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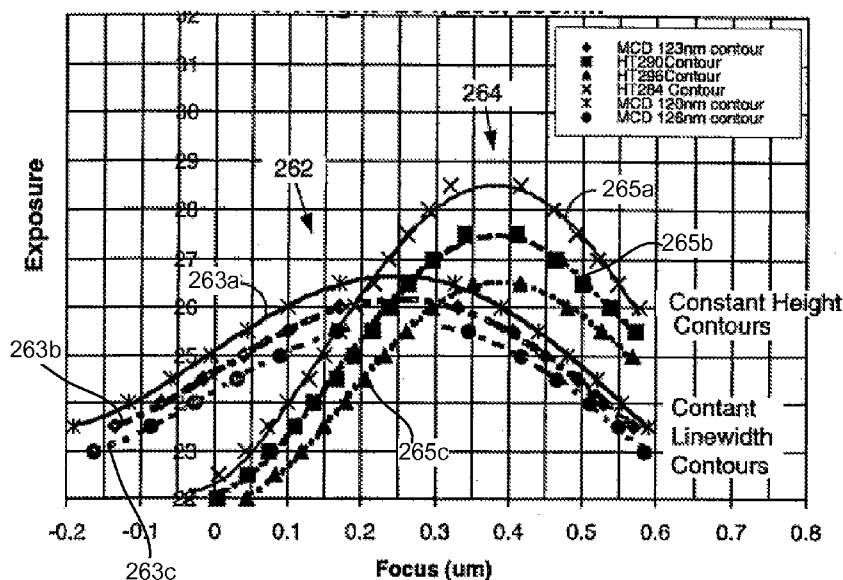


Figure 2

(57) Abstract: Disclosed are apparatus and methods for determining optimal focus for a photolithography system. A plurality of optical signals are acquired from a particular target located in a plurality of fields on a semiconductor wafer, and the fields were formed using different process parameters, including different focus values. A feature is extracted from the optical signals related to changes in focus. A symmetric curve is fitted to the extracted feature of the optical signals as a function of focus. An extreme point in the symmetric curve is determined and reported as an optimal focus for use in the photolithography system.