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Low Resistance Contact to P-type Monolayer WSe₂

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Abstract

Advanced microelectronics in the future may require semiconducting channel materials beyond silicon. Two-dimensional (2D) semiconductors with their atomically thin thickness, hold great promise for future electronic devices. One challenge to achieving high-performance 2D semiconductor field effect transistors (FET) is the high contact resistance at the metal-semiconductor interface. In this study, we develop a charge-transfer doping strategy with $\text{WSe}_2/\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ heterostructures to achieve low-resistance ohmic contact for p-type monolayer WSe_2 transistors. We show that hole doping as high as $3 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ can be achieved in the $\text{WSe}_2/\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ heterostructure due to its type-III band alignment, resulting in an ohmic contact with resistance of $4 \text{ k}\Omega \mu\text{m}$. Based on that, we demonstrate p-type WSe_2 transistors with an on-current of $35 \mu\text{A} \cdot \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ and an $I_{\text{ON}}/I_{\text{OFF}}$ ratio exceeding 10^9 at room temperature.

Keywords:

Ohmic contacts, p-type monolayer WSe_2 FET, charge transfer, type-III band alignment, $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$

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4 The family of transition-metal dichalcogenide (TMD) materials possesses exceptional
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6 characteristics, including atomically thin structures and the absence of dangling bonds, that
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8 make them ideal candidates for advanced electronic applications^[1-12]. However, it is
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10 challenging to form low-resistance electrical contact to TMD monolayers due to the Schottky
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12 barrier between the three-dimensional metal and the two-dimensional (2D) semiconductors.
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14 This issue can limit the ultimate scaling and performance of TMD-based 2D electronic
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16 devices^[3, 13-17]. Heavy substitutional doping, widely used to achieve low resistance ohmic
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18 contact to bulk semiconductors, does not work well for atomically thin 2D materials^[3]. A
19
20 variety of new contact strategies have been explored to realize ohmic contact to TMD
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22 materials^[18-21]. For n-type TMD monolayers such as MoS₂, there has been impressive progress
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24 where a contact resistance as low as 123 $\Omega \mu\text{m}$ has been demonstrated^[20]. In contrast, low-
25
26 resistance ohmic contact to p-type monolayer semiconductors is more challenging. Recently,
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28 there have been various methods developed to improve p-type contacts to monolayer WSe₂,
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30 such as metal-hBN transfer^[22], MOCVD synthesis^[23], and NO_x doping at the contact regions^[24].
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32 However, further research is still needed to achieve reliable and low-resistance p-type contact
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34 to TMD monolayers.
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48 Here we present a new alternative approach to achieving ohmic contact to monolayer WSe₂
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50 and demonstrate p-type WSe₂ field-effect transistors. Our approach utilizes charge-transfer
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52 doping in the WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃ heterostructure with type-III band alignment. Figure 1a illustrates
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54 the type-III band alignment between monolayer WSe₂ and α -RuCl₃, wherein the conduction
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56 band minimum of α -RuCl₃ is positioned lower than the valence band maximum of monolayer
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4 WSe₂. The energy difference between these two levels is approximately 0.8 eV^[25]. When WSe₂
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6 is in close proximity to α -RuCl₃, electrons in WSe₂ will spontaneously transfer to α -RuCl₃
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8 which has lower energy. As a result, the WSe₂ contact regions are heavily hole-doped. The
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10 increase in the doping level leads to a narrower depletion region such that field emission takes
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12 place to reduce the barrier height (Supplementary Figure S1)^[26-28]. Previously, highly efficient
13
14 charge transfer doping of graphene by α -RuCl₃ has been observed^[29-31]. Recent optical
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16 spectroscopy shows that strong charge transfer doping of WSe₂ is present in WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃
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18 heterostructures^[32] and this doping could improve electrical contact to the WSe₂ layer^[33]. Here
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20 we quantify charge transfer charge density in WSe₂ monolayer through Hall measurements and
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22 demonstrate good p-type field effect transistor performance using the charge-transfer doped
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24 electrical contacts.

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35 To examine the contact resistance of monolayer WSe₂ with an α -RuCl₃ charge transfer
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37 interface, we fabricated monolayer WSe₂ devices for the transmission line method^[34] (TLM)
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39 measurement, which is a commonly used technique for determining the contact resistance in
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41 electronic devices. Figure 1b shows the schematic side view of the TLM device and Figure 1c
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43 presents the optical image of the device where the sample width is 7 μ m (WSe₂ is outlined by
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45 the blue solid line). The 10nm-thick platinum electrodes^[35-37] were pre-patterned on a SiO₂/Si
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47 substrate with separation ranging from 0.3 μ m to 3 μ m. A monolayer WSe₂ that was fully
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49 covered by a few-layer α -RuCl₃ flake (outlined by the orange solid line) was then released on
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51 top of the platinum electrodes. During this process, we didn't intend to align WSe₂ and α -RuCl₃,
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53 and the twist angles are random in different devices. The bottom contact was used to avoid
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4 direct evaporation of metals to monolayer WSe₂ because the evaporation requires high energy
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6 for sublimation and the transfer of this energy to monolayer TMD leads to the formation defects
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8 that pin the Fermi level near the conduction band and results in poor contacts^[18].
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14 The I-V curves of different electrodes at room and low temperatures were measured and plotted
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16 in Figure 2a, b. Linear characteristics were observed at both room temperature (Figure 2a) and
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18 low temperature (Figure 2b), indicating the absence of the Schottky barrier at the contact
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20 interface and the presence of ohmic contacts. The contact resistance values extracted from the
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22 TLM method at different temperatures are presented in Figure 2c, d, showing the contact
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24 resistance values (R_C) of 4 k Ω μm at room temperature and 4.5 k Ω μm at low temperature
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26 (extracted after subtracting the resistance of Platinum electrodes). We also evaluated the
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28 contact resistance using gold/graphite/WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃ contacts (Supplementary Figure S2) as
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30 well as another TLM device (Supplementary Figure S3). Similar results were observed in all
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32 these devices, suggesting the robustness and consistency of the contact interface. This low
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34 contact resistance value could contribute to more efficient charge carrier injection, which may
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36 in turn enhance device performance and overall functionality. We also note that the contact
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38 resistance between metal and α -RuCl₃ is above 40 k Ω μm at room temperature, and the flake
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40 itself has a resistance > 1 M Ω μm at low temperature^[38], thus its contribution to the contact
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42 resistance of WSe₂ is negligible.
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56 To quantify the charge transfer doping level in the WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃ heterostructure, the Hall
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58 measurement was employed. We fabricated monolayer WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃ devices with standard
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4 Hall-bar electrodes (Figure 3a) which are made of prepatterned few-layer graphite (outlined by
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6 the purple lines). We note that the ideal Hall bar would be point contacts and aligned
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8 perpendicular to the current to avoid the pickup of R_{XX} . We use the anti-symmetrized Hall
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10 resistance to remove the effect of non-ideal geometry. Figure 3b shows the Hall resistance R_{XY}
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12 as a function of perpendicular magnetic field B at room and low temperatures. The R_{XY}
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14 increases linearly with the perpendicular magnetic field. The positive sign of the Hall slope
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16 confirms the hole doping in the monolayer WSe_2 . From the linear fit to Hall resistance, we
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18 estimate a hole carrier density of $3.1 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at room temperature and $3.3 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at low
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20 temperature. Similar charge-transfer hole densities are observed in another two monolayer
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22 $\text{WSe}_2/\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ Hall bar devices (Supplementary Figure S4 and S5). The three devices give an
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24 average hole density of $2.9 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ with a standard deviation of $0.1 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at room
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26 temperature. This confirms that the monolayer WSe_2 contact region has undergone heavy hole
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28 doping through the charge transfer mechanism with $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$. Compared to other charge
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30 transfer methods like NO_2 ^[39] and WO_x ^[40] whose charge transfer hole doping is in the level of
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32 $1\sim 2 \times 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-2}$, we achieved an order of magnitude higher hole doping. It is also higher than
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34 what can typically be achieved by conventional gate injection methods using hBN as the
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36 dielectric^[41], where the hole carrier density is typically less than $1 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$. From the TLM
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38 and Hall measurements, we get a mobility of $21 \text{ cm}^{-1}\text{V}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$ in the contact regions. This value is
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40 low because the WSe_2 monolayer is in direct contact with $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ in the TLM and Hall bar
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42 devices, and charges on the interface of $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ can scatter the carriers in WSe_2 effectively.
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4 The low contact resistance to monolayer WSe₂ could enable us to achieve high-performance
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6 p-type monolayer WSe₂ field-effect transistors (FETs). Figure 4a depicts the schematic side
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8 view of an FET device and Figure 4b presents the corresponding optical image. The contact
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10 regions of WSe₂ are positioned between few-layer graphite and few-layer α -RuCl₃, forming a
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12 sandwich structure. The α -RuCl₃ flakes were pre-patterned by AFM cutting^[42] to make an FET
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14 channel length of around 0.5 μ m. Then chromium and gold (typically 5 nm and 50nm) were
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16 sequentially deposited on the few-layer graphite contacts to make the electrodes.
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25 The switching behavior of our monolayer WSe₂ FET was characterized at room temperature in
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27 the configuration presented in Figure 4a. A few-layer graphene and a 30 nm hBN were used as
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29 a top gate and a gate dielectric, respectively. We swept both the top gate voltage (V_{GS}) and the
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31 drain-source bias voltage (V_{DS}) across the monolayer WSe₂ conductive channel. Figure 4c
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33 shows the 2D color plot of drain-source current I_{DS} as a function of V_{DS} and V_{GS} at room
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35 temperature. A typical FET behavior is observed: as the top gate voltages V_{GS} increases, the
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37 FET undergoes a transition from the off state to the on state. The on-state drain-source current
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39 can be as high as 31 μ A μ m⁻¹ at $V_{GS} = -16$ V, where the gate-induced carrier density in the
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41 monolayer WSe₂ channel is 0.7×10^{13} cm⁻², and the overall two-terminal resistance is 28 k Ω
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43 μ m. We also extracted the Schottky barrier height to be 1.5 meV at the flat-band voltage^{[3, 43,}
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51 ^{44]} (Supplementary Figure S6).
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56 Figure 4d depicts the measured drain-source I_{DS} - V_{DS} curves, corresponding to the horizontal
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58 line cuts in Figure 4c, where the drain-source current I_{DS} varies linearly with V_{DS} . The reliable
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4 and ohmic nature of the contact is crucial for the practical utilization electronic devices,
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6 providing its potential in various technological applications.
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11 Figure 4e presents the transfer characteristics of the monolayer WSe₂ FET device,
12 corresponding to the vertical line cuts in Figure 4c. The observed current variation for different
13 values of top gate voltages V_{GS} suggests that the field-effect behavior of our transistor is
14 primarily governed by the monolayer WSe₂ channel rather than the contacts. For a drain-source
15 bias voltage $V_{DS} = -100\text{mV}$, we observe an on-current of $4 \mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$. At drain-source bias
16 voltage $V_{DS} = -1\text{V}$, the maximal measured on-current is $31 \mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$, indicating the device's
17 ability to conduct current in the on state. From the slope of the $I_{DS}-V_{GS}$ curve, we get a mobility
18 of $287 \text{ cm}^{-1}\text{V}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$ for the pristine WSe₂ channel. This mobility is higher than that of the TLM
19 and Hall devices because the WSe₂ channel layer is sandwiched between hBN and not affected
20 by the $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$. Additionally, the device exhibits a low off-state current of approximately 10^{-8}
21 $\mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$, making it suitable for applications in devices with low standby power dissipation.
22 The measured drain current modulation, with an on/off current ratio I_{ON}/I_{OFF} exceeding 10^9 ,
23 highlights the performance of the monolayer WSe₂ transistor with $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ contacts. Low-
24 temperature characteristics are shown in Supplementary Figure S7. The observed high on/off
25 current ratio is beneficial for achieving rapid switching and short latency devices if the on-state
26 current is further increased by optimizing the device structure. Simultaneously, the low off-
27 state current is helpful for minimal static power consumption, making it promising for
28 applications in digital electronics.
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4 The subthreshold swing is a measure of the efficiency of a transistor in controlling the current
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6 flow when it operates in the subthreshold region^[45]. We observed a subthreshold swing of
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8 approximately 0.7 V per decade in our monolayer WSe₂ transistor with α -RuCl₃ contacts,
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10 which is higher compared to that in commercial silicon-based devices (~70 mV per decade at
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12 room temperature). We suspect the rather big subthreshold swing may be attributed to the large
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14 thickness of the hBN dielectric (~30 nm) used in this device. Further optimization by using a
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16 thinner hBN of about 15nm can reduce the subthreshold swing to approximately 0.2 V per
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18 decade (Supplementary Figure S8). And another device showed a subthreshold swing of 0.3V
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20 per decade (Supplementary Figure S9). These improvements suggest that the choice of gate
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22 dielectric can play an important role in optimizing the subthreshold swing and overall device
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24 performance. Therefore we can further reduce the subthreshold swing by using a gate dielectric
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26 with a thinner thickness or higher dielectric constant, such as HfO₂^[46] or Bi₂SeO₅^[47], allowing
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28 for more efficient modulation of the carrier density in the monolayer WSe₂ channel. Another
29
30 possible explanation is that there is a jump of the doping profile at the edge between the contact
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32 region (heavily hole-doped $\sim 3 \times 10^{13}$ cm⁻²) and the channel region (moderately hole-doped 10^{11}
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34 $\sim 10^{12}$ cm⁻²) that may introduce some energy barrier and limit the current. A further
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36 optimization of the device structure with a partial gate to smooth the doping profile near the
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38 edge may be helpful.
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53 For potential applications in digital and radiofrequency devices, saturation of the drain current
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55 is crucial for achieving maximum operation speeds^[48]. At room temperature, a current
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57 saturation can be achieved at all gate voltages within the high drain-source bias region (Figure
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4 4f). And the saturation current can be as high as $39 \mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$. Furthermore, the electrical
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6 contacts exhibit ohmic behavior within the linear region at low drain-source biases. The
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8 presence of this saturation behavior, which is not typically observed in graphene-based FET
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10 devices^[48], is important for achieving high power gains. Because our channel material is a 0.7
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12 nm thick monolayer WSe_2 ^[39], it would be resilient against short-channel effects when the
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14 channel length is scaled down to the nanometer range. Therefore, monolayer WSe_2 with α -
15
16 RuCl_3 contacts could be promising for high-speed field-effect device applications. We note
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18 that our device exhibits relatively low on-state conductance and relatively high threshold drain-
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20 source bias compared to typical silicon-based devices. These characteristics might be limited
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22 by the long channel length in our current device. By reducing the channel length to the
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24 nanometer scale and utilizing a thinner gate dielectric or a high-k dielectric, we could anticipate
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26 improved device performance, including larger saturation current and lower threshold bias.
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28 Further investigations are required to explore and evaluate the limits of device performance for
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30 monolayer WSe_2 FETs with α - RuCl_3 contacts.
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43 To summarize, we provide a proof-of-principle demonstration of low-resistance p-type ohmic
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45 contact to monolayer WSe_2 by utilizing α - RuCl_3 as a charge transfer interface, which enables
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47 the heavy hole doping of the contact region with the hole density of $\sim 3 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$. The contact
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49 resistance to monolayer WSe_2 can be as low as $4 \text{ k}\Omega \mu\text{m}$. Functional p-type FET devices were
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51 fabricated using this new contact technique. Our samples exhibit a drain saturation current at
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53 on-state up to $35 \mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$, and an on-off ratio of $\sim 10^9$ at room temperature.
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4 Supplementary Information: Measurements for additional samples, including low-temperature
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6 behaviors.
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10 11 **Methods**

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14 **Sample preparation and device fabrication.** Two-dimensional flakes (monolayer WSe₂,
15 graphite, hBN, α -RuCl₃) were prepared in the air by mechanical exfoliation from the bulk
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17 crystal on a 90nm SiO₂/Si substrate via the Scotch tape method. The crystal and substrate are
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19 heated to 90 °C to increase the yield. Monolayer and multilayer flakes were identified with
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21 optical microscopy. All the flakes are stored in vacuum desiccators before transfer. We note
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23 that the α -RuCl₃ flakes will degrade and cannot be picked up if exposed in air for one day.
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25 Polypropylene carbon (PPC) and polyethylene terephthalate glycol (PETG) based dry transfer
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27 technology were used to subsequently pick up the flakes at 45 °C and 70 °C in the air. The α -
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29 RuCl₃ flakes were pre-patterned by atomic force microscopy (AFM) cutting to have a gap of
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31 around 0.5 μ m before the stacking process to make the monolayer WSe₂ FET. The devices are
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33 stable in the air since they are encapsulated by the top hBN flakes. Then photolithography and
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35 electron-beam lithography were used to pattern the electrodes, during which the devices are
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37 heated at 180°C for 5 minutes after spin-coating the photoresist and e-beam resist. Chromium
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39 and gold were sequentially evaporated on the few-layer graphene contact and gate to make
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41 electrodes. For the TLM device, the chromium/platinum (typically 3nm and 10nm) electrodes
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43 were pre-patterned on a SiO₂/Si substrate before releasing the sample on them. The devices are
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45 stable for more than one month after the fabrication process.
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4 **Measurements.** The transport measurements were performed in a Cryomagnetics
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6 superconducting magnet system with a variable temperature insert. Samples were in a Helium
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8 environment of around 0.3 bar. Transport characteristics were mainly measured by applying
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10 DC voltage with the Keithley 2612B SourceMeter and Keithley 6482 picoammeter. The Hall
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12 measurements were performed by the standard four-probe AC lock-in method using an SRS
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14 830 lock-in amplifier with an AC current of 10nA and frequency of around 17Hz.
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22 **Data availability**

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24 The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author
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26 upon reasonable request.
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32 **Competing interests**

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35 The authors declare that they have no competing interests.
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40 **Acknowledgments**

41
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43
44 of Science, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, Materials Sciences and Engineering Division
45
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47
48 lithography patterning is supported by Army Research Office award W911NF2110176. The
49
50 WSe₂ monolayer-RuCl₃ heterostructure fabrication is supported by the U.S. Department of
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5
6 Initiative (WPI), MEXT, Japan.
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10 11 **Author contributions** 12

13 F. W. conceived the research. F. W. and J. A. supervised the project. J. X., H. Z., and Z. Z.
14
15 fabricated the device and performed most of the experimental measurements together. W. Z.,
16
17 C. S., R. Q., S. C., S. K., M. C., and A. Z. contributed to the fabrication of van der Waals
18
19 heterostructures. H. K. contributed to the electrical transport measurements. J. X., Z. Z., and F.
20
21 W. performed data analysis. K. W. and T. T. grew hBN crystals. V. N. grew α -RuCl₃ crystals.
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26 All authors discussed the results and wrote the manuscript.
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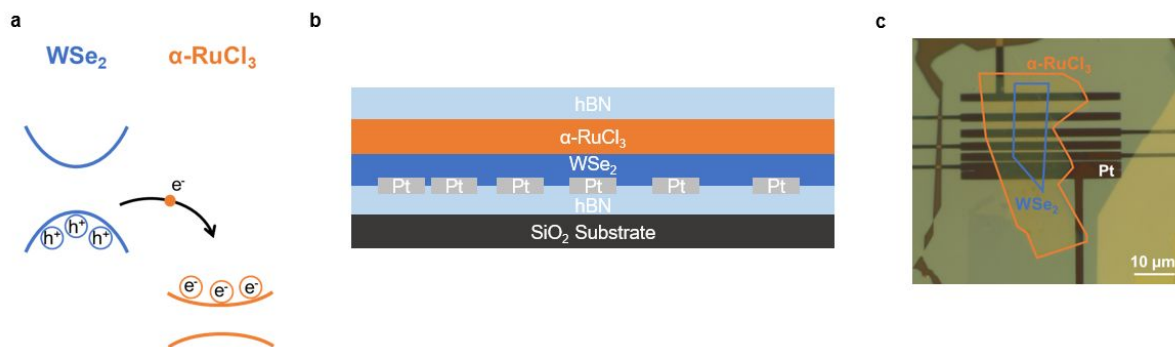


Figure 1: WSe₂/ α -RuCl₃ band alignment and contact resistance measurements. (a) Type-III band alignment of WSe₂ and α -RuCl₃. The conduction band minimum of α -RuCl₃ is lower than the valence band maximum of WSe₂ and there is a spontaneous charge transfer between WSe₂ and α -RuCl₃, resulting in a heavily doped WSe₂ layer. (b) Schematic side view of the device for transmission line method (TLM). (c) Optical image of the TLM device. The separation between electrodes ranges from 0.3 μ m to 3 μ m. The blue and orange shapes mark the monolayer WSe₂ and α -RuCl₃ region, respectively.

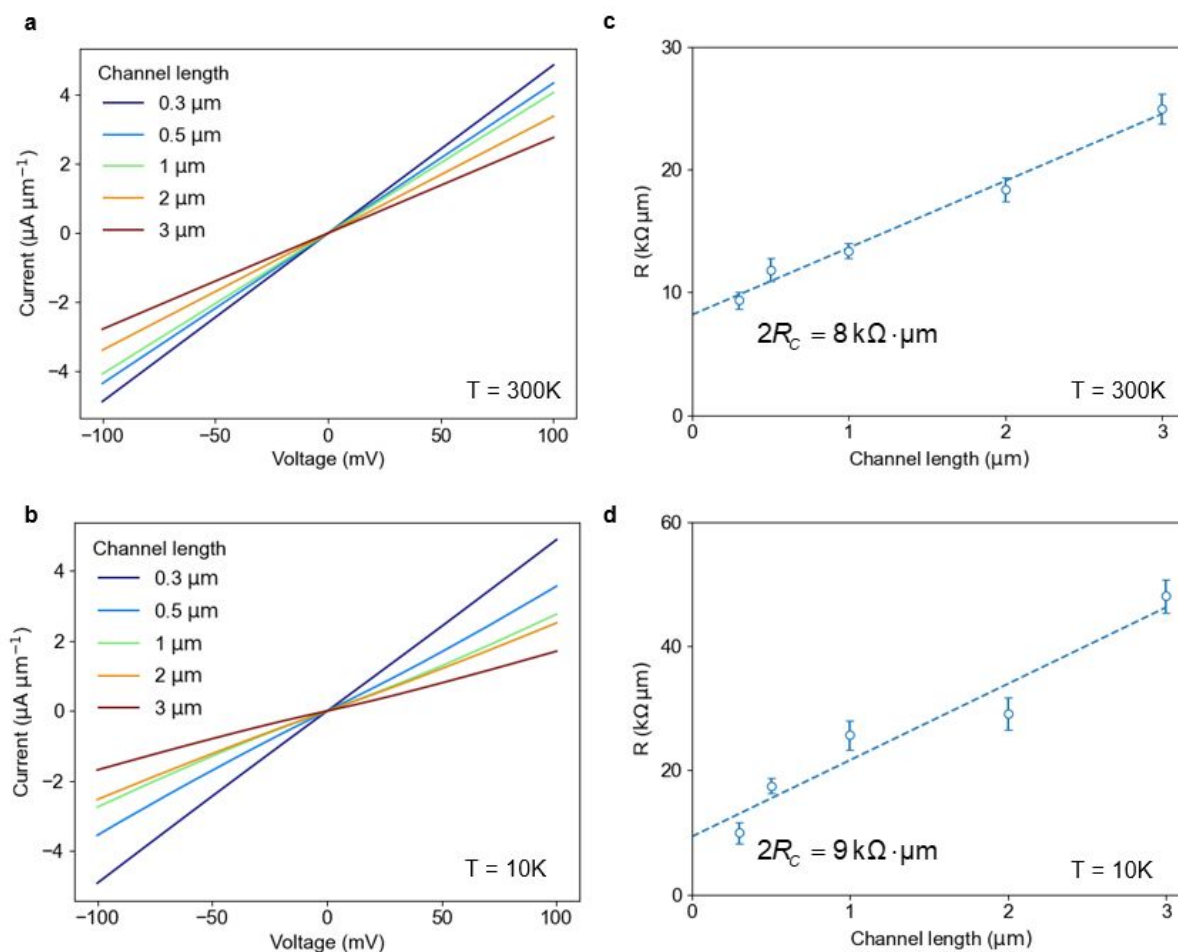


Figure 2: Contact resistance to a monolayer WSe₂ with the Pt/WSe₂/α-RuCl₃ contact. (a and b) I-V curves for different channel lengths at room temperature (a) and T = 10K (b). Linear behavior is observed at both room temperature and low temperature, indicating the absence of a contact barrier. (c) and (d) Contact resistance R_C extracted using TLM at room temperature (c) and T = 10K (d).

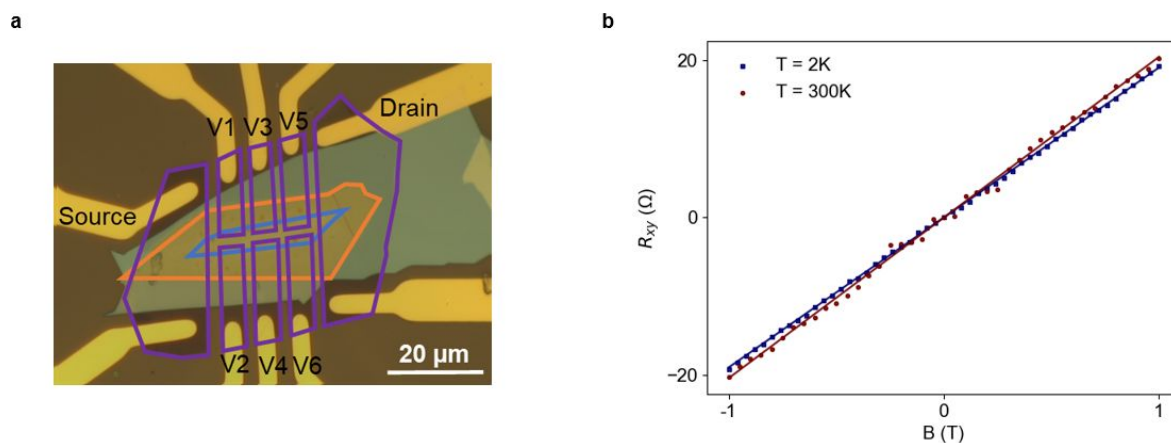


Figure 3: Determination of carrier density in the charge-transfer doped WSe_2 with $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$. (a) Optical image of the multi-terminal monolayer $\text{WSe}_2/\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$ device for the Hall measurements. Blue, orange and purple boxes outline the monolayer WSe_2 , $\alpha\text{-RuCl}_3$, and graphite electrodes, respectively. (b) Hall resistance R_{xy} as a function of magnetic field where solid lines are linear fits to the experiment data. The positive sign of Hall slope confirms the hole doping in the monolayer WSe_2 . We estimate a hole carrier density of $3.1 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at room temperature and of $3.3 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ at low temperature from the Hall slope.

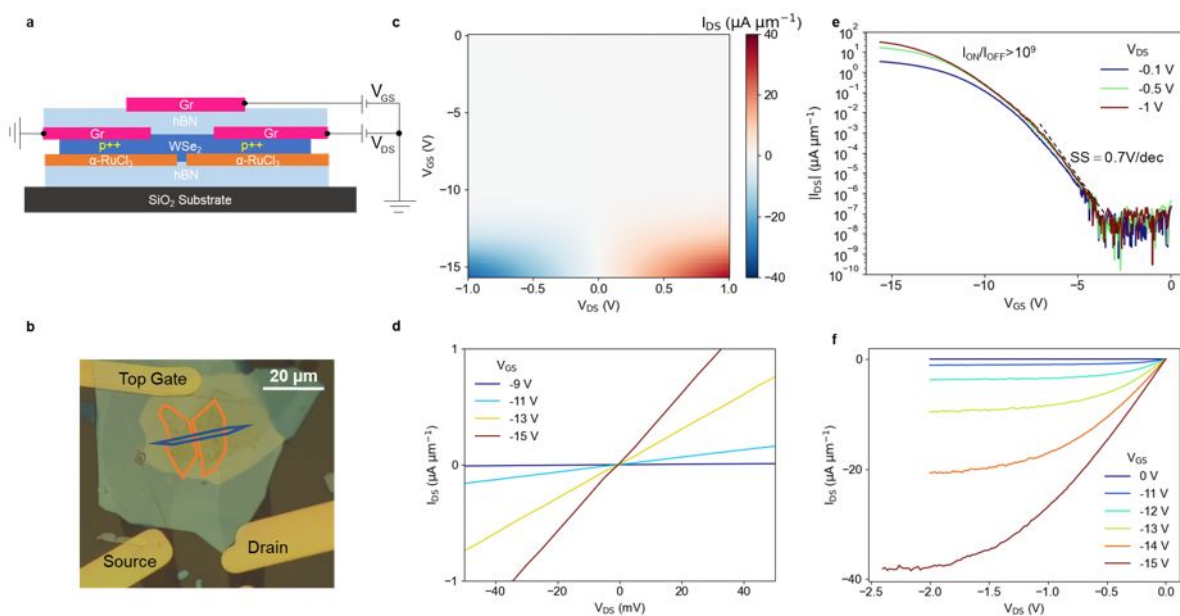


Figure 4: Characterization of monolayer WSe₂ FET. (a) Schematic cross-sectional view of FET device structure. The contact regions are sandwiched by a few-layer graphite and a few-layer α -RuCl₃. The monolayer WSe₂ channel is separated from the few-layer graphene top gate by a 30-nm-thick hBN (b) Optical image of the monolayer WSe₂ FET device. Blue and orange boxes mark the monolayer WSe₂ region and α -RuCl₃ contact region, respectively. The channel length and width are 0.5 μm and 2 μm . (c) 2D color plot of drain-source current I_{DS} as a function of drain-source voltage V_{DS} and top gate voltage V_{GS} at room temperature. The on-state drain-source current can be as high as 31 $\mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ when the FET operates at $V_{DS} = -1\text{V}$. (d) $I_{DS} - V_{DS}$ characteristics at room temperature. The source-drain current I_{DS} varies linearly with V_{DS} at sufficiently high gate voltages, indicating an Ohmic contact in the on states. (e) Drain-source current (on a logarithmic scale) as a function of top gate voltage with drain-source voltage of -0.1V, -0.5V and -1V. For a drain-source bias voltage $V_{DS} = -100\text{ mV}$, an on-current of 4 $\mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ is observed. At drain-source bias voltage $V_{DS} = -1\text{V}$, the maximum on-current is 31 $\mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$. The on/off current ratio I_{ON}/I_{OFF} can exceed 10^9 with an off-state current of about 10^{-8}

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4 $\mu\text{A } \mu\text{m}^{-1}$. The subthreshold swing is around 0.7 V per decade. (f) Drain–source current I_{DS} as
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6 a function of drain source bias voltage V_{DS} at different top gate voltages. A saturation region
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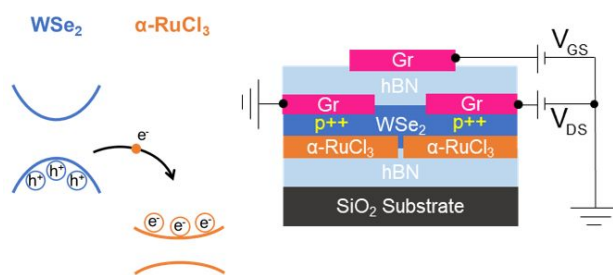
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