

# Scaling Rules for Multi-Finger Structures of 0.1- $\mu$ m Metamorphic High-Electron-Mobility Transistors

Pil-Seok Ko · Hyung-Moo Park\*

## Abstract

We examined the scaling effects of a number of gate\_fingers ( $N$ ) and gate\_widths ( $w$ ) on the high-frequency characteristics of 0.1- $\mu$  m metamorphic high-electron-mobility transistors. Functional relationships of the extracted small-signal parameters with total gate widths ( $w_t$ ) of different  $N$  were proposed. The cut-off frequency ( $f_T$ ) showed an almost independent relationship with  $w_t$ ; however, the maximum frequency of oscillation ( $f_{max}$ ) exhibited a strong functional relationship of gate-resistance ( $R_g$ ) influenced by both  $N$  and  $w_t$ . A greater  $w_t$  produced a higher  $f_{max}$ ; but, to maximize  $f_{max}$  at a given  $w_t$ , to increase  $N$  was more efficient than to increase the single gate\_width.

**Key Words:** Scaling Rule, HEMT, Small-Signal Parameters, Gate Width.

## 1. Introduction

High-electron-mobility transistors (HEMTs) have been highlighted as essential high-frequency devices for various state-of-the-art microwave or millimeter-wave application systems, such as satellite communication, electronic warfare, radiometry, base stations, and smart weapons [1-3]. These systems require not only excellent radio frequency (RF) characteristics but also high-power performances for their specific applications [4]. The enhancement of power characteristics can be achieved by improving the current level or breakdown voltage of the HEMTs. A variety of methods have been used to increase the power performance of HEMTs these include the GaN/AlGaIn material system [5, 6], the gate-field-plate technique [7, 8], and the adoption of composite channel systems [9, 10]. Most of these methods have focused on the enhancement of transistor power by increasing the breakdown voltage. These technologies, however, have some drawbacks, such as high cost and difficulty in material growth of the composite channel HEMTs, poor RF characteristics of the GaN HEMTs, and low electron mobility and large increase in the parasitic capacitances of the gate-field-plated HEMTs. As a consequence, in many application achieving a large current level by simply increasing the transistor gate\_width ( $w$ ) has been one of the most economic and practical

methods in terms of circuit design and device fabrication.

A very long gate width or multi-finger gates are effective, but an increase in  $w$  gives rise to a large gate resistance ( $R_g$ ), thereby causing degradation of noise characteristics [11] and the maximum frequency of oscillation ( $f_{max}$ ) [12]. Therefore, it is preferable to achieve a long effective gate width with no significant increase or even reduction in  $R_g$ . The use of a wide-head T-gate was reported [11] as an exemplary method for suppressing  $R_g$ ; however, this technique has a limit in expanding the gate head because high source-to-drain channel resistance is unavoidable under increased source-drain spacing for accommodating a wide gate-head dimension; consequently, the structural instability of the T-gate increases in this structure. Even though studies [13-15] have documented the critical role of  $R_g$  in the high-frequency characteristics of HEMTs based on a small-signal-equivalent circuit model, there has been minimal investigation in reducing  $R_g$  in HEMTs with long gate\_widths or multi-finger gates. In this study, we investigated the multi-finger structures of the HEMTs affecting  $R_g$  and high-frequency characteristics. Because  $R_g$  is strongly influenced by a number of gate\_fingers ( $N$ ) and gate\_widths ( $w$ ) of the device structure, we examined the effects of all these parameters on  $R_g$  and the device characteristics by using various combinations of struc-

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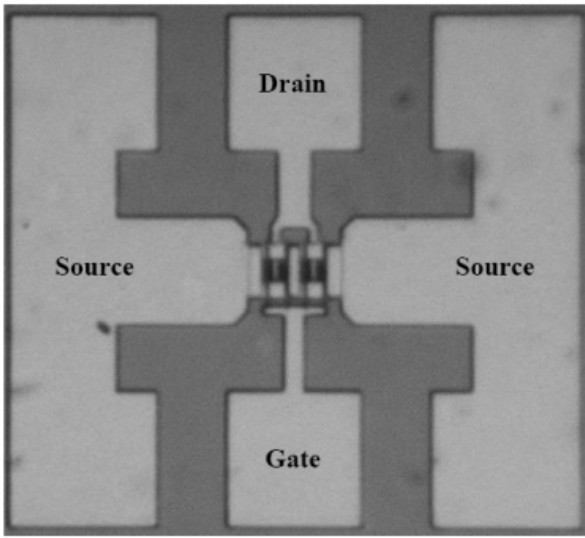


Fig. 1. Micrograph of the fabricated chip with the four-finger metamorphic high-electron-mobility transistors.

tural parameters for the 0.1- $\mu\text{m}$  depletion-mode InGaAs/InAlAs metamorphic HEMT (MHEMT). To investigate the effects of  $N$  and  $w$ , 12 different gate peripheries were fabricated with various gate fingers (2, 4, and 6) and gate widths (25, 40, 50, and 70  $\mu\text{m}$ ). Except for the variations in  $N$  and  $w$ , we maintained the same epitaxial structure, gate length of 0.1- $\mu\text{m}$ , and source-drain spacing of 2- $\mu\text{m}$  for all fabricated devices, as described in the next section.

The MHEMT micrograph of the HEMT with four fingers is shown in Fig. 1.

## II. Device Fabrication

As shown in Fig. 2, the MHEMT epitaxial structure was grown by molecular beam epitaxy on a semi-insulating GaAs substrate. The structures consisted of the following layers from the bottom: a 1000-nm  $\text{In}_x\text{Al}_{1-x}\text{As}$  linearly graded buffer layer with an indium mole fraction,  $x$ , linearly graded from 0 to 0.5; a 300-nm undoped  $\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$  buffer layer; a silicon delta-doped plane ( $1.3 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$ ), a 4-nm undoped  $\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$  spacer layer; a 23-nm undoped  $\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Ga}_{0.47}\text{As}$  channel layer; a 3-nm undoped  $\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$  spacer layer; a silicon delta-doped plane ( $4.5 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$ ); a 15-nm undoped  $\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$  Schottky barrier layer; and a 15-nm n-type  $\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Ga}_{0.47}\text{As}$  cap layer ( $6 \times 10^{18}/\text{cm}^3$ ). The grown epitaxial layer showed a two-dimensional electron carrier density ( $n_s$ ) of about  $3.5 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$  and a Hall mobility of about  $9,700 \text{ cm}^2/\text{Vsec}$  at room temperature.

To fabricate the MHEMTs, we first isolated active areas by using mesa etching with an etchant of phosphoric acid/ $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (1:1:60) to reduce the thickness to

n <sup>+</sup> Cap Layer	( $6 \times 10^{18}/\text{cm}^3$ )	$\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Ga}_{0.47}\text{As}$	15 nm
i - Schottky Barrier Layer		$\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$	15 nm
i - Spacer Layer	Si delta doping ( $4.5 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$ )	$\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$	3 nm
i - Channel Layer		$\text{In}_{0.53}\text{Ga}_{0.47}\text{As}$	23 nm
i - Spacer Layer		$\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$	4 nm
i - Buffer Layer	Si delta doping ( $1.3 \times 10^{12}/\text{cm}^2$ )	$\text{In}_{0.52}\text{Al}_{0.48}\text{As}$	300 nm
i - Graded buffer Layer		$\text{In}_x\text{Al}_{1-x}\text{As}$ ( $X = 0 \sim 0.5$ )	1000 nm
Semi - insulating GaAs Substrate			

Fig. 2. Epitaxial structure of the metamorphic high-electron-mobility transistor.

200-nm. AuGe/Ni/Au (140/30/160 nm) ohmic metalization showed a specific contact resistance of about  $5 \times 10^{-7} \Omega\text{-cm}^2$  after rapid thermal annealing at  $320^\circ\text{C}$  for 60 seconds in a vacuum. An electron beam lithography system (EBPG-4HR, Leica Microsystems Ltd., Buffalo Grove, IL, USA) was used to perform 0.1- $\mu\text{m}$  T-shaped gate patterning upon completion gate recess, gate metalization was performed by evaporating Ti/Au (50/400 nm) followed by metal lift-off. The MHEMTs were passivated with the  $\text{Si}_3\text{N}_4$  films (80 nm). Finally, a Ti/Au (30/700 nm) air-bridge interconnection was made to connect the source pad.

## III. Analysis of Device Scaling

The DC characteristics of each MHEMT were measured in an HP 4156 DC parameter analyzer. Drain current ( $I_{ds}$ ) versus gate voltage ( $V_{gs}$ ) and transfer characteristics of the MHEMTs (at a drain voltage [ $V_{ds}$ ] of 1.2 V) were measured at various  $N$  and  $w$  values. With the total gate width ( $w_t$ ), the saturation drain current ( $I_{dss}$ ) and maximum transconductance ( $g_{m,max}$ ) were linearly increased at constant slopes of about 0.58 mA/ $\mu\text{m}$  and 0.57 mS/ $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively, as shown in Fig. 3. The  $w_t$  is hereafter defined as “total gate width” and given by the product of  $N$  and  $w$ . The scaling rules for these parameters are then simply expressed as:

$$\frac{I_{dss}^1}{I_{dss}^2} = \frac{g_{m,max}^1}{g_{m,max}^2} = \frac{w_t^1}{w_t^2} \quad (1)$$

High-frequency characteristics of the fabricated MHEMTs were measured in the frequency range of 0.5 to 90 GHz using an HP8510C network parameter analyzer (Agilent Technologies, Palo Alto, CA, USA). Cut-off frequency ( $f_T$ ) and  $f_{max}$  were determined by extrapolating the  $h_{21}$  and  $U$  gain curves, respectively, at a slope of 6 dB/octave. The DC and RF data were measured from each gate type of the MHEMTs at six different dies on

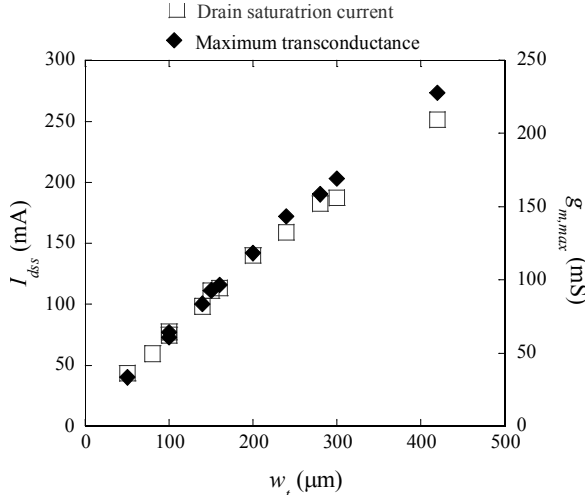


Fig. 3.  $I_{dss}$  and  $g_m$  versus  $w_t$  of the metamorphic high-electron-mobility transistors at various  $N$ .

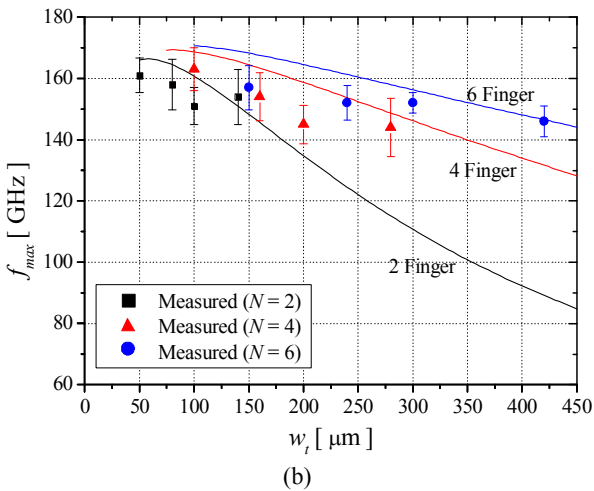
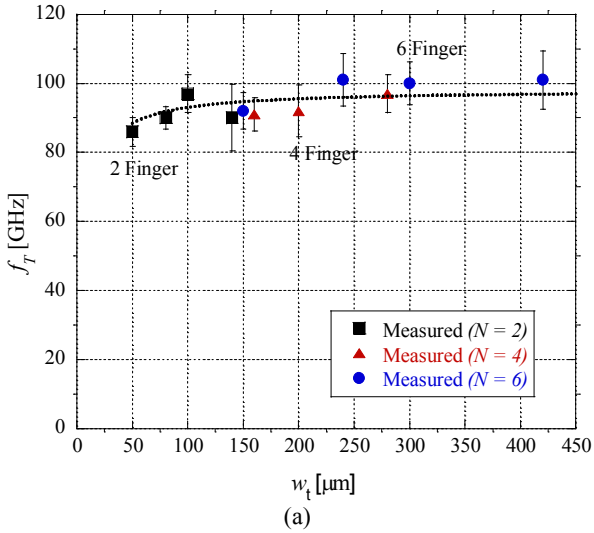


Fig. 4. Average  $f_T$  and  $f_{max}$  as functions of the  $w_t$  measured from the metamorphic high-electron-mobility transistors of twelve different gate types and six different dies (calculation, solid line; measurement, symbols).

Table 1. Fitting equations of the small-signal parameters

Parameter	Fitting equation
$C_{gs}$	$C_{gs} = 0.00089w_t$
$C_{gd}$	$C_{gd} = 0.0049 + 0.000087w_t$
$G_{ds}$	$G_{ds} = 0.0355w_t$
$g_{m,int}$	$g_{m,int} = 0.614w_t$
$R_i$	$R_i = 1.580 / w_t$
$R_s$	$R_s = 190 / w_t$

a  $2.5 \times 2.5 \text{ cm}^2$  specimen. The average  $f_T$  and  $f_{max}$  from the MHEMTs with 12 different gate types measured from six different dies were plotted respectively in Fig. 4 with their standard deviations ( $1\sigma$ ). The  $f_T$  increased slightly in a small  $w_t$  region and was saturated to a frequency of about 100 GHz; on the other hand, the  $f_{max}$  decreased continuously with the  $w_t$  in our whole experimental range of  $w_t$ , and the reduction ratio was a function of  $N$ .

To examine the effects of  $N$  and  $w_t$  on the small-signal parameters directly affecting  $f_T$  and  $f_{max}$ , all the parameters shown in Eqs. (2) and (3) [16, 17] were extracted from the fabricated MHEMTs by the Dambrine method [18] and curve-fitted to simple functions of  $w_t$ . As shown in Table 1, gate-to-source capacitance ( $C_{gs}$ ), gate-to-drain capacitance ( $C_{gd}$ ), drain conductance ( $G_{ds}$ ), and intrinsic transconductance ( $g_{m,int}$ ) were proportional to  $w_t$ .

However, intrinsic resistance ( $R_i$ ) and source resistance ( $R_s$ ) were inversely proportional to  $w_t$ . All these parameters were functions of  $w_t$ . But were not functions of  $N$ ; however, one exception was  $R_g$ , which was a function of both  $w_t$  and  $N$ .

$$f_T = \frac{g_{m,int}}{2\pi(C_{gs} + C_{gd})(1 + G_{ds} \cdot R_s) + C_{gd}g_{m,int}R_s} \approx \frac{g_{m,int}}{2\pi C_{gs}} \quad (2)$$

$$f_{max} = \frac{f_T}{\sqrt{4G_{ds}(R_g + R_s + R_i) + 4g_{m,int}R_g \frac{C_{gd}}{C_{gs} + C_{gd}}}} \quad (3)$$

The relationships of the fitted parameters with  $w_t$  can be explained as follows.  $C_{gs}$  is a function of  $C_{gso}$  which is gate-to-source capacitance per unit gate width, and therefore is expressed as

$$C_{gs} = C_{gso} \times N \cdot W = C_{gso} \times w_t \quad (4)$$

where  $C_{gso}$  is about 0.00089 pF/ $\mu\text{m}$  in our case. In the case of the  $C_{gd}$ , y-axis intercepts should also be considered. A non-zero  $C_{gd}$  at zero  $w_t$  can be formed between

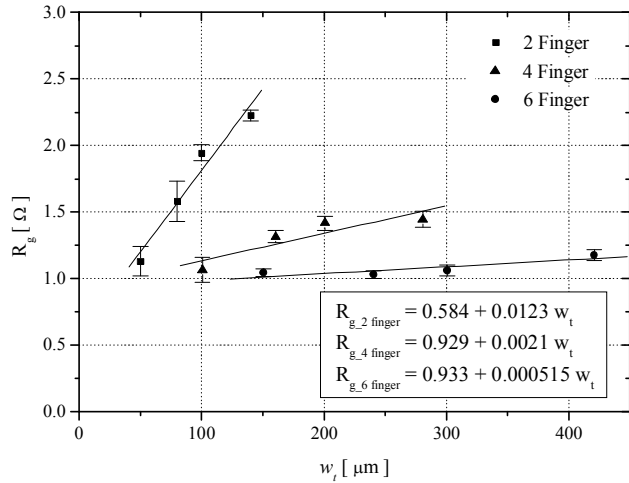


Fig. 5. Extracted  $R_g$  as functions of  $w_t$  (fitting, solid line; measurement, symbols).

the gate bus line and drain pad and this parasitic capacitance, in fact, has been observed in earlier studies [13, 19, 20]. In our case, the y-axis intercept of  $C_{gd}$  was about 0.0049 pF, and the proportionality constant was about 0.000087 pF/ $\mu\text{m}$ . The linear relationship of  $G_{ds}$  with  $w_t$  can be understood such that the total source-drain conductance is given by  $(dI_{ds}/dV_{ds}$  per unit gate width) $\times w_t$ , and the corresponding proportionality constant was about 0.0355 mS/ $\mu\text{m}$  in our case.  $R_s$  and  $R_t$  were inversely proportional to  $w_t$  and curve-fitted in the same way with the proportionality constants of about 190 and about 1,580  $\Omega \cdot \mu\text{m}$ , respectively. The linear increase of  $g_{m,int}$  with  $w_t$  can be explained by the linear scaling rule of  $g_{m,ext}$  with  $w_t$ , as shown in Eq. (1); the proportionality constant was about 0.614 mS/ $\mu\text{m}$ .

$$R_g = R_o + \rho_G \frac{W}{3AN} = R_o + \rho_G \frac{w_t}{3AN^2} \quad (5)$$

$R_g$  is a function of both  $N$  and  $w_t$ , as shown in Fig. 5, and can be expressed as Eq. (5) where  $\rho_G$  is the resistivity of the gate metal, and  $A$  is the cross-sectional area of the gate.  $R_o$  is the y-axis intercept obtained by linear curve fitting. This relationship can be obtained by assuming the gradual (linear) reduction in gate current ( $I_g$ ) density as the open end is approached, as illustrated in Fig. 6, and an essentially uniform displacement current fed from the bottom of the gate to the channel region of the HEMTs [21]. In the open-ended gate structure shown in Fig. 6,  $I_g$  and the infinitesimal change of  $V_{gs}$  ( $\delta V_{gs}$ ) over  $\delta x$  are given by Eqs. (6) and (7),

$$I_g(x) = I_{go} \left(1 - \frac{x}{w}\right) \quad (6)$$

$$\delta V_{gs}(x) = -I_g(x) \cdot \delta R(x) = -I_{go} \left(1 - \frac{x}{w}\right) \cdot \rho_G \left(\frac{\delta x}{Lh}\right) \quad (7)$$

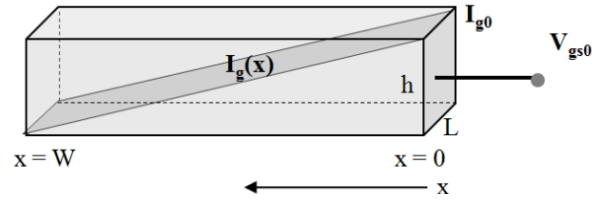


Fig. 6. Distribution of gate current in the gate-width direction.

where  $L$  and  $h$  are gate-length and gate-height, respectively. The minus sign in Eq. (7) indicates that gate voltage decreases with increasing  $x$ . At  $x=0$ ,  $V_{gs}$  is equal to  $V_{gs0}$ , gate terminal voltage. Gate voltage  $V_{gs}(x)$  is obtained by integrating Eq. (7) with the boundary condition at  $x=0$ .

$$V_{gs}(x) = -\left(\frac{I_{go} \cdot \rho_G}{Lh}\right) \left(x - \frac{x^2}{2w}\right) + V_{gs0} \quad (8)$$

The average gate voltage is equal to the integral of  $V_{gs}(x)$  from  $x=0$  to  $W$  and then divided by  $W$ . After carrying out the definition, we find the average value to be

$$\overline{V_{gs}} = -\frac{1}{3} \frac{w}{Lh} I_{go} \cdot \rho_G + V_{gs0} \quad (9)$$

The average intrinsic gate resistance inside the gate electrode region from  $x=0$  to  $w$  is then given by:

$$\overline{R_g} = \frac{V_{gs0} - \overline{V_{gs}}}{I_{go}} = \frac{1}{3} \frac{w}{Lh} \cdot \rho_G = \frac{1}{3} \frac{w}{A} \cdot \rho_G \quad (10)$$

Investigations have focused on  $R_o$ ,  $R_g$  when  $w$  approaches zero [21, 22]; however, the model for  $R_o$ , is still not fully understood. In our case, the y-axis intercepts of the MHEMTs ( $N=2, 4$ , and  $6$ ) range from about 0.6 to 0.9  $\Omega$ , with the corresponding proportionality constants of about 0.0123, 0.0021, and 0.000515  $\Omega/\mu\text{m}$ , respectively, as shown in Fig. 4. Therefore, the scaling rules of the small-signal parameters can be summarized as follows:

$$\frac{C_{gd}^1}{C_{gd}^2} \approx \frac{C_{gs}^1}{C_{gs}^2} = \frac{G_{ds}^1}{G_{ds}^2} = \frac{g_{m,int}^1}{g_{m,int}^2} = \frac{w_t^1}{w_t^2} \quad (11)$$

$$\frac{R_i^1}{R_i^2} = \frac{R_s^1}{R_s^2} = \frac{w_t^2}{w_t^1} \quad (12)$$

$$R_g \propto w_t \text{ and } \frac{1}{N^2} \quad (13)$$

$f_T$  and  $f_{max}$  can be calculated by substituting each small-signal parameter of Eqs. (2) and (3) with the curve-fitting equations in Table 1. The calculated results are plotted in Fig. 4 with measurements at each  $N$  and

$w_i$ . Good agreement was obtained from the calculated  $f_T$  and  $f_{max}$  with the measured data over the entire range of measured  $w_i$ . Some discrepancies between the measurements and the calculations are due to the errors associated with the device process in pattern lithography. Because  $g_m$  and  $C_{gs}$  are both proportional to  $w_i$ , as shown in Eq. (2),  $f_T$  is not a function of  $w_i$ . From our calculations contained in Fig. 3,  $f_T$  showed an almost constant frequency of about 100 GHz above a  $w_i$  of about 100- $\mu\text{m}$ . Below this  $w_i$   $f_T$  showed a slight increase with  $w_i$  owing to the y-axis intercept effect of  $C_{gd}$ , as observed in many earlier studies [23, 24]. Since  $f_{max}$  is a strong function of  $R_g$  as shown in Eq. (3), it is affected by both  $N$  and  $w_i$ . If we assume that  $G_{ds}$  is negligible (ideal case without channel length modulation), Eq. (3) is simply expressed as [25]:

$$f_{max} \approx \sqrt{\frac{f_T}{8\pi R_g C_{gd}}} \quad (14)$$

Because  $f_T$  is almost constant, we therefore obtain:

$$f_{max} \propto \frac{1}{\sqrt{R_g(N, w_i) \cdot C_{gd}(w_i)}} \quad (15)$$

Eq. (15) shows that a careful combination of  $N$  and  $w_i$  is required to achieve a maximum  $f_{max}$  in a given device technology. Obviously, a greater  $w_i$  produces a higher  $f_{max}$ ; however, to increase the number of gate-fingers by reducing the unit gate width is more efficient than to simply increase the single-gate\_width in order to maximize  $f_{max}$  at a given  $w_i$ .

#### IV. Conclusion

We investigated the effects of  $N$  and  $w$  on the RF characteristics of 0.1- $\mu\text{m}$  depletion-mode multi-finger MHEMTs and their small-signal parameters.  $C_{gs}$ ,  $C_{gd}$ ,  $G_{ds}$ , and  $g_{m,int}$  were all proportional to  $w_i$ ; however,  $R_i$  and  $R_s$  were inversely proportional to  $w_i$ .  $R_g$  was proportional to both  $w_i$  and  $1/N^2$ .  $f_T$  and  $f_{max}$  were calculated by using the small-signal models and curve-fitting equations from each extracted small-signal parameters. The calculations showed good agreements with the measurements, and the results demonstrated that a greater  $w_i$  produces a higher  $f_{max}$ ; however, to maximize  $f_{max}$  at a given  $w_i$ , increasing the number of gate\_fingers is more efficient than increasing the single-gate width. On the other hand,  $f_T$  showed an almost independent relationship with  $w_i$ . To our knowledge, this is the first successful demonstration of multi-finger gate-width scaling effects (individual effect of  $N$  and  $w_i$ ) on HEMT devices operating at millimeter-wave frequencies.

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