applying a voltage to the select line **245**, and thus to the gate of the transistors **240**. Although illustrated as separate lines along the x-direction, in some examples, select lines **245** also may be common to all the transistors **240** associated with the block **210** (e.g., a commonly biased ground select node). For example, like the word lines **265** of the block **210**, select lines **245** associated with the block **210** may, in some examples, be implemented as a planar conductor (e.g., in an xy-plane) that is coupled with each of the transistors **240** associated with the block **210**.

(28) To operate the memory architecture **200** (e.g., to perform a program operation, a read operation, or an erase operation on one or more memory cells **205** of the block **210**), various voltages may be applied to one or more select lines **235** (e.g., to the gate of the transistors **230**), to one or more bit lines **250** (e.g., to the drain of one or more transistors **230**), to one or more word lines **265**, to one or more select lines **245** (e.g., to the gate of the transistors **240**), to one or more source lines **260** (e.g., to the source of the transistors **240**), or to a bulk for the memory cells **205** (not shown) of the block **210**. In some cases, each memory cell **205** of a block **210** may have a common bulk, the voltage of which may be controlled independently of bulks for other blocks **210**.

(29) In some cases, as part of a read operation for a memory cell **205**, a positive voltage may be applied to the corresponding bit line **250** while the corresponding source line **260** may be grounded or otherwise biased at a voltage lower than the voltage applied to the bit line **250**. In some examples, voltages may be concurrently applied to the select line **235** and the select line **245** that are above the threshold voltages of the transistor **230** and the transistor **240**, respectively, for the memory cell **205**, thereby activating the transistor **230** and transistor **240** such that a channel associated with the string **220** that includes the memory cell **205** may be electrically connected to the corresponding bit line **250** and the source line **260**. A channel may be an electrical path through the memory cells **205** in the string **220** (e.g., through the sources and drains of the transistors in the memory cells **205** of the string **220**) that may conduct current under some operating conditions.

(30) In some examples, multiple word lines **265** (e.g., in some cases all word lines **265**) of the block **210**—except a word line **265** associated with a page **215** of the memory cell **205** to be read—may concurrently be set to a voltage (e.g., VREAD) that is higher than the threshold voltage (V_T) of the memory cells **205**. VREAD may cause all memory cells **205** in the unselected pages **215** be activated so that each unselected memory cell **205** in the string **220** may maintain high conductivity within the channel. In some examples, the word line **265** associated with the memory cell **205** to be read may be set to a voltage, V_{Target} . Where the memory cells **205** are operated as SLC memory cells, V_{Target} may be a voltage that is between (i) V_T of a memory cell **205** in an erased state and (ii) V_T of a memory cell **205** in a programmed state.

(31) When the memory cell **205** to be read exhibits an erased V_T (e.g., $V_{Target} > V_T$ of the memory cell **205**), the memory cell **205** may turn “ON” in response to the application of V_{Target} to the word line **265** of the selected page **215**, which may allow a current to flow in the channel of the string **220**, and thus from the bit line **250** to the source line **260**. When the memory cell **205** to be read exhibits a programmed V_T (e.g., $V_{Target} < V_T$ of the selected memory cell), the memory cell **205** may remain “OFF” despite the application of V_{Target} to the word line **265** of the selected page **215**, and thus may prevent a current from flowing in the channel of the string **220**, and thus from the bit line **250** to the source line **260**.

(32) A signal on the bit line **250** for the memory cell **205** (e.g., an amount of current below or above a threshold) may be sensed (e.g., by a sense component **170** as described with reference to FIG. 1),

and may indicate whether the memory cell **205** became conductive or remained non-conductive in response to the application of VTarget to the word line **265** of the selected page **215**. The sensed signal thus may be indicative of whether the memory cell **205** was in an erased state (e.g., storing a logic 1) or a programmed state (e.g., storing a logic 0). Though aspects of the example read operation above have been explained in the context of an SLC memory cell **205** for clarity, such techniques may be extended or altered and applied in the context of a multiple-level memory cell **205** (e.g., through the use of multiple values of VTarget corresponding to the different amounts of charge that may be stored in one multiple-level memory cell **205**).

(33) In some cases, as part of a program operation for a memory cell **205**, charge may be added to a portion of the memory cell **205** such that current flow through the memory cell **205**, and thus the corresponding string **220**, may be inhibited when the memory cell **205** is later read. For example, charge may be injected into a charge trapping structure **120** as shown in memory cell **105-a** of FIG. **1**. In some cases, respective voltages may be applied to the word line **265** of the page **215** and the bulk of the memory cell **205** to be programmed such that a control gate **115** of the memory cell **205** is at a higher voltage than the bulk of the memory cell **205** (e.g., a positive voltage may be applied to the word line). Concurrently, voltages may be applied to the select line **235** and the select line **245** that are above the threshold voltages of the transistor **230** and the transistor **240**, respectively, thereby activating the transistor **230** and the transistor **240**, and the bit line **250** for the memory cell **205** to be programmed may be set to a relatively high voltage. This may cause an electric field such that electrons are pulled from the source of the memory cell **205** towards the drain. The electric field may also cause some of these electrons to be pulled through dielectric material **125** and thereby injected into the charge trapping structure **120** of the memory cell **205**, through a process which may in some cases be referred to as tunnel injection.

(34) In some cases, a single program operation may program some or all memory cells **205** in a page **215**, as the memory cells **205** of the page **215** may all share a common word line **265** and a common bulk. For a memory cell **205** of the page **215** for which it is not desired to write a logic 0 (e.g., not desired to program the memory cell **205**), the corresponding bit line **250** may be set to a relatively low voltage (e.g., ground), which may inhibit the injection of electrons into a charge trapping structure **120**. Though aspects of the example program operation above have been explained in the context of an SLC memory cell **205** for clarity, such techniques may be extended and applied to the context of a multiple-level memory cell **205** (e.g., through the use of multiple programming voltages applied to the word line **265**, or multiple passes or pulses of a programming voltage applied to the word line **265**, corresponding to the different amounts of charge that may be stored in one multiple-level memory cell **205**).

(35) In some cases, as part of an erase operation for a memory cell **205**, charge may be removed from a portion of the memory cell **205** such that current flow through the memory cell **205**, and thus the corresponding string **220**, may be uninhibited (e.g., allowed, at least to a greater extent) when the memory cell **205** is later read. For example, charge may be removed from a charge trapping structure **120** as shown in memory cell **105-a** of FIG. **1**. In some cases, respective voltages may be applied to the word line **265** of the page **215** and the bulk of the memory cell **205** to be erased such that a control gate **115** of the memory cell **205** is at a lower voltage than the bulk of the memory cell **205** (e.g., a positive voltage may be applied to the bulk), which may cause an electric field that pulls electrons out of the charge trapping structure **120** and into the bulk of the memory cell **205**. In some cases, a single program operation may erase all memory cells **205** in a block **210**, as the memory cells **205** of the block **210** may all share a common bulk.

(36) In some cases, electron injection and removal processes associated with program and erase operations may cause stress on a memory cell **205** (e.g., on the dielectric material **125**). Over time, such stress may in some cases cause one or more aspects of the memory cell **205** (e.g., the dielectric material **125**) to deteriorate. For example, charge trapping structure **120** may become unable to maintain a stored charge. Such deterioration may be an example of a wearout mechanism

for a memory cell **205**, and for this or other reasons, some memory cells **205** may support a finite quantity of program and erase cycles.

(37) In some examples, the memory architecture **200** may include one or more STI regions. For example, the memory architecture **200** may include a STI region between one or more transistors **230** of a logic circuit or memory array. As described herein, when forming the STI regions, one or more dielectric materials may be formed in the trenches. A portion of the dielectric material may subsequently be removed (e.g., etched) and a spacer material may be formed in the trenches. In some examples, portions of the spacer material may be removed (e.g., etched) and the trenches may be filled with the dielectric material. The resulting trench may include one or more spacers that isolate the dielectric material from a gate oxide or other materials formed above the silicon wafer. Accordingly, when the gate oxide or other materials above the wafer are removed (e.g., etched), the spacers may prevent the dielectric material from being etched. That is, the presence of the spacer(s) may prevent the formation of divots in the shallow trenches, thus mitigating potential breakdown in transistors formed using the gate region between the trenches.

(38) FIG. 3 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **300** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **300** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **300** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above a substrate **301** (e.g., a silicon wafer). As described herein, forming a material may include processing steps such as depositing (vapor deposition, sputtering), etching (e.g., wet etching, dry etching, reactive ion etching, sputtering), patterning (e.g., photolithography), planarizing, oxidizing, heat treatment, other processing steps to add, remove, or change the properties of portions of the material, or combinations of these processing steps. Processing steps such as depositing or etching may be isotropic or anisotropic.

(39) In some examples, an oxide layer **302** (e.g., a first oxide layer **302**) may be formed above the substrate **301**. The oxide layer **302** may be formed by oxidizing (e.g., for a duration) a top layer (e.g., a top surface) of the substrate **301**. After forming the oxide layer **302**, a nitride layer **303** may be formed over the oxide layer **302** (e.g., the nitride layer **303** may be deposited over an upper surface of the oxide layer **302**). After forming the nitride layer **303**, a carbon layer **304** may be formed over the nitride layer **303** (e.g., the carbon layer **304** may be deposited over an upper surface of the nitride layer **303**).

(40) After forming the carbon layer **304**, an anti-reflection layer **305** (e.g., a dielectric anti-reflective coating (DARC) layer **305**) may be formed over the carbon layer **304** (e.g., the anti-reflection layer **305** may be deposited over an upper surface of the carbon layer **304**). The anti-reflection layer **305** may be formed to affect reflectivity of the stack of materials during subsequent operations (e.g., during subsequent lithography operations). Additionally or alternatively, the formation of materials described with reference to FIG. 3 may occur during any quantity of processing steps.

(41) FIG. 4 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **400** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **400** may illustrate the formation of one or more trenches **401** (e.g., shallow trenches) in one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **400** may illustrate the formation of one or more trenches **401** that are exhumed (e.g., etched) through the nitride layer **303**, the oxide layer **302**, and at least part of the substrate **301** as described with reference to FIG. 3.

(42) In some examples (not shown), prior to the formation of the trenches **401**, the anti-reflection layer **305** and the carbon layer **304** may be removed from the stack of materials. The anti-reflection layer **305** and the carbon layer **304** may be removed using one or more patterning operations (e.g., a photolithography operation), one or more etching operations (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation), or a combination thereof.

(43) After the removal of the anti-reflection layer **305** and the carbon layer **304**, one or more

trenches **401** may be formed through the nitride layer **303**, the oxide layer **302**, and the substrate **301**. In some examples, the trenches **401** may be formed using either a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation. Additionally or alternatively, any quantity of trenches **401** may be formed. For example, *n* trenches may be formed through the nitride layer **303**, the oxide layer **302**, and the substrate **301**, which may be represented by trench **401-n**.

(44) In some examples, the trenches may be located adjacent to regions of the substrate **301** that are associated with different voltage thresholds. For example, a super low voltage region **402-a** may be located adjacent to the trench **401-a** and the trench **401-b**, a low voltage region **402-b** may be located adjacent to the trench **401-b** and the trench **401-c**, and a super high voltage region **402-c** may be located adjacent to the trench **401-c** and the trench **401-n**. In some examples, transistors may be formed in each of the regions **402** and may include a gate oxide having a thickness that is proportional to the region's voltage threshold (e.g., a transistor formed in the super high voltage region **402-c** may have a thicker gate oxide than a transistor formed in the super low voltage region **402-a**).

(45) FIG. 5 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **500** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **500** may illustrate the formation of one or more liners **501** (e.g., one or more oxide liners) in within each of the trenches **401** that are formed as described with reference to FIG. 4.

(46) In some examples, an oxide material may be formed in each of the *n* trenches **401**, resulting in oxide liners **501** being formed within the respective trenches **401**. For example, the oxide liners **501** may be located on the sidewalls and bottom surface of each trench **401** and may be in contact with respective portions of the substrate **301**, the oxide layer **302**, and the nitride layer **303**.

(47) FIG. 6 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **600** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **600** may illustrate the formation of a dielectric material **601** within each of the trenches **401** that were formed as described with reference to FIG. 4.

(48) In some examples, the dielectric material **601** may be formed in each of the *n* trenches **401**, resulting in trenches **401** being filled with the dielectric material **601**. For example, the dielectric material **601** may be coplanar with a top surface of the nitride layer **303**. In some examples, the dielectric material **601** and the nitride layer **303** may be coplanar due to a polishing operation (e.g., a chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP) operation) being performed after the formation of the dielectric material **601**. Additionally or alternatively, in some examples the formation of the dielectric material **601** may occur over the oxide liners **501**. That is, oxide liners **501** may be present between the dielectric material **601** and the sides and/or bottom of the trenches. In some cases, the oxide liners **501** may be a different dielectric material than the dielectric material **601**.

(49) FIG. 7 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **700** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **700** may illustrate the removal of a portion of the dielectric material **601** from each of the trenches **401** to form respective recesses **701** (e.g., recesses **701-a**, **701-b**, **701-c**, **701-n**).

(50) In some examples, a portion of the dielectric material **601** that was formed in each of the trenches **401** may be removed. For example, an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation) may be performed on each formed dielectric material **601**. As a result, respective recesses **701** may be formed in each trench **401**. That is, the etching operation may remove a portion of the dielectric material **601** such that an upper surface of the dielectric material **601** is below an upper surface of the substrate **301**. Thus, respective sidewalls of the oxide layer **302** and the nitride layer **303** may be exposed.

(51) FIG. 8 illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **800** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **800** may illustrate the formation of a spacer material **801** above an upper surface of the nitride layer **303** and within each respective recess **701** that were formed as described with

reference to FIG. 7.

(52) In some examples, the spacer material **801** may be formed within each recess **701** and above an upper surface of the nitride layer **303**. For example, the spacer material **801** may be formed continuously across the nitride layer **303** and within each recess **701** such that it begins above the nitride layer **303** adjacent to the recess **701-a** (e.g., on a first side of the recess **701-a**) and ends above the nitride layer **303** adjacent to the recess **701-n** (e.g., on a second side of the recess **701-n**). Additionally or alternatively, the spacer material **801** may be in contact with at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the nitride layer **303** within each recess **701**, at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the oxide layer **302** within each recess **701**, and an upper surface of the substrate **301** within each recess **701**. In some examples, the spacer material **801** may also be in contact with at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the substrate **301** within each recess **701**.

(53) FIG. **9** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **900** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **900** may illustrate the removal (e.g., the etching) of a portion of the spacer material **801** from within each respective recess **701** that was formed as described with reference to FIG. 7.

(54) In some examples, a portion of the spacer material **801** that was formed in each of the recesses **701** may be removed. For example, a directional etching operation (e.g., a dry etching operation) may be performed the spacer material **801** within each recess to remove at least a portion of the spacer material **801**. The etching operation may remove at least a portion of the spacer material **801** in contact with an upper surface of the substrate **301**. For example, the etching operation may selectively remove the portions above the nitride layer **303** and on an upper surface of the dielectric material **601**, while leaving the spacer material **801** on the sidewalls of the trenches. Accordingly, the etching operation may result in a respective spacer **901** being formed within each recess **701**. The spacer **901** may be in contact with at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the nitride layer **303** and at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the oxide layer **302** at the boundary of the respective recess **701**. Additionally or alternatively, the spacer **901** may also be in contact with at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the substrate **301** within the recess.

(55) FIG. **10** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1000** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1000** may illustrate the formation of a dielectric material **1001** within each of the recesses that were formed as described with reference to FIG. 7.

(56) In some examples, the dielectric material **1001** may be formed in each of the *n* recesses **701**, resulting in *n* recesses **701** being filled with the dielectric material **1001**. In some examples, the dielectric material **1001** may be a same material (e.g., a same dielectric material) as the dielectric material **601** as described with reference to FIG. 6. Thus forming the dielectric material **1001** may be referred to as forming the dielectric material **601** in each of the trenches **401** for a second time.

(57) Upon forming the dielectric material **1001** in the recesses **701**, the dielectric material **1001** may be coplanar with a top surface of the nitride layer **303** and with a top surface of the spacers **901**. Additionally or alternatively, the dielectric material **1001** may be in contact with at least a first sidewall and a second sidewall of the spacers **901**. In some examples, the dielectric material **1001** may be coplanar with the top surface of the spacers **901** and the top surface of the nitride layer **303** due to a polishing operation (e.g., a chemical-mechanical polishing (CMP) operation) being performed after the formation of the dielectric material **1001**.

(58) FIG. **11** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1100** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1100** may illustrate the removal of the nitride layer **303**. For example, the process flow diagram **1100** may illustrate the removal of the nitride layer **303** using an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation).

(59) The removal of the nitride layer **303** may expose an upper surface of the oxide layer **302**. Additionally or alternatively, the removal of the nitride layer **303** may expose at least a third

sidewall and a fourth sidewall of each spacer **901**. Moreover, an upper surface of the dielectric material **1001** may no longer be coplanar with a material due to the removal of the nitride layer **303**. In some examples, the nitride layer **303** may be removed to expose the oxide layer **302** for a subsequent cleaning operation and channel implantation.

(60) FIG. **12** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1200** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1200** may illustrate the implantation of one or more gate regions within the substrate **301**. In some examples, at least one channel dopant may be implanted in each of the super low voltage region **402-a**, the low voltage region **402-b**, and the super high voltage region **402-c**. The gate regions may be implanted by implanting a dopant through the oxide layer **302**. In some examples, the implanted dopant may be a p-type dopant, an n-type dopant, or a combination thereof. The implantation of one or more gate regions within the substrate may support the formation of one or more transistors in each region **402** during subsequent processing steps.

(61) FIG. **13** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1300** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1300** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **1300** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above the oxide layer **302**.

(62) In some examples, a nitride layer **1301** may be formed over the oxide layer **302** (e.g., the nitride layer **1301** may be formed over an upper surface of the oxide layer **302**). In some examples, the nitride layer **1301** may be a same material as the nitride layer **303** that was removed during a prior processing step. Additionally or alternatively, the nitride layer **1301** may be formed above an upper surface of the dielectric material **1001** and may be in contact with a third sidewall and a fourth sidewall of each spacer **901** as described with reference to FIG. **12**. In some examples, after forming the nitride layer **1301**, one or more recesses **1302** may naturally form in the nitride layer **1301**. For example, the recesses **1302** (e.g., recesses **1302-a**, **1302-b**, **1302-n**) may be located above a portion of each voltage region **402**.

(63) FIG. **14** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1400** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1400** may illustrate the removal of a portion of the nitride layer **1301**. For example, the process flow diagram **1400** may illustrate the removal of the portion of the nitride layer **1301** above the super high voltage region **402-c** (e.g., shown by **1401**) using an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation) or a cleaning operation. The removal of the portion of the oxide layer **302** above the super high voltage region **402-c** may expose a portion of an upper surface of the oxide layer **302**.

(64) FIG. **15** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1500** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1500** may illustrate the removal of a portion of the oxide layer **302**. For example, the process flow diagram **1500** may illustrate the removal of the portion of the oxide layer **302** above the super high voltage region **402-c** (e.g., shown by **1501**) using an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation). The removal of the portion of the oxide layer **302** above the super high voltage region **402-c** may expose a portion of an upper surface of the substrate **301**. Because of the presence of the material of spacer **901-d** during the removal of the oxide layer **302**, which may have a low selectivity to the etch process for the oxide layer **302**, the removal process may not create a divot into the material of spacer **901-d** or the dielectric material **601**, which is protected by the material of spacer **901-d**. Thus, the material of spacer **901-d** may assist in forming a transistor that comprises a gate region including region **1501** that is not susceptible to breakdown due to divot formation in the oxide in the trench region.

(65) FIG. **16** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1600** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1600** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process

flow diagram **1600** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above a portion of the substrate **301**.

(66) In some examples, an oxide layer **1601** (e.g., a first oxide layer **1601**) may be formed above the super high voltage region **402-c** of the substrate **301**. The oxide layer **1601** may be formed by oxidizing (e.g., for a duration) a top layer (e.g., a top surface) of the substrate **301** for a duration. In some examples, the duration that the top surface of the substrate **301** is oxidized may be proportional to the thickness of the resulting gate oxide. For example, because the resulting gate oxide is associated with the super high voltage region **402-c**, the top surface of the substrate **301** may be oxidized for a relatively long duration such that the resulting gate oxide is relatively thick.

(67) FIG. **17** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1700** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1700** may illustrate the removal of the remaining portions of the nitride layer **1301**. For example, the process flow diagram **1700** may illustrate the removal of the portion of the nitride layer **1301** above the super low voltage region **402-a** (e.g., shown by region **1701-a**) and the low voltage region **402-b** (shown by region **1701-b**) using an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation) or a cleaning operation. The removal of the portion of the oxide layer **1301** above the super low voltage region **402-a** and the low voltage region **402-b** may be performed during a single etching or cleaning operation and may expose a portion of an upper surface of the oxide layer **302**.

(68) FIG. **18** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1800** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1800** may illustrate the removal of a portion of the oxide layer **302**. For example, the process flow diagram **1800** may illustrate the removal of the portion of the oxide layer **302** above the super low voltage region **402-a** (e.g., shown by **1801-a**) and above the low voltage region **402-b** (e.g., shown by **1801-b**) using an etching operation (e.g., a wet etching operation or a dry etching operation) or a cleaning operation. The removal of the portion of the oxide layer **302** above the super low voltage region **402-a** and the low voltage region **402-b** may be performed during a single etching or cleaning operation and expose a portion of an upper surface of the substrate **301**.

Because of the presence of the material of spacer **901** (e.g., spacer **901-a**, **901-b**, and **901-c**) during the removal of the oxide layer **302**, which may have a low selectivity to the etch process for the oxide layer **302**, the removal process may not create a divot into the material of spacer **901** or the dielectric material **601**, which is protected by the spacer **901**. Thus, the spacer **901** may assist in forming transistors that comprise gate regions including regions **1801-a** or **1801-b** that are not susceptible to breakdown due to divot formation in the oxide in the trench region.

(69) FIG. **19** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **1900** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **1900** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **1900** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above a portion of the substrate **301**.

(70) In some examples, an oxide layer **1902** (e.g., a second oxide layer **1902**) may be formed above the low voltage region **402-b** of the substrate **301** and an oxide layer **1901** (e.g., a third oxide layer **1901**) may be formed above the super low voltage region **402-a** of the substrate **301**. The oxide layer **1902** and the oxide layer **1901** may be formed by oxidizing (e.g., for respective durations) a top layer (e.g., a top surface) of the substrate **301**. In some examples, the duration that the top surface of the substrate **301** is oxidized may be proportional to the thickness of the resulting gate oxide.

(71) For example, because the resulting gate oxide associated with the low voltage region **402-b** may be less thick than the resulting gate oxide associated with the super high voltage region **402-c**, the top surface of the substrate **301** above the low voltage region **402-b** may be oxidized for a lesser duration than the top surface of the substrate **301** above the super high voltage region **402-c**.

Additionally or alternatively, because the resulting gate oxide associated with the super low voltage region **402-a** may be less thick than the resulting gate oxide associated with the low voltage region **402-b**, the top surface of the substrate **301** above the super low voltage region **402-a** may be oxidized for a lesser duration than the top surface of the substrate **301** above the low voltage region **402-b**. Additionally, the oxide layer **1601** may be partially formed during the step for forming the oxide layers **1901** and **1902**, such that a first portion of oxide layer **1601** may be formed as shown in FIG. **16**, and a second portion may be formed concurrently with formation of the oxide layers **1901** and **1902**.

(72) FIG. **20** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **2000** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **2000** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **2000** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above the respective gate oxides associated with the voltage regions **402**.

(73) In some examples, a polysilicon material **2001** may be formed over the respective gate oxides. Additionally or alternatively, the polysilicon material may be formed over an upper surface of each dielectric material **1001** such that the upper surface of each dielectric material **1001** is in contact with a portion of the polysilicon material **2001**. In some examples, the polysilicon material **2001** may have a uniform thickness across the substrate **301**, however the height of the polysilicon material **2001** relative to the substrate **301** may differ above each voltage region **402** due to the thickness of respective gate oxide regions.

(74) FIG. **21** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **2100** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **2100** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials. For example, the process flow diagram **2100** may illustrate the formation of one or more materials above the polysilicon material **2001**.

(75) In some examples, a tungsten silicide material **2101** may be formed over the polysilicon material **2001**. The tungsten silicide material **2101** may be formed using a sputtering operation. Additionally or alternatively, an oxide material **2102** may be formed above the tungsten silicide material **2101**. In some examples, the tungsten silicide material **2101** and the oxide material **2102** may each have a uniform thickness across the substrate **301**, however the height of the respective materials relative to the substrate **301** may differ above each voltage region **402** due to the thickness of respective gate oxide regions.

(76) FIG. **22** illustrates an example of a process flow diagram **2200** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. In some examples, the process flow diagram **2200** may illustrate the formation of one or more gate regions **2201** by performing one or more etching operations (e.g., one or more wet etching operations or one or more dry etching operations). For example, the process flow diagram **2200** may illustrate the removal of respective portions of the polysilicon material **2001**, the tungsten silicide material **2101**, and the oxide material **2102** above the respective voltage regions **402**. In some examples, the gate regions **2201** (e.g., gate regions **2201-a**, **2201-b**, and **2201-n**) may support the formation of one or more transistors during a subsequent processing step. Additionally or alternatively, after forming the gate regions **2201**, the spacers may remain in the resulting structure. As described herein, the presence of the spacer(s) may prevent the formation of divots in the shallow trenches, thus mitigating any potential breakdown in various regions of the silicon.

(77) FIG. **23** shows a flowchart illustrating a method or methods **2300** that support shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. The operations of method **2300** may be implemented by a manufacturing system or one or more controllers associated with a manufacturing system. In some examples, one or more controllers may execute a set of instructions to control one or more functional elements of the manufacturing system to perform the described functions. Additionally or alternatively, one or more controllers may perform aspects of the

described functions using special-purpose hardware.

(78) At **2305**, the method may include forming a trench in a substrate, where a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate. The operations of **2305** may be performed in accordance with examples as described herein.

(79) At **2310**, the method may include forming a dielectric material within a first portion of the trench based at least in part on forming the trench. The operations of **2310** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.

(80) At **2315**, the method may include forming a spacer at the portion of the boundary of the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the first portion of the trench, where the spacer is adjacent to an upper surface of the dielectric material and at least a portion of a side of the spacer is adjacent to at least a portion of a first sidewall of the substrate at the portion of the boundary of the trench. The operations of **2315** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.

(81) At **2320**, the method may include forming the dielectric material within a second portion the trench based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench, where the dielectric material extends to a top surface of the spacer based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the second portion of the trench. The operations of **2320** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.

(82) In some examples, an apparatus as described herein may perform a method or methods, such as the method **2300**. The apparatus may include features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions (e.g., a non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions executable by a processor), or any combination thereof for performing the following aspects of the present disclosure:

(83) Aspect 1: A method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a trench in a substrate, where a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate; forming a dielectric material within a first portion of the trench based at least in part on forming the trench; forming a spacer at the portion of the boundary of the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the first portion of the trench, where the spacer is adjacent to an upper surface of the dielectric material and at least a portion of a side of the spacer is adjacent to at least a portion of a first sidewall of the substrate at the portion of the boundary of the trench; and forming the dielectric material within a second portion the trench based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench, where the dielectric material extends to a top surface of the spacer based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the second portion of the trench.

(84) Aspect 2: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 1, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a first oxide layer above the substrate and forming a nitride layer above the first oxide layer, where the trench is formed through the first oxide layer, the nitride layer, and the substrate.

(85) Aspect 3: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 2, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for removing the nitride layer above the first oxide layer; implanting a dopant into the gate region through the first oxide layer based at least in part on removing the nitride layer above the first oxide layer; and removing the first oxide layer based at least in part on implanting the dopant through the first oxide layer.

(86) Aspect 4: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 3, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a second oxide layer above a first portion the substrate based at least in part on removing the first oxide layer.

(87) Aspect 5: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 4,

further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a third oxide layer above a second gate region, where the second oxide layer includes a first thickness and the third oxide layer includes a second thickness different than the first thickness and forming a fourth oxide layer above a third gate region, where the fourth oxide layer includes a third thickness different than the first thickness and the second thickness.

(88) Aspect 6: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 4 through 5, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a polysilicon material above the second oxide layer; forming a conductive material above the polysilicon material; forming a fourth oxide layer above the conductive material; and performing a first etching operation after forming the fourth oxide layer above the conductive material, where at least a portion of the fourth oxide layer, the conductive material and the polysilicon material are removed based at least in part on performing the first etching operation.

(89) Aspect 7: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 2 through 6 where forming the spacer includes operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming an insulating material above the dielectric material and above the nitride layer, where a first portion of the insulating material is in contact with an upper surface of the nitride layer, a second portion of the insulating material is in contact with the upper surface of the dielectric material, a third portion of the insulating material is in contact with a sidewall of the portion of the boundary of the trench and performing a second etching operation based at least in part on forming the insulating material, where the first portion of the insulating material and the second portion of the insulating material are removed based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

(90) Aspect 8: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 2 through 7, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a carbon layer above the nitride layer; forming an anti-reflection layer above the carbon layer; and removing the carbon layer and the anti-reflection layer.

(91) Aspect 9: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 2 through 8, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming an oxide liner within the trench, where the oxide liner is in contact with at least the first sidewall of the substrate, a second sidewall of the substrate, the first oxide layer, and the nitride layer, and where the dielectric material is in contact with the oxide liner.

(92) Aspect 10: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 1 through 9, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for performing a third etching operation based at least in part on the dielectric material formed within the first portion of the trench, where forming the spacer within the trench is based at least in part on performing the third etching operation.

(93) Aspect 11: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 1 through 10, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a plurality of trenches in the substrate; forming the dielectric material within the first portion of each trench of the plurality of trenches; forming a respective spacer within each trench of the plurality of trenches; and forming the dielectric material within a second portion of each trench of the plurality of trenches.

(94) FIG. 24 shows a flowchart illustrating a method or methods **2400** that supports shallow trench isolation spacers in accordance with examples as disclosed herein. The operations of method **2400** may be implemented by a manufacturing system or one or more controllers associated with a manufacturing system. In some examples, one or more controllers may execute a set of instructions to control one or more functional elements of the manufacturing system to perform the described functions. Additionally or alternatively, one or more controllers may perform aspects of the described functions using special-purpose hardware.

- (95) At **2405**, the method may include forming a sacrificial oxide layer above a substrate. The operations of **2405** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (96) At **2410**, the method may include forming a trench in the substrate, where the trench is formed through the sacrificial oxide layer, and where a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate. The operations of **2410** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (97) At **2415**, the method may include forming a dielectric material within the trench based at least in part on forming the trench. The operations of **2415** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (98) At **2420**, the method may include forming a spacer within the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within trench. The operations of **2420** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (99) At **2425**, the method may include implanting the gate region through the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench. The operations of **2425** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (100) At **2430**, the method may include removing the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on implanting the gate region. The operations of **2430** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (101) At **2435**, the method may include forming a first gate oxide layer above the gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the first gate oxide layer. The operations of **2435** may be performed in accordance with examples as disclosed herein.
- (102) In some examples, an apparatus as described herein may perform a method or methods, such as the method **2400**. The apparatus may include features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions (e.g., a non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions executable by a processor), or any combination thereof for performing the following aspects of the present disclosure:
- (103) Aspect 12: A method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a sacrificial oxide layer above a substrate; forming a trench in the substrate, where the trench is formed through the sacrificial oxide layer, and where a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate; forming a dielectric material within the trench based at least in part on forming the trench; forming a spacer within the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within trench; implanting the gate region through the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench; removing the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on implanting the gate region; and forming a first gate oxide layer above the gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the first gate oxide layer.
- (104) Aspect 13: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 12, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a second gate oxide layer above a second gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the first gate oxide layer above the gate region of the substrate, where the first gate oxide layer includes a first thickness and the second gate oxide layer includes a second thickness different than the first thickness and forming a third gate oxide layer above a third gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the second gate oxide layer above the second gate region of the substrate, where the third gate oxide layer includes a third thickness different than the first thickness and the second thickness.
- (105) Aspect 14: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 13 where forming the third gate oxide layer includes operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for oxidizing, for a first duration, a first portion of an upper surface of the substrate.
- (106) Aspect 15: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 13 through 14 where forming the second gate oxide layer includes operations, features,

circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for oxidizing, for a second duration greater than a first duration, a second portion of an upper surface of the substrate.

(107) Aspect 16: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 12 through 15 where forming the first gate oxide layer includes operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for oxidizing, for a third duration greater than a first duration and a second duration, a third portion of an upper surface of the substrate.

(108) Aspect 17: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 12 through 16, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a polysilicon material above the first gate oxide layer; forming a tungsten silicide material above the polysilicon material; forming an oxide layer above the tungsten silicide material; and performing a first etching operation after forming the oxide layer above the tungsten silicide material, where at least a portion of the oxide layer, the tungsten silicide material, and the polysilicon material are removed based at least in part on performing the first etching operation.

(109) Aspect 18: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 12 through 17, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a nitride layer above the sacrificial oxide layer, where forming the spacer includes; forming an insulating material above at least a portion of the dielectric material and above the nitride layer; and performing a second etching operation based at least in part on forming the insulating material above at least the portion of the dielectric material and above the nitride layer, where at least the insulating material above the nitride layer is removed based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

(110) Aspect 19: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of aspect 18, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming the dielectric material within the trench for a second time based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

(111) Aspect 20: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 18 through 19, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming an oxide liner within the trench, where the oxide liner is in contact with at least a first sidewall of the substrate, a second sidewall of the substrate, the sacrificial oxide layer, and the nitride layer, and where the dielectric material is in contact with the oxide liner.

(112) Aspect 21: The method, apparatus, or non-transitory computer-readable medium of any of aspects 18 through 20, further including operations, features, circuitry, logic, means, or instructions, or any combination thereof for forming a carbon layer above the nitride layer; forming an anti-reflection layer above the carbon layer; and removing the carbon layer and the anti-reflection layer.

(113) It should be noted that the described methods include possible implementations, and that the operations and the steps may be rearranged or otherwise modified and that other implementations are possible. Further, portions from two or more of the methods may be combined.

(114) An apparatus is described. The following provides an overview of aspects of the apparatus as described herein:

(115) Aspect 22: An apparatus, including: a substrate including a trench region, where the trench region includes a dielectric material; a spacer located within the trench region, where the spacer extends along a sidewall of the trench region and is adjacent to a first gate region of the substrate; a first oxide material above the first gate region of the substrate, where the first oxide material includes a first thickness and is in contact with at least a portion of the spacer; a second oxide material above a second gate region of the substrate, where the second oxide material includes a second thickness and is in contact with at least a portion of the spacer; a third oxide material above

a third gate region of the substrate, where the third oxide material includes a third thickness and is in contact with at least a portion of the spacer; and a polysilicon material located above the first oxide material and the second oxide material, where at least a portion of the polysilicon material is in contact with a top surface of the dielectric material of the trench region.

(116) Aspect 23: The apparatus of aspect 22, further including: a tungsten silicide material located above the polysilicon material; and a third oxide material located above the tungsten silicide material.

(117) Aspect 24: The apparatus of any of aspects 22 through 23, where the first gate region is associated with a first voltage threshold and the second gate region is associated with a second voltage threshold different than the first voltage threshold.

(118) Aspect 25: The apparatus of any of aspects 22 through 24, where a first surface area of a first side of the spacer is in contact with the first oxide material, and a second surface area of a second side of the spacer is in contact with the second oxide material, the first surface area is different than the second surface area.

(119) Information and signals described herein may be represented using any of a variety of different technologies and techniques. For example, data, instructions, commands, information, signals, bits, symbols, and chips that may be referenced throughout the above description may be represented by voltages, currents, electromagnetic waves, magnetic fields or particles, optical fields or particles, or any combination thereof. Some drawings may illustrate signals as a single signal; however, the signal may represent a bus of signals, where the bus may have a variety of bit widths.

(120) The terms “electronic communication,” “conductive contact,” “connected,” and “coupled” may refer to a relationship between components that supports the flow of signals between the components. Components are considered in electronic communication with (or in conductive contact with or connected with or coupled with) one another if there is any conductive path between the components that can, at any time, support the flow of signals between the components. At any given time, the conductive path between components that are in electronic communication with each other (or in conductive contact with or connected with or coupled with) may be an open circuit or a closed circuit based on the operation of the device that includes the connected components. The conductive path between connected components may be a direct conductive path between the components or the conductive path between connected components may be an indirect conductive path that may include intermediate components, such as switches, transistors, or other components. In some examples, the flow of signals between the connected components may be interrupted for a time, for example, using one or more intermediate components such as switches or transistors.

(121) The term “coupling” refers to a condition of moving from an open-circuit relationship between components in which signals are not presently capable of being communicated between the components over a conductive path to a closed-circuit relationship between components in which signals are capable of being communicated between components over the conductive path. If a component, such as a controller, couples other components together, the component initiates a change that allows signals to flow between the other components over a conductive path that previously did not permit signals to flow.

(122) The term “isolated” refers to a relationship between components in which signals are not presently capable of flowing between the components. Components are isolated from each other if there is an open circuit between them. For example, two components separated by a switch that is positioned between the components are isolated from each other if the switch is open. If a controller isolates two components, the controller affects a change that prevents signals from flowing between the components using a conductive path that previously permitted signals to flow.

(123) The term “layer” or “level” used herein refers to a stratum or sheet of a geometrical structure (e.g., relative to a substrate). Each layer or level may have three dimensions (e.g., height, width, and depth) and may cover at least a portion of a surface. For example, a layer or level may be a

three dimensional structure where two dimensions are greater than a third, e.g., a thin-film. Layers or levels may include different elements, components, or materials, or combinations thereof. In some examples, one layer or level may be composed of two or more sublayers or sublevels. (124) As used herein, the term “electrode” may refer to an electrical conductor, and in some examples, may be employed as an electrical contact to a memory cell or other component of a memory array. An electrode may include a trace, wire, conductive line, conductive layer, or the like that provides a conductive path between elements or components of a memory array.

(125) The terms “if,” “when,” “based on,” or “based at least in part on” may be used interchangeably. In some examples, if the terms “if,” “when,” “based on,” or “based at least in part on” are used to describe a conditional action, a conditional process, or connection between portions of a process, the terms may be interchangeable.

(126) The term “in response to” may refer to one condition or action occurring at least partially, if not fully, as a result of a previous condition or action. For example, a first condition or action may be performed and second condition or action may at least partially occur as a result of the previous condition or action occurring (whether directly after or after one or more other intermediate conditions or actions occurring after the first condition or action).

(127) Additionally, the terms “directly in response to” or “in direct response to” may refer to one condition or action occurring as a direct result of a previous condition or action. In some examples, a first condition or action may be performed and second condition or action may occur directly as a result of the previous condition or action occurring independent of whether other conditions or actions occur. In some examples, a first condition or action may be performed and second condition or action may occur directly as a result of the previous condition or action occurring, such that no other intermediate conditions or actions occur between the earlier condition or action and the second condition or action or a limited quantity of one or more intermediate steps or actions occur between the earlier condition or action and the second condition or action. Any condition or action described herein as being performed “based on,” “based at least in part on,” or “in response to” some other step, action, event, or condition may additionally, or alternatively (e.g., in an alternative example), be performed “in direct response to” or “directly in response to” such other condition or action unless otherwise specified.

(128) The devices discussed herein, including a memory array, may be formed on a semiconductor substrate, such as silicon, germanium, silicon-germanium alloy, gallium arsenide, gallium nitride, etc. In some examples, the substrate is a semiconductor wafer. In some other examples, the substrate may be a silicon-on-insulator (SOI) substrate, such as silicon-on-glass (SOG) or silicon-on-sapphire (SOP), or epitaxial layers of semiconductor materials on another substrate. The conductivity of the substrate, or sub-regions of the substrate, may be controlled through doping using various chemical species including, but not limited to, phosphorous, boron, or arsenic. Doping may be performed during the initial formation or growth of the substrate, by ion-implantation, or by any other doping means.

(129) A switching component or a transistor discussed herein may represent a field-effect transistor (FET) and comprise a three terminal device including a source, drain, and gate. The terminals may be connected to other electronic elements through conductive materials, e.g., metals. The source and drain may be conductive and may comprise a heavily-doped, e.g., degenerate, semiconductor region. The source and drain may be separated by a lightly-doped semiconductor region or channel. If the channel is n-type (i.e., majority carriers are electrons), then the FET may be referred to as an n-type FET. If the channel is p-type (i.e., majority carriers are holes), then the FET may be referred to as a p-type FET. The channel may be capped by an insulating gate oxide. The channel conductivity may be controlled by applying a voltage to the gate. For example, applying a positive voltage or negative voltage to an n-type FET or a p-type FET, respectively, may result in the channel becoming conductive. A transistor may be “on” or “activated” if a voltage greater than or equal to the transistor's threshold voltage is applied to the transistor gate. The transistor may be

“off” or “deactivated” if a voltage less than the transistor's threshold voltage is applied to the transistor gate.

(130) The description set forth herein, in connection with the appended drawings, describes example configurations and does not represent all the examples that may be implemented or that are within the scope of the claims. The term “exemplary” used herein means “serving as an example, instance, or illustration” and not “preferred” or “advantageous over other examples.” The detailed description includes specific details to providing an understanding of the described techniques. These techniques, however, may be practiced without these specific details. In some instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form to avoid obscuring the concepts of the described examples.

(131) In the appended figures, similar components or features may have the same reference label. Further, various components of the same type may be distinguished by following the reference label by a hyphen and a second label that distinguishes among the similar components. If just the first reference label is used in the specification, the description is applicable to any one of the similar components having the same first reference label irrespective of the second reference label.

(132) The functions described herein may be implemented in hardware, software executed by a processor, firmware, or any combination thereof. If implemented in software executed by a processor, the functions may be stored on or transmitted over, as one or more instructions or code, a computer-readable medium. Other examples and implementations are within the scope of the disclosure and appended claims. For example, due to the nature of software, described functions can be implemented using software executed by a processor, hardware, firmware, hardwiring, or combinations of any of these. Features implementing functions may also be physically located at various positions, including being distributed such that portions of functions are implemented at different physical locations.

(133) For example, the various illustrative blocks and components described in connection with the disclosure herein may be implemented or performed with a general-purpose processor, a digital signal processor (DSP), an application-specific integrated circuit (ASIC), a field-programmable gate array (FPGA) or other programmable logic device, discrete gate or transistor logic, discrete hardware components, or any combination thereof designed to perform the functions described herein. A general-purpose processor may be a microprocessor, but in the alternative, the processor may be any processor, controller, microcontroller, or state machine. A processor may be implemented as a combination of computing devices (e.g., a combination of a DSP and a microprocessor, multiple microprocessors, one or more microprocessors in conjunction with a DSP core, or any other such configuration).

(134) As used herein, including in the claims, “or” as used in a list of items (for example, a list of items prefaced by a phrase such as “at least one of” or “one or more of”) indicates an inclusive list such that, for example, a list of at least one of A, B, or C means A or B or C or AB or AC or BC or ABC (i.e., A and B and C). Also, as used herein, the phrase “based on” shall not be construed as a reference to a closed set of conditions. For example, an exemplary step that is described as “based on condition A” may be based on both a condition A and a condition B without departing from the scope of the present disclosure. In other words, as used herein, the phrase “based on” shall be construed in the same manner as the phrase “based at least in part on.”

(135) Computer-readable media includes both non-transitory computer storage media and communication media including any medium that facilitates transfer of a computer program from one place to another. A non-transitory storage medium may be any available medium that can be accessed by a general purpose or special purpose computer. By way of example, and not limitation, non-transitory computer-readable media can comprise RAM, ROM, electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), compact disk (CD) ROM or other optical disk storage, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other non-transitory medium that can be used to carry or store desired program code means in the form of instructions

or data structures and that can be accessed by a general-purpose or special-purpose computer, or a general-purpose or special-purpose processor. Also, any connection is properly termed a computer-readable medium. For example, if the software is transmitted from a website, server, or other remote source using a coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, twisted pair, digital subscriber line (DSL), or wireless technologies such as infrared, radio, and microwave, then the coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, twisted pair, DSL, or wireless technologies such as infrared, radio, and microwave are included in the definition of medium. Disk and disc, as used herein, include CD, laser disc, optical disc, digital versatile disc (DVD), floppy disk, and Blu-ray disc, where disks usually reproduce data magnetically, while discs reproduce data optically with lasers. Combinations of the above are also included within the scope of computer-readable media.

(136) The description herein is provided to enable a person skilled in the art to make or use the disclosure. Various modifications to the disclosure will be apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other variations without departing from the scope of the disclosure. Thus, the disclosure is not limited to the examples and designs described herein but is to be accorded the broadest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed herein.

Claims

1. A method, comprising: forming a trench in a substrate, wherein a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate; forming a dielectric material within a first portion of the trench based at least in part on forming the trench; forming a spacer at the portion of the boundary of the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the first portion of the trench, wherein the spacer is adjacent to an upper surface of the dielectric material, at least a first portion of a side of the spacer is adjacent to at least a portion of a first sidewall of the substrate at the portion of the boundary of the trench, and at least a second portion of the side of the spacer is exposed after forming the spacer; and forming the dielectric material within a second portion of the trench based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench, wherein the dielectric material extends to a top surface of the spacer based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within the second portion of the trench.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: forming a first oxide layer above the substrate; and forming a nitride layer above the first oxide layer, wherein the trench is formed through the first oxide layer, the nitride layer, and the substrate.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising: removing the nitride layer above the first oxide layer, wherein the second portion of the side of the spacer is exposed based on removing the nitride layer; implanting a dopant into the gate region through the first oxide layer based at least in part on removing the nitride layer above the first oxide layer; and removing the first oxide layer based at least in part on implanting the dopant through the first oxide layer.
4. The method of claim 3, further comprising: forming a second oxide layer above a first portion of the substrate based at least in part on removing the first oxide layer.
5. The method of claim 4, further comprising: forming a third oxide layer above a second gate region, wherein the second oxide layer comprises a first thickness and the third oxide layer comprises a second thickness different than the first thickness; and forming a fourth oxide layer above a third gate region, wherein the fourth oxide layer comprises a third thickness different than the first thickness and the second thickness.
6. The method of claim 4, further comprising: forming a polysilicon material above the second oxide layer; forming a conductive material above the polysilicon material; forming a fourth oxide layer above the conductive material; and performing a first etching operation after forming the fourth oxide layer above the conductive material, wherein at least a portion of the fourth oxide layer, the conductive material and the polysilicon material are removed based at least in part on

performing the first etching operation.

7. The method of claim 2, wherein forming the spacer comprises: forming an insulating material above the dielectric material and above the nitride layer, wherein a first portion of the insulating material is in contact with an upper surface of the nitride layer, a second portion of the insulating material is in contact with the upper surface of the dielectric material, a third portion of the insulating material is in contact with a sidewall of the portion of the boundary of the trench; and performing a second etching operation based at least in part on forming the insulating material, wherein the first portion of the insulating material and the second portion of the insulating material are removed based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

8. The method of claim 2, further comprising: forming a carbon layer above the nitride layer; forming an anti-reflection layer above the carbon layer; and removing the carbon layer and the anti-reflection layer.

9. The method of claim 2, further comprising: forming an oxide liner within the trench, wherein the oxide liner is in contact with at least the first sidewall of the substrate, a second sidewall of the substrate, the first oxide layer, and the nitride layer, and wherein the dielectric material is in contact with the oxide liner.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising: performing a third etching operation based at least in part on the dielectric material formed within the first portion of the trench, wherein forming the spacer within the trench is based at least in part on performing the third etching operation.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising: forming a plurality of trenches in the substrate; forming the dielectric material within the first portion of each trench of the plurality of trenches; forming a respective spacer within each trench of the plurality of trenches; and forming the dielectric material within a second portion of each trench of the plurality of trenches.

12. A method, comprising: forming a sacrificial oxide layer above a substrate; forming a trench in the substrate, wherein the trench is formed through the sacrificial oxide layer, and wherein a portion of a boundary of the trench is adjacent to a gate region of the substrate; forming a dielectric material within the trench based at least in part on forming the trench; forming a spacer within the trench based at least in part on forming the dielectric material within trench; implanting the gate region through the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on forming the spacer within the trench; removing the sacrificial oxide layer based at least in part on implanting the gate region; and forming a first gate oxide layer above the gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the first gate oxide layer.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising: forming a second gate oxide layer above a second gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the first gate oxide layer above the gate region of the substrate, wherein the first gate oxide layer comprises a first thickness and the second gate oxide layer comprises a second thickness different than the first thickness; and forming a third gate oxide layer above a third gate region of the substrate based at least in part on forming the second gate oxide layer above the second gate region of the substrate, wherein the third gate oxide layer comprises a third thickness different than the first thickness and the second thickness.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein forming the third gate oxide layer comprises: oxidizing, for a first duration, a first portion of an upper surface of the substrate.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein forming the second gate oxide layer comprises: oxidizing, for a second duration greater than a first duration, a second portion of an upper surface of the substrate.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein forming the first gate oxide layer comprises: oxidizing, for a third duration greater than a first duration and a second duration, a third portion of an upper surface of the substrate.

17. The method of claim 12, further comprising: forming a polysilicon material above the first gate oxide layer; forming a tungsten silicide material above the polysilicon material; forming an oxide layer above the tungsten silicide material; and performing a first etching operation after forming the oxide layer above the tungsten silicide material, wherein at least a portion of the oxide layer, the

tungsten silicide material, and the polysilicon material are removed based at least in part on performing the first etching operation.

18. The method of claim 12, further comprising: forming a nitride layer above the sacrificial oxide layer, wherein forming the spacer comprises: forming an insulating material above at least a portion of the dielectric material and above the nitride layer; and performing a second etching operation based at least in part on forming the insulating material above at least the portion of the dielectric material and above the nitride layer, wherein at least the insulating material above the nitride layer is removed based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising: forming the dielectric material within the trench for a second time based at least in part on performing the second etching operation.

20. The method of claim 18, further comprising: forming an oxide liner within the trench, wherein the oxide liner is in contact with at least a first sidewall of the substrate, a second sidewall of the substrate, the sacrificial oxide layer, and the nitride layer, and wherein the dielectric material is in contact with the oxide liner.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising: forming a carbon layer above the nitride layer; forming an anti-reflection layer above the carbon layer; and removing the carbon layer and the anti-reflection layer.
