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Mathematical Model of Low-Temperature Wafer Bonding Under Medium Vacuum and its Application

Wei Bo Yu, Jun Wei, Cher Ming Tan, Senior Member, IEEE, and Guang Yu Huang

Abstract—Low-temperature direct wafer bonding was successfully performed under medium vacuum level. A mathematical model was developed based on the qualitative understanding of the bonding mechanisms. The model combined the diffusion-reaction model of water in SiO₂ and the diffusion theory in porous media. It is found that the model agrees well with the experimental data. This model can be applied to predict the effects of annealing time, annealing temperature, ambient vacuum, wafer orientation, and wafer dimension on the bond strength.

Index Terms—Bond strength, bonding mechanisms, diffusion theory, mathematical model, wafer bonding.

I. INTRODUCTION

DIRECT wafer bonding has attracted significant attention in the fields of microelectronics and micro electromechanical systems (MEMS). The trend now is toward low-temperature wafer bonding as traditional direct wafer bonding requires high-temperature annealing above 800 °C–1000 °C that would produce undesirable effects on the bonded materials and devices.

There are several methods to achieve high bond strength at low temperature, such as plasma-activated wafer bonding [1], nitric acid dipping wafer bonding [2], and vacuum wafer bonding. [3]–[7]. Among them, vacuum wafer bonding has the potential of becoming a reliable low-temperature bonding method.

There are several vacuum wafer bonding methods published, such as wafer bonding in ultrahigh vacuum (UHV) (10⁻¹⁰ mbar) [3], wafer bonding after Ar beam surface activation in high vacuum (10⁻⁵ mbar) [4], wafer bonding at medium vacuum level (10⁻¹ mbar) [5], [6], and wafer bonding at low vacuum level (several mbar) [7].

In this paper, we will focus on the bonding at medium vacuum level. Although the high bond strength can be achieved with this type of bonding [5], [6], the bonding mechanisms have not been explored. It is found that the mechanisms are different from that of the traditional direct wafer bonding as well as the UHV bonding methods. On the other hand, the mechanisms exhibit similarity to low vacuum level wafer bonding to some extent.

A kinetic model for the traditional direct wafer bonding based on the interaction of water and hydroxyl groups on silica surfaces was proposed by Stengl et al. [8], and was further developed by Tong et al. to become a widely accepted wafer bonding mechanism [9]. In the model, water plays a crucial role at each stage of wafer bonding. The governing reaction is in (1). Although this model well explains the traditional wafer bonding, it cannot be applied to explain quantitatively the enhancement of bond strength in the novel low-temperature wafer bonding, such as plasma-activated wafer bonding and vacuum wafer bonding [1], [7].

$$\text{Si-O-Si + H}_2\text{O} \leftrightarrow 2\text{Si-OH},$$  \hspace{1cm} (1)

As for the vacuum wafer bonding, the bonding mechanisms at different levels of vacuum are found to be distinct. For low vacuum level wafer bonding, the enhancement of the bond strength is proposed to be due to the reduction of trapped air at the bonding interface, which in turn increases the bondable area at the bonding interface and allow for the development of covalent bonds (siloxane) [7]. However, in UHV wafer bonding, two atomically clean surfaces produced in UHV make covalent bonding easier, thus attaining high bond strength [3].

As for the medium vacuum level wafer bonding, its mechanisms are rarely discussed even qualitatively [5], [6]. To our knowledge, no mathematical model has been established for the medium vacuum level wafer bonding. In this paper, we will develop a mathematical model for the medium vacuum wafer bonding by combining the diffusion–reaction theory and the theory of Knudsen diffusion in porous media. To verify our model, Si to SiO₂ direct wafer bonding was conducted at both the medium vacuum level and at air atmosphere.

II. EXPERIMENT

Bare silicon wafers and silicon wafers with thermal oxide were used in this work. The silicon wafers are standard bare CZ-grown 4-in, p-type, (100) wafers with resistivity of 1–50 Ω cm. The silicon wafers with thermal oxide of 500–600 nm thickness are also of (100) orientation. The bonding procedures were described elsewhere [5], [6]. Only Si-SiO₂ wafer bonding was performed in present work for the fabrication of SOI structure. The bond strength was measured by pull test using an Instron tensile testing machine.

In this paper, both the vacuum and air wafer bonding were performed at 200 °C, 300 °C, 400 °C, and 500°C with different annealing time of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 h, respectively. To obtain perfect bonding, wafers were also bonded in an oven with N₂ ambient at 800 °C for 100 h.

III. MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Because the two wafers were prebonded at room temperature prior to loading into the vacuum chamber in our experiments,
medium vacuum cannot take effect as UHV does [3]. Therefore, the mechanisms of UHV wafer bonding are not applicable in our case. Based on the mechanisms of low vacuum level wafer bonding [7], we propose that water plays a crucial role in the medium vacuum level wafer bonding and the enhancement of bond strength compared with traditional wafer bonding is due to the acceleration effect on water diffusion due to vacuum ambient.

Also, another significant basic point of our model is that the bonding interface is porous in nature right after room temperature bonding due to the surface roughness and the resulting void areas that contain neither water molecules bonded by hydrogen bonds nor Si–O–Si bonds. These void areas can be viewed as pores in the interface region called interlayer. As more bonding sites are bonded through (1), the interface gradually close up, and thus, changing the interlayer to amorphous-like SiO$_2$ in the annealing process. In other words, the diffusion coefficient of water along the interface will be time-dependent.

To develop a mathematical model for the mechanisms of the medium level vacuum bonding, and for the sake of simplification, we neglect the diffusion of other trapped gases, such as nitrogen, hydrogen, and so on. The justification for this assumption will be shown from the computation results shown below.

A. Identification of Diffusion Mechanism of Water

As water diffusion plays a crucial role in the bonding mechanisms, the mechanism of water diffusion in the porous interface needs to be determined. To begin, we first calculate the mean free path of water diffusion $\lambda$, which is given as follows [10]:

$$\lambda = \frac{kT}{\sqrt{2}\pi dP} = \frac{kT}{\sqrt{2}\pi d^2P_{\text{sat}}/\text{RH}}$$

$$= \frac{1.38 \times 10^{-23} \times 298}{\sqrt{2\pi} \times (4 \times 10^{-10})^2 \times 3100/50} \approx 9.2 \times 10^{-5} \text{ m}$$ (2)

where $\lambda$ is the mean free path in m, $k$ is the Boltzmann constant, $T$ is the absolute temperature in $K$, $d$ is the diameter of water molecule, $P$ is the partial pressure of water in Pa, and RH is the relative humidity.

From Tong’s model [9], the distance between the two bonded wafers via hydrogen bonds is around 10 Å after room temperature bonding. This separation, together with the distance due to microroughness of the bonding surface that is around 5 Å on the average, the mean pore diameter can be estimated to be around 15 Å, i.e., $d_0 = 2r_0 = 1.5 \times 10^{-9} \text{ m}$. This means that the pore diameter is similar to the void size in glass found in the work of Huang et al. [11] and Donnet et al. [12]. Their values are 23 and 10 Å, respectively. However, the actual average pore diameters cannot be determined directly using tunneling electron microscopy (TEM) because the bond strength after room-temperature bonding is too weak to withstand the TEM sample preparation. Also, Reznick et al. performed a comparative TEM study of bonded silicon/silicon interfaces fabricated by hydrophilic [13], hydrophobic, and UHV wafer bonding, and their TEM results for hydrophilic wafer bonding at annealing temperature higher than 130 °C was found to have a pore diameter of 10 Å, and it is consistent with our estimation.

With this value of average pore diameter, the Knudsen number is computed to be [14]

$$N_{Kn} = \frac{\lambda}{2r_0} = \frac{9.2 \times 10^{-5}}{1.5 \times 10^{-9}} = 61.000 \gg 10.$$ (3)

Hence, it can be concluded that the water diffusion through the bonding interface is the Knudsen diffusion [14]. The Knudsen diffusion coefficient is independent of pressure, and it is given by [14]

$$D_K = 9700 \times \bar{\tau} \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}}$$ (4)

where $D_K$ is the diffusivity of water in cm$^2$/s, $\bar{\tau}$ is the mean radius of the pore in centimeters, $T$ is the absolute temperature in K, and $M$ is the molecular weight of water.

Since the interface is porous in nature as described earlier, the effective diffusivity of water needs to be modified as follows [14]:

$$D_{K,\varepsilon} = D_K \varepsilon = 9700 \times \bar{\tau} \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}} \varepsilon = 9700 \times \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}} \varepsilon \bar{\tau}$$ (5)

where $\varepsilon$ is the porosity which is defined as the ratio of the unoccupied space over the total space available, and $\tau$ is the tortuosity factor of the porous interface.

B. Development of Diffusion Model

The diffusion model in this paper is shown in Fig. 1 schematically. Since the thickness of the interlayer ($L \approx 2$–$3$ nm) [13] is much less than the diameter of the wafer ($d_{\text{wafer}} = 10$ cm), we can simplify this case to a one-dimensional model.

The diffusion of water out of the interlayer consists of three paths, one is the diffusion along the interface to the ambient and the other two are diffusions into the two wafers. Their respective diffusion fluxes are denoted as $J_{H_2O}$, $J'$, and $J''$ as shown in Fig. 1. Based on the principle of mass conservation, we have

$$(C_{H_2O,t+\Delta t} - C_{H_2O,t})_t \ast 1 \ast L \ast \Delta \tau = (J_{H_2O,x,t} \ast 1 \ast L - J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} \ast 1 \ast L) + R \ast 1 \ast L \ast \Delta \tau - (J'_{x,t} \ast 1) \ast \Delta \tau \ast 1$$ (6)
where $C_{H_2O}(t,x)$ is the water concentration at time $t$ and location $x$ and $R$ is the reaction rate of the reverse reaction of (1). Here, the width of the structure is assumed to be 1 unit.

In the case of Si-SiO$_2$ wafer bonding, although one Si wafer is covered by a native oxide layer, which is typically about 2–10 Å and has lower density than thermal oxide, it can not hold much of the water diffused into it, which is shown by experiments of Mack’s et al. [15], [16]. More importantly, the water diffused through native oxide will react with the surrounding Si to form hydrogen, which will diffuse back to interface and diffuse outside along the interface. The overall number of gas molecules is not affected by this reaction, since in exchange for each consumed water molecule one hydrogen molecule is released [16]. At the condition of bonding temperature lower than 500 °C and very low water pressure, the chemical reaction of water with surrounding silicon is negligible. In the case of the thermal SiO$_2$-covered Si wafers, although interface water can also diffuse into the surrounding oxide, the diffusion coefficient is quite low. The time-dependent diffusion coefficients at different temperatures are calculated by Doremus’s equation [17]. Comparison between vertical and transverse diffusion coefficients will be performed in the section of results and discussion, which will show that vertical diffusion coefficient is much smaller than transverse diffusion coefficient. Moreover, the vacuum effect on the diffusion of water along interface has been confirmed by experimental results of Tong et al.’s low vacuum wafer bonding [7] and our medium vacuum wafer bonding. Therefore, in vacuum wafer bonding, $J^f$ and $J^m$ is negligible; thus, (6) can be simplified to

$$
(C_{H_2O,t+\Delta t} - C_{H_2O,t}) = \frac{1}{\Delta t} (J_{H_2O,x,t} \cdot 1 \times L - J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} \cdot 1 \times L) + R \times 1 \times L \times \Delta x. \tag{7}
$$

From the comparison between the bond strength of air wafer bonding and vacuum wafer bonding, it is found that vacuum bonding can improve the bond strength dramatically [5], [6]. This implies that the vacuum wafer bonding is diffusion-control process. In other words, we may presume that the reaction rate $R$ is much faster than water diffusion during annealing.

Since there are more than one water molecules per bonding site as shown in Fig. 2, we can assume that one pair of bonding sites contact when $n$ water molecules are diffused out, but at the same time, one water molecule is produced again according to (1). In other words, one water molecule will be produced when $n$ water molecules diffuse out during bonding within the elemental volume shown in Fig. 1. Thus, the rate of water molecules produced by (1) is $R \times 1 \times L \times \Delta x$. The rate of water diffused out of the volume is given by $(J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} - J_{H_2O,x,t}) \cdot 1 \times L$, hence

$$
\frac{R \times 1 \times L \times \Delta x}{(J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} - J_{H_2O,x,t}) \cdot 1 \times L} = \frac{1}{n} \equiv \delta. \tag{8}
$$

Substitute (8) into (7), we have

$$
(C_{H_2O,t+\Delta t} - C_{H_2O,t}) = \frac{1}{\Delta t} \left( J_{H_2O,x,t} \cdot 1 \times L - J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} \cdot 1 \times L \right)
- \delta \left( J_{H_2O,x,t} \cdot 1 \times L - J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} \cdot 1 \times L \right). \tag{9}
$$

Equation (9) may be transformed to

$$
\frac{(C_{H_2O,t+\Delta t} - C_{H_2O,t})}{\Delta t} = -(1 - \delta) \left( \frac{J_{H_2O,x+\Delta x,t} - J_{H_2O,x,t}}{\Delta x} \right). \tag{10}
$$

Let $\Delta x \to 0$, $\Delta t \to 0$, (10) becomes

$$
\frac{\partial C_{H_2O}}{\partial t} = -(1 - \delta) \frac{\partial J_{H_2O}}{\partial x}. \tag{11}
$$

However

$$
J_{H_2O} = -D_{K,e} \frac{\partial C_{H_2O}}{\partial x}. \tag{12}
$$

Hence, substitute (12) into (11), we have

$$
\frac{\partial C_{H_2O}}{\partial t} = D_{K,e} (1 - \delta) \frac{\partial^2 C_{H_2O}}{\partial x^2}. \tag{13}
$$
Substitute (5) into (13)

\[
\frac{\partial C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{\partial t} = 9700 \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}} \varepsilon \frac{1}{\tau} (1 - \delta) \frac{\partial^2 C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{\partial x^2} = D_{\text{eff}}(t) \frac{\partial^2 C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{\partial x^2}
\]

(14)

where

\[
D_{\text{eff}}(t) = 9700 \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}} \varepsilon \frac{1}{\tau} (1 - \delta).
\]

(15)

Thus, we can describe \(D_{\text{eff}}(t)\) as an effective time-dependent diffusion coefficient. Intuitively, as the diffusion proceeds, \(\varepsilon\) and \(\tau\) decrease, \(\tau\) increases, so we can approximate an empirical equation for \(D_{\text{eff}}(t)\) as follows:

\[
D_{\text{eff}}(t) = (\eta_0 - D_{\text{equl}}) e^{-bt} + D_{\text{equl}}.
\]

(16)

At \(t = 0\)

\[
\eta_0 = D_{\text{eff}}(0) = 9700 \sqrt{\frac{T}{M}} \frac{\varepsilon_0 \tau_0}{\eta_0} (1 - \delta).
\]

(17)

As the bonding interface becomes amorphous oxygen as \(t \to \infty\)

[18], we can approximate \(D_{\text{equl}}\) to be the equilibrium water diffusion coefficient in silica glass [21], hence

\[
D_{\text{equl}} \approx 1.9 \times 10^{-4} e^{-711/RT}
\]

(18)

with \(D_{\text{equl}}\) in \(\text{cm}^2/\text{s}\), \(R\) is the gas constant in \(\text{kJ/mol} \cdot \text{k}\), and activation energy of water diffusion is 71 \(\text{kJ/mol}\). Then, after substituting (16) into (14), we have

\[
\frac{\partial C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{\partial t} = [(\eta_0 - D_{\text{eff}}) e^{-bt} + D_{\text{equl}}] \frac{\partial^2 C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}}{\partial x^2}.
\]

(19)

In a heated vacuum chamber, the water concentration is extremely low, i.e., \(C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(0, t) \approx 0\) and \(C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(10, t) \approx 0\); hence, we have the boundary conditions as follows:

**Initial Condition:**

\[
t = 0, \quad C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} = C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(x, 0).
\]

(20)

**Boundary Condition I:**

\[
t > 0, \quad x = 0 \text{ cm} \quad C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(0, t) = 0.
\]

(21)

**Boundary Condition II:**

\[
t > 0, \quad x = 10 \text{ cm} \quad C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(10, t) = 0.
\]

(22)

C. Determination of the Bonding Strength

To determine the bonding strength, it is reasonable to assume that the strength is proportional to the concentration of chemical bonds between the two interfaces [18]. Thus, the strength can be expressed as a function of time \(t\) as follows:

\[
F(t) = k_1 C_{\text{Si-O}}(t) + k_2 C_{\text{Hydro}}(t)
\]

(23)

where \(F(t)\) is the bonding strength, \(k_1\) is the force needed to break one Si–O–Si bond, \(C_{\text{Si-O}}\) is the concentration of Si–O–Si bonds between two wafers, \(k_2\) is the force needed to break one hydrogen bond between two wafers, and \(C_{\text{Hydro}}(t)\) is the concentration of the hydrogen bonds at the interface between the two wafers. For a reason that will be clear later, the relationship between \(C_{\text{Hydro}}(t)\) and \(C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}\) can be given by

\[
\frac{C_{\text{Hydro}}}{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}} = \frac{1}{m}.
\]

(24)

During annealing, the water is diffusing out, and, hence, the concentration of the hydrogen bonds will be decreasing and the concentration of the Si–O–Si will be increasing. If the number of total bonding sites is assumed to be constant, we have

\[
C_{\text{Si-O}} = n_0 - \delta C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}
\]

(25)

where \(n_0\) is the number of initially available bonding sites per unit area, which is equal to \(4.6 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-2}\) [9], and \(\delta\) accounts for the fact that there are more than one water molecule per bonding site, which has been defined in (8).

To determine the bonding strength, substitute (24) and (25) into equation (23), we have

\[
F(t) = k_1 C_{\text{Si-O}} + k_2 C_{\text{Hydro}} = k_1 (n_0 - \delta C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}) + \frac{k_2}{m} C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}} = k_1 n_0 + \left(\frac{k_2}{m} - \delta k_1\right) C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}.
\]

(26)

Since the bond strength of the bonded pair is position-dependent over the wafer surface, the average value of the bonding strength should be used to compare with the experimental results. Hence, (26) should be written as

\[
\overline{F(t)} = k_1 n_0 + \left(\frac{k_2}{3} - \delta k_1\right) \overline{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(t)}
\]

(27)

where

\[
\overline{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(t)} = \int_0^{d_{\text{wafer}}} C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(x, t) dx.
\]

(28)

D. Determination of Parameters’ Values

The next step is to evaluate \(\eta_0\), \(D_{\text{eff}}\), \(b\), \(m\), \(k_1\), and \(k_2\). From the interface chemical structure proposed by Tong et al. as shown in Fig. 2, at an associated silanol site (two pairs of silanol groups), there are equivalent six water molecules as well as two effective hydrogen bonds attached, and two water molecules will be produced when this associated silanol site close and polymerize to two Si–O–Si bonds via reaction (1). For an isolated silanol site, there are six water molecules, two effective hydrogen bonds attached, and one water molecule will be produced when this site close. The results are summarized in Table I.

Since the surface density of the associated and isolated silanol groups are \(C_{\text{asso}} = 3.2 \times 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-2}\) and \(C_{\text{iso}} = 1.4 \times \)
10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-2}$, respectively [9], constant “$m$” in (24) can be calculated as follows:

\[
\frac{C_{\text{Hydro}}}{C_{H_2O}} = \frac{1}{m} = \frac{1 \times C_{\text{asso}} + 2 \times C_{\text{iso}}}{\frac{1}{3} \times C_{\text{asso}} + \frac{2}{3} \times C_{\text{iso}}} = \frac{3.2 \times 10^{14} + 2 \times 1.4 \times 10^{14}}{3 \times 3.2 \times 10^{14} + 6 \times 1.4 \times 10^{14}} = \frac{1}{3/2}.
\]

where the consideration is per bonding site. The initial water concentration right after room-temperature bonding at the interface can also be calculated as

\[
C_{H_2O}(0) = C_{H_2O}(x, 0) = 3C_{\text{asso}} + 6C_{\text{iso}} = 3 \times 3.2 \times 10^{14} + 6 \times 1.4 \times 10^{14} = 1.8 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-2}. \tag{29}
\]

The value of $\delta$ can be computed according to our definition of $\delta$ as follows:

\[
\delta = \frac{1 \times C_{\text{asso}} + 1 \times C_{\text{iso}}}{3C_{\text{asso}} + 6C_{\text{iso}}} = \frac{n_0}{C_{H_2O}(x, 0)} = \frac{4.6 \times 10^{14}}{1.8 \times 10^{15}} \approx 0.26. \tag{30}
\]

Assuming that the pores are space not covered by silanol groups and water molecules, then according to the definition of porosity as defined earlier, the initial porosity is given as

\[
\varepsilon_0 = 1 - \frac{n_0}{C_{\text{Si}}} = 1 - \frac{4.6 \times 10^{14}}{1.355 \times 10^{15}} = 0.06. \tag{31}
\]

where $C_{\text{Si}}$ is the Si bond density on Si(100) surface [20]

\[
r_0 = \frac{d_0}{2} = \frac{1.5 \times 10^{-9} \text{ nm}}{2} = 7.5 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}, \tag{32}
\]

Assume $\tau_0 = 1.57$, (the choice of this value will be explained later), with (17) and (18), we can obtain $\eta_0$ and $D_{\text{exp}}$ at different temperature as shown in Table II.

It is found that the bond strength of the sample saturated after 800 $^\circ\text{C}$ annealing without viscous flow at higher annealing temperatures, we can consider its bonding strength as $F_{\text{max}}$. This also means that all the bonding sites have changed to Si–O–Si bonds between two wafers at this condition [9]. From our experiment results

\[
F_{\text{max}} = k_1n_0 = 35 \text{ MPa}, \tag{34}
\]

Then

\[
k_1 = \frac{F_{\text{max}}}{n_0}. \tag{35}
\]

At $t = 0$, the bonding of the wafers is simply via the hydrogen bonding; hence

\[
F_{\text{min}} = F(0) = k_2C_{\text{Hydro}} = \frac{k_2}{3}C_{H_2O}(0, x). \tag{36}
\]

However, the bond strength at this initial condition cannot be determined as the bonded pair cannot withstand the dicing process for the sample preparation of the pull test. Instead, we can use the surface energies of the samples bonded at room temperature and 800 $^\circ\text{C}$ to obtain the bond strength of the sample bonded at room temperature. From Tong’s model [9], surface energy at room temperature ($E_{\text{min}}$) is 60 mJ/m$^2$, and surface energy at 800 $^\circ\text{C}$($E_{\text{max}}$) is 1658 mJ/m$^2$, thus

\[
\frac{F_{\text{min}}}{F_{\text{max}}} = \frac{E_{\text{min}}}{E_{\text{max}}} = \frac{60}{1658}. \tag{37}
\]

Thus

\[
F_{\text{min}} = 35 \times \frac{60}{1658} = 1.27 \text{ MPa}. \tag{38}
\]

Hence, from (36), we can compute the value of $k_2$ as

\[
k_2 = \frac{3F_{\text{min}}}{C_{H_2O}(0, x)} \tag{39}
\]

and (27) can be transformed to

\[
\mathcal{F}(t) = k_1n_0 + \left( \frac{k_2}{3} - \delta k_1 \right) \frac{C_{H_2O}(t)}{C_{H_2O}(0)} = F_{\text{max}} + \left( \frac{3E_{\text{min}}}{C_{H_2O}(0, x)} \frac{n_0}{F_{\text{max}}} - \frac{n_0}{C_{H_2O}(0, x)} \cdot \frac{F_{\text{max}}}{n_0} \right) \times C_{H_2O}(t) = \frac{F_{\text{max}}}{C_{H_2O}(0, x)} \cdot \frac{C_{H_2O}(t)}{C_{H_2O}(0)} = 35 - \left( \frac{35 - 1.27}{1.8 \times 10^{15}} \right) \cdot \frac{C_{H_2O}(t)}{C_{H_2O}(0)} = 35 - 1.87 \times 10^{-14}C_{H_2O}(t). \tag{40}
\]
where $F$ is in MPa and $C_{H_2O}(t)$ is in cm\(^{-2}\).

Now, let us look back at (16). The value of the constant “$b$” can be determined by treating it as a fitting parameter of (19) when comparing its computation results with the experimental data. The experimental data for bonding at various temperatures annealed for four hours are used for the comparison. The values of “$b$” is listed in Table II.

The value of the initial tortuosity factor $\tau_0$ is set at 1.57. This is the result of many trials on the solution of the partial differential equation (PDE). It is found that its value has a rather limited range around 1.57. Any value of $\tau_0$ deviates from 1.57 will render the bond strength impractical regardless of the value of “$b$.” For smaller $\tau_0$, the bond strength will be larger, and vice versa.

Now that the values of all the parameters needed are known, as shown in Table II, (19) can be solved using the boundary conditions in (20) to (22). Then, using (40), the change of $F(t)$ with time can be obtained. The effect of the environment water concentration on bond strength can also be studied by changing the boundary conditions (21) and (22).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This model can be applied to predict the effects of annealing time, annealing temperature, ambient vacuum, wafer orientation, and dimension on the bond strength.

A. Effect of Annealing

The simulation results of the vacuum wafer bond strength versus time at different temperatures are shown in Fig. 3. To validate our model, we superimpose the experimental results onto the simulation. It can be seen that our model agrees well with the experimental results. From this figure, the following can be made.

1) For a given annealing temperature, there is saturation for the bond strength. The higher the annealing temperature, the higher the saturated bond strength.
2) At early stage of the annealing, the rate of enhancement of the bond strength is dramatically different at different annealing temperature. Faster improvement can be seen for higher annealing temperature.
3) The saturated bond strength can be achieved in a much shorter time under medium vacuum level as compared to that of traditional wafer bonding which always takes more than 100 h [9].

B. Effect of Vacuum

The effect of vacuum can also be examined by looking at the effect of ambient water concentration (relative concentration = ambient water concentration/initial water concentration at the interface). Fig. 4 shows this effect at different annealing temperatures and different annealing time. It can be seen that the
ambient water concentration affects bond strength dramatically, and this shows the significance of vacuum level in improving the bond strength. It should be noted that in the above calculation, when the relative water concentration increases to a high value (close to 1), the model would need to be modified since vertical diffusion of water into wafers cannot be ignored.

C. Effect of Wafer Orientation

Resnik et al. found that wafers in the (111) orientation exhibited higher bonding abilities compared to (100) in case of bonding wafers with native oxides [19]. This was believed to be due to the higher density of available bonding sites as a consequence of enhanced chemical oxide growth rate and its homogeneity on (111) surface. In our model, the changes should be reflected on the improvement of \(n_0\), which is the number of initially available bonding sites per unit area. Then

\[
F(t)_{(111)} = k_1n_0(111) + \left( \frac{k_2}{3} - \delta k_3 \right) \frac{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(t)_{(111)}}{n_0(100)}
\]

\[
= \frac{n_{(111)}}{n_{(100)}} \cdot \left( F_{\text{trsec}(100)} + (F_{\text{min}(100)} - F_{\text{trsec}(100)}) \right) \cdot \frac{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(t)_{(111)}}{C_{\text{H}_2\text{O}}(0,x)_{(111)}}
\]

where \((n_{(111)}/n_{(100)}) = ((1.176 \times 10^{15})/(0.677 \times 10^{15})) \approx 1.737\), available bond densities of (111) and (100) orientation are \(1.176 \times 10^{15}\) cm\(^{-2}\) and \(0.677 \times 10^{15}\) cm\(^{-2}\), respectively [20].

The simulation results are shown in Fig. 5. It is obvious that (111)-oriented wafer bonding has higher bond strength than (100)-oriented wafer bonding which is in good agreement with the observation by Resnick et al. [19].

D. Effect of Wafer Dimension

Four-inch wafers are most commonly used in almost all papers published related to wafer bonding. What is the influence of dimension of as-bonded wafers on final bonding quality? The model derived in this work can predict the influence of wafer dimension on bond strength as shown in Fig. 5. From this figure, we can find that the wafer dimension has obvious influence on the bond strength: with the same annealing process, the larger the wafer, the lower the bond strength will be. It is easy to qualitatively understand this result from the basis of this model, diffusion of water trapped and produced at the interface. When the dimension is larger, the diffusion of water to ambient does need longer time. Also, more of the water will be trapped in the “dead” pore (without any channel connected to ambient) in the process of annealing. Therefore, lower bond strength is caused.

The experimental verification to study the effect of vacuum level, wafer orientation, and wafer dimension are in process now.

Finally, to further verify the simplification by ignoring the diffusion into surrounding thermal oxide, the transverse diffusion coefficients of water along the interface at different temperatures in first 5 h are shown in Table III. From Tables I and III, it can be seen that the vertical diffusion coefficients are at least \(10^8\) orders smaller than the transverse diffusion coefficients. Therefore, the simplification is acceptable.
V. CONCLUSION

Direct wafer bonding was performed under medium vacuum ($10^{-4}$ mbar). The samples were annealed for different times at different temperatures. A mathematical model of low-temperature vacuum wafer bonding was constructed based on water diffusion and reaction, which has a crucial impact on the bond strength. The results predicted by this model agree well with the experimental results. With this model, the effects of annealing time, annealing temperature, vacuum level, wafer orientation, and wafer dimension on the bond strength are studied.

REFERENCES


