The intermolecular vibrations of the NO dimer

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(Received 28 April 1998; accepted 12 June 1998)

The far infrared spectrum of the NO dimer in the gas phase has been observed for the first time, using a low temperature (100 K) long-path (180 m) absorption cell. The spectroscopic results are used, together with mid-infrared observations and high level CCSD(T) ab initio calculations, to locate the four low frequency intermolecular vibrational modes of (NO)$_2$: $v_2$ (symmetric bend) = 239.361 cm$^{-1}$, $v_3$ (intermolecular stretch) = 134.503 cm$^{-1}$, $v_4$ (out-of-plane torsion) = 117 cm$^{-1}$, and $v_6$ (antisymmetric bend) = 429.140 cm$^{-1}$. These values agree poorly with previous determinations based on condensed-phase spectra, indicating that there are large shifts in going from the isolated gas-phase dimer to the liquid, solid, or matrix-isolated environments.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nitric oxide plays a major role in the atmospheric, surface, and biological sciences; interactions among NO radicals are thus of fundamental and practical importance. The propensity of NO to form dimers, (NO)$_2$, has long been known, but there are still a number of mysteries surrounding this rather basic molecule. A solution of some of these mysteries is the subject of this paper.

The binding energy of the NO dimer is known to be approximately 700 cm$^{-1}$, an amount that is larger than a normal van der Waals interaction, but, of course, very much smaller than a normal chemical bond. High-resolution gas-phase microwave$^{5,7}$ and infrared$^{3,4,8-10}$ spectroscopy indicate that the NO dimer has a singlet ground electronic state and a cis structure with $C_{2v}$ symmetry, a N–O bond length close to that of the monomer (1.15 vs 1.14 Å), a N–N bond length of 2.26 Å, and a N–N–O angle of 97°. The $v_1$ ($a_1$ symmetric) and $v_5$ ($b_2$ antisymmetric) N–O stretching bands of (NO)$_2$ have been unambiguously located by gas-phase spectroscopy at 1868.25 and 1789.10 cm$^{-1}$, respectively. The four remaining fundamental vibrations occur at much lower frequencies, corresponding to far infrared wavelengths, but they have never previously been observed in the gas phase. However, since nitric oxide in its condensed phases is made up to some extent of dimers, these vibrations have been extensively studied by infrared and Raman spectroscopy in liquid, solid, and matrix-isolated NO. These studies have not always agreed about the correct locations and assignment of the low frequency modes, but the generally accepted values are probably those given by Nour et al.$^{15}$ and Menoux et al.$^{17}$

We have recently made the first gas-phase observations of the weak far-infrared spectrum of the NO dimer, and have also recorded the mid-infrared spectrum with greater detail and accuracy than previously accomplished. In the present paper, we address the mystery of the intermolecular modes of (NO)$_2$ by employing these data together with results from a new high-level ab initio calculation. The spectra result in definitive assignments of the three infrared-allowed low-frequency fundamental vibrations; $v_2$ ($a_1$ symmetric bend), $v_3$ ($a_1$ van der Waals stretch), $v_4$ ($a_2$ out-of-plane torsion), with reasonable certainty on the basis of mid-infrared observations and theoretical considerations. Our new values for the intermolecular frequencies agree only poorly with the accepted condensed phase values,$^{15-17}$ suggesting that (NO)$_2$ undergoes large vibrational frequency shifts in going from the gas phase to the liquid, solid, or matrix-isolated environments.

II. EXPERIMENT

Most spectra were recorded with the same 5 m low-temperature, long-path, absorption cell and Bomem DA3.002 FTIR spectrometer used previously to study (NO)$_2$. Modifications for operation in the 200–500 cm$^{-1}$ region included fitting the cell with polypropylene windows and the spectrometer with a Mylar beamsplitter and either a 4.2 K Cu:Ge photoconductive detector (>320 cm$^{-1}$) or a 1.6 K Si bolometer detector. Absorption paths were in the range of 140–200 m, corresponding to 28–40 passes of the cell. Sample pressures of up to 22 Torr of NO were used; to put these in perspective, it should be noted that we could easily observe the $v_1$ band of (NO)$_2$ at only 0.6 Torr, and that the concentration of dimers varies approximately as the square of the pressure. The sample temperatures were in a range around 100 K, close to the lowest values possible for the particular pressures used; in other words, the temperature was determined by the vapor pressure of nitric oxide. One spectrum, covering the 100–300 cm$^{-1}$ region, was recorded with a 2 m cell, using a path of 80 m, a pressure of 35 Torr, and a temperature of 115 K.

The NO samples were purified by passing the gas through a cold trap at −90 °C before entering the absorption cell. In the spectral regions of interest here, absorptions by impurity molecules were not a problem, but we did note the presence of CH$_4$ and N$_2$O impurities in the 1200–1400 cm$^{-1}$
region. Many other potential impurity molecules would, of course, have a negligible vapor pressure at our low sample temperatures.

III. SPECTROSCOPIC RESULTS

The first, and strongest, new far-infrared band of \((\text{NO}_2)\) that we observed is shown in Fig. 1. Even though this band, located around 240 cm\(^{-1}\), turned out to be the strongest low frequency band of the dimer, it is still at least 100 times weaker than the previously known \(\nu_1\) and \(\nu_5\) \(\text{N–O}\) stretching bands around 1800 cm\(^{-1}\). Inspection indicated that this was a type-\(b\) band, like \(\nu_1\), involving an upper state of \(\alpha_1\) symmetry, and we assign it as the \(\nu_2\) fundamental because \(\nu_3\) was subsequently located at a lower frequency. Since we have precise knowledge\(^7\) of the rotational levels in the ground vibrational state of \((\text{NO}_2)\) and previous experience\(^3\) with the \(\nu_2\) band origin to be 239.3605 cm\(^{-1}\), we made a detailed line-by-line analysis,\(^18\) assigning over 200 lines to transitions with \(J\leq30\) and \(K_a=16\), and fitting these with a standard deviation of about 0.0006 cm\(^{-1}\). We thus obtained a complete set of upper state rotational and quartic centrifugal distortion parameters, and determined the \(\nu_2\) band origin to be 239.3605 cm\(^{-1}\).

The next vibration that we analyzed was \(\nu_3\), the remaining totally symmetric \((\alpha_1)\) mode of \((\text{NO}_2)\). This mode is readily apparent from a type-\(a\) difference band, \(\nu_5−\nu_3\), appearing in the 1650–1675 cm\(^{-1}\) region as shown in Fig. 2. Fragments of the \(\nu_3\) fundamental band are observed in the 130–160 cm\(^{-1}\) region between lines of the \(^2\Pi_{3/2}−^2\Pi_{1/2}\) monomer band. As shown in Fig. 2, our analysis explains moderately sharp \((0.5\ \text{cm}^{-1}\) features at 1651.7 and 1654.8 cm\(^{-1}\) as being due, respectively, to the \(P\)- and \(Q\)-branches of the \(\nu_3−\nu_5\) band. Originally,\(^10\) we assigned the peak at 1651.7 cm\(^{-1}\) as the central peak of the type-\(c\) band \(\nu_5−\nu_4\), but the higher pressure spectrum obtained here shows that this band has a similar appearance to the much weaker \(\nu_5−\nu_2\) type-\(b\) band observed near 1550 cm\(^{-1}\) (shown in the inset to Fig. 2). The somewhat unusual shapes of these difference bands arise because of relatively large changes in the \(B\) and \(C\) rotational constants for the \(\nu_2\) and \(\nu_3\) states relative to \(\nu_5\) (see below).

There is extensive and detailed agreement between the observed and calculated spectra for the \(\nu_5−\nu_1\) band from 1650 to 1670 cm\(^{-1}\) as shown in Fig. 2. Other features observed in Fig. 2 at 1677 and 1701 cm\(^{-1}\) can be explained as due to analogous "piled-up" \(P\)-branch heads of sequence bands built on \(\nu_5−\nu_1\), namely, \(\nu_5+\nu_3−2\nu_3\) and \(\nu_5+2\nu_3−3\nu_3\). The relative intensities in such a sequence are expected to be approximately proportional to \(n\) exp \((-\hbar c\nu_5/kT)\) for the \(\nu_5+(n−1)\nu_3−n\nu_3\) sequence band, and this agrees well with the observed intensities for the sample temperature of 99 K. Various of these 1652, 1655, 1677, and 1701 cm\(^{-1}\) features have been observed weakly in previous experiments,\(^10,17,19\) but no meaningful assignment has been possible until now.

The \(\nu_3\) state band origin and rotational parameters are mainly based on line assignments in the type-\(b\) fundamental \(\nu_3\) band around 140 cm\(^{-1}\). Figure 3 shows the extent of obscuration by the considerably stronger NO monomer lines arising from the \(^2\Pi_{3/2}−^2\Pi_{1/2}\) magnetic dipole spin transition.\(^20\) Nevertheless, the clear \(Q\)-branch peak at 138.37 cm\(^{-1}\), as well as some individual resolved \(\nu_3\) band lines in the 142, 145, and 149 cm\(^{-1}\) regions can be seen. The complete calculated \(\nu_3\) fundamental band at 115 K is shown in Fig. 4; note the general similarity to the \(\nu_2\) band in Fig. 1.

The successful assignment of \(\nu_2\) and \(\nu_3\) left \(\nu_6\), the \(b_2\) antisymmetric bending vibration, as the remaining unlocated infrared-allowed mode. For this fundamental band, one expects a type-\(a\) parallel band structure, similar to that of the \(\nu_5\) band\(^10\) at 1789 cm\(^{-1}\). Finding this band was difficult because of its extreme weakness. With some theoretical guidance indicating that \(\nu_6\) should lie above the other fundamentals (see below), it was ultimately detected in the 430 cm\(^{-1}\) region, as shown in Fig. 5. We have made a partial line assignment and fit for this band, but there seem to be some perturbations of the upper state. Our band profile calculation, shown in the lower trace of Fig. 5, shows good, but not perfect, agreement.
with the observation; small discrepancies may be due to the perturbations noted, and also due to centrifugal distortion effects. The presence of perturbations is not surprising because \( \nu_6 \) lies close to \( 4 \nu_4 \), \( 4 \nu_3 \), and \( 2 \nu_2 \), and therefore quite a large number of overtone and combination vibrational states could be perturbing its rotational structure. A somewhat stronger band with type-\( b \) structure (not shown here) was observed near 350 cm\(^{-1}\); we assign this as the \( \nu_2 + \nu_3 \) combination band.

The location of the infrared-forbidden \( \nu_4 \) vibration (\( a_2 \) out-of-plane torsion) was not immediately straightforward from our results. However, guided by our force-field calculations, we assigned a feature observed at 1672 cm\(^{-1}\) to the type-\( c \) \( \nu_5 \rightarrow \nu_4 \) difference band, and therefore obtained a value of \( \nu_4 = 117 \) cm\(^{-1}\); more details are given in Sec. VI below. We have not attempted to make a detailed band profile analysis of the 1672 cm\(^{-1}\) feature, since it is overlapped by the stronger \( \nu_5 \rightarrow \nu_3 \) band, and so we obtained no information on the rotational parameters for the \( \nu_4 \) state.

The results that we obtained for the intermolecular frequencies of (NO)\(_2\) are listed in Table I, where they are compared with previous condensed phase values\(^{15,16}\) and a recent Ar matrix isolation study.\(^{16}\) There are large differences; our \( \nu_2 \) and \( \nu_3 \) values are much lower than these previous values, our \( \nu_4 \) is slightly higher, and our \( \nu_6 \) is almost double. It is interesting that an Ar matrix band is observed\(^{16}\) at 243 cm\(^{-1}\), very close to our assignment of \( \nu_2 \) at 239 cm\(^{-1}\). However, this 243 cm\(^{-1}\) band was assigned as \( \nu_6 \); while a matrix band at 299 cm\(^{-1}\) was assigned as \( \nu_2 \).\(^{16}\) The fractional isotope shift in \( \nu_6 \) can be calculated from the Teller–Redlich product rule\(^{21}\) using the known rotational constants and the observed \( \nu_6^I/\nu_6^J \) ratio. For the observed \( \nu_5 \) ratio\(^{16}\) in an Ar matrix, the \( \nu_6 \) shift is calculated to be \(-1.94\%\) for \((^{15}\text{N}^{16}\text{O})_2\). The only far infrared Ar matrix bands with approximately this shift are at 362.4 cm\(^{-1}\) in \((^{14}\text{N}^{16}\text{O})_2\) and 355.2 cm\(^{-1}\) in \((^{15}\text{N}^{16}\text{O})_2\), giving \(-1.99\%\). The other information from the product rule is that for \( \nu_2 \) and \( \nu_3 \) the sum of the fractional shifts should be \(-3.42\%,\) using the observed Ar matrix \( \nu_6^I/\nu_6^J \) ratio. Unfortunately, it does not seem possible to assign the far infrared observed bands\(^{16}\) to meet this requirement.

The observed changes in rotational parameters for the intermolecular modes of (NO)\(_2\) are listed in Table II, which also gives values\(^{7,10}\) for the intramolecular modes, \( \nu_1 \) and \( \nu_5 \). The changes in the \( B \) and \( C \) rotational constants upon

### Table I. Measured frequencies for the intermolecular modes of the NO dimer (in cm\(^{-1}\)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vibration</th>
<th>Gas phase, Present value</th>
<th>Condensed phases, Ref. 15</th>
<th>Matrix isolation, Ref. 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_2(a_1) ) Symmetric bend</td>
<td>239.361</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>299.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_3(a_1) ) van der Waals stretch</td>
<td>134.503</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>175.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_4(a_2) ) Torsion (IR forbidden)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>103.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_5(b_2) ) Antisymmetric bend</td>
<td>429.140</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>242.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIG. 3.** Observed (upper) and calculated \( \nu_1 \) fundamental band of (NO)\(_2\), with an absorption path of 80 m, a pressure of 35 Torr, and a temperature of 115 K. The upper trace is dominated by the much stronger \( R(3.5) \rightarrow R(7.5) \) lines of the \( ^2\Pi_{3/2} \rightarrow ^2\Pi_{1/2} \) electronic transition of the NO monomer (including those of \(^{15}\text{N}^{16}\text{O} \) and \(^{14}\text{N}^{18}\text{O} \)).

**FIG. 4.** The calculated spectrum of the \( \nu_2 \) fundamental band of (NO)\(_2\) at 115 K.

**FIG. 5.** Observed (upper) and calculated (lower) \( \nu_4 \) fundamental band spectra of (NO)\(_2\), with experimental conditions as in Fig. 2. The prominent feature near 432 cm\(^{-1}\) is due to the ‘‘piled-up’’ \( R \)-branch. \( Q \)-branch features are evident near 429 cm\(^{-1}\).
vibrational excitation are considerably larger for the intermolecular than for the intramolecular modes, which is not surprising since the former tend to involve larger amplitude motions. The fact that \( \nu_2 \) involves a large increase (183 MHz) in the \( \Delta r \) constant, whereas \( \nu_3 \) involves little change (\(-5\) MHz), helps to confirm their description as the symmetric bending and van der Waals stretching motions, respectively.

**IV. AB INITIO CALCULATIONS**

We performed \textit{ab initio} force field calculations to provide initial guidance for our experiments and further insight into the vibrational dynamics of \((\text{NO})_2\). We chose CCSD(T) theory\textsuperscript{22,23} with the aug-cc-pVDZ basis set\textsuperscript{24} for the computation of the harmonic force field because it predicts a reasonably accurate geometry for the dimer \((r_{NN} = 1.227 \text{ Å}, r_{NO} = 1.169 \text{ Å}, \theta_{\text{NNO}} = 96.2^\circ)\).\textsuperscript{25} The force field and harmonic frequencies were computed from finite difference second derivatives of total energy (with displacements of 0.005 Å and 0.01 rad), using energies computed with MOLPRO (Ref. 26) and coordinate transformations from INTDER.\textsuperscript{27}

Observed and calculated vibrational frequencies are compared in Table III, and the \textit{ab initio} force field is given in Table IV. Overall, it is significant and encouraging that the relative ordering, and approximate magnitude, of the \textit{ab initio} calculations agree well with the present experimental values. In particular, the \textit{ab initio} results favor a significantly higher value for \( r_6 \) than previously proposed.\textsuperscript{15–17} The present level of theory predicts \( r_{NN} \) to be 0.036 Å too short compared to experiment,\textsuperscript{9} and \( r_{NO} \) to be 0.018 Å too long, thus implying a dimer which is slightly too tightly bound. This suggests that the \textit{ab initio} harmonic frequencies will be calculated too high for the intermolecular vibrations, and too low for the two NO stretch modes. Note as well that the neglect of anharmonicity causes each harmonic frequency to be higher than the true fundamental frequency. Hence, the overestimation of the observed intermolecular fundamental frequencies (by 40–107 cm\(^{-1}\), or 17%–63%) is disappointing but not altogether surprising. The \( \nu_1 \) and \( \nu_5 \) frequencies are underestimated by 0.3% and 3.0%, respectively.

These CCSD(T) vibrational frequencies are now the best available \textit{ab initio} predictions for \((\text{NO})_2\) by far, being considerably closer to the observed values than previous density functional theory predictions.\textsuperscript{28–30} Further improved \textit{ab initio} predictions would only be achieved with more expensive methods which explicitly incorporate two reference electronic configurations, since it has been observed\textsuperscript{25,31} that the \((\sigma_{NN})^2 \rightarrow (\sigma^*)^2\) configuration contributes strongly to the ground state wave function. Furthermore, since this second configuration has increased N–N antibonding character, its full inclusion would likely result in a more weakly bound dimer.

**V. FORCE FIELD CALCULATIONS**

We also made empirical harmonic potential calculations, as an extension of those described in Ref. 9. The observed data that are fitted are the vibrational frequencies and their isotopic variations, the centrifugal distortion constants, and the inertial defects. Ideally, these parameters should be corrected for anharmonicity, but this is not presently possible. Our previous force field (Fit 2) (Ref. 9) from 1995, calculated without knowledge of the intermolecular frequencies, agrees well with the new experimental values reported here (see Table III). The degree of agreement is probably fortu-

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**TABLE II. Changes in rotational constants with vibrational excitation for the NO dimer.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vibration</th>
<th>Origin/cm(^{-1})</th>
<th>( \Delta A/\text{MHz} )</th>
<th>( \Delta B/\text{MHz} )</th>
<th>( \Delta C/\text{MHz} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_1(\alpha_1) )\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>1868.252</td>
<td>-123</td>
<td>+17</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_2(\beta_2) )\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>1789.098</td>
<td>-138</td>
<td>+106</td>
<td>+67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_2(\alpha_1) )</td>
<td>239.361</td>
<td>+183</td>
<td>-147</td>
<td>-137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_3(\alpha_1) )</td>
<td>134.503</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-244</td>
<td>-174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_5(\beta_2) )</td>
<td>429.140</td>
<td>+41</td>
<td>-423</td>
<td>-289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}Brookes et al. (Ref. 7).  
\textsuperscript{b}Watson and McKellar (Ref. 10).

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**TABLE III. Observed and calculated intermolecular vibrational frequencies and isotope shifts of \((\text{NO})_2\) (in cm\(^{-1}\)).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vibration</th>
<th>Present Observed</th>
<th>Fit 2 force field, Ref. 9</th>
<th>Fit 3 force field</th>
<th>Fit 3 ( ^{15}\text{N} ) shift\textsuperscript{a}</th>
<th>Present \textit{ab initio}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_2(\alpha_1) )</td>
<td>239.361</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>-1.04%</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_3(\alpha_1) )</td>
<td>134.503</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>-2.37%</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_5(\beta_2) )</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>-1.99%</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \nu_5(\beta_2) )</td>
<td>429.140</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>-1.88%</td>
<td>536</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}This is the calculated Fit 3 fractional shift of the \((^{15}\text{N}^{16}\text{O})_2 \) frequency relative to \((^{16}\text{N}^{16}\text{O})_2 \).

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**TABLE IV. Harmonic potential constants\textsuperscript{a} of \((\text{NO})_2\).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Fit 2</th>
<th>Fit 3</th>
<th>Present ab initio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( f_\alpha )</td>
<td>14.684(14)</td>
<td>14.662(34)</td>
<td>14.410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\beta )</td>
<td>0.308(69)</td>
<td>0.195(15)</td>
<td>0.358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\omega )</td>
<td>0.782(61)</td>
<td>0.671(17)</td>
<td>1.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_1 )</td>
<td>0.036(9)</td>
<td>0.0342(24)</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_2 )</td>
<td>0.215</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_3 )</td>
<td>0.269(47)</td>
<td>0.155(16)</td>
<td>0.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_4 )</td>
<td>-0.100(16)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_5 )</td>
<td>0.783(12)</td>
<td>0.759(34)</td>
<td>0.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_6 )</td>
<td>0.637(150)</td>
<td>0.274(92)</td>
<td>0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( f_\nu_7 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a}Units correspond to energies in aJ, bond lengths in Å, and angles in radians.
ituous, but it does illustrate the value of accurate centrifugal distortion data in determining force fields. A repeat of Fit 2 (with $f_{aa} = f_{ab} = f_{ra'} = 0$) including the new data (except for $v_4$) gave potential constants that agreed with the previous ones within their standard deviations; weighting of the data was similar to Ref. 9. When this fit was repeated with each of these three constants in turn also adjusted, the only significant improvement was in $f_{aa}$, which improved the fit by about 40% and gave $v_4 = 116 \text{ cm}^{-1}$. On the other hand, fits with $f_{aa}$ and either $f_{ra}$ or $f_{ra'}$ adjusted tended to jump to a solution with $v_4$ greater than $v_3$, e.g., $v_4 = 158 \text{ cm}^{-1}$.

These results suggested a search for the allowed $v_5 ← v_4$ type-c band in the regions either 120 or 160 cm$^{-1}$ below $v_5$. (Intermediate values near 135 cm$^{-1}$ are unlikely because the large perturbing effect on the inertial defect of $v_3$ would have been detectable in our analysis of $v_3$.) In general, type-c bands have a strong sharp feature near the band center. The candidate we have chosen is the feature at 1672 cm$^{-1}$ (see Fig. 2), some 117 cm$^{-1}$ below $v_5$, which is the strongest unassigned feature between 90 and 200 cm$^{-1}$ below $v_5$. When this is included in the fits, the tendency to jump to a second solution is constrained. Variation of all three constants then gave a good fit, but their uncertainties were rather large. For the moment, we decided somewhat arbitrarily to constrain both $f_{ra}$ and $f_{ra'}$ to zero, giving the frequencies and potential constants shown as Fit 3 in Tables III and IV.

The nature of the normal mode motions is specified by the force fields, and there is general agreement between our ab initio and empirical results, although the exact distribution of motions between $v_2$ and $v_3$ is quite sensitive to the force field. The empirical (Fit 3) normal mode motions for $v_2$, $v_3$, and $v_6$ are illustrated in Fig. 6 (note that $v_4$, the out-of-plane vibration, is completely determined by symmetry). The $v_2$ vibration can be described as an antisymmetric combination of oscillating O–O and N–N distances, or, in other words, as the symmetric in-plane bend. The $v_3$ motion clearly corresponds to the dissociative intermolecular stretching mode, but neither $v_2$ nor $v_3$ correspond to a pure N–N stretch motion. And $v_6$ is the antisymmetric bend. The predicted fractional $^{15}$N isotope shifts from the Fit 3 force field are listed in Table III.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the far-infrared spectrum of the gas phase NO dimer has been studied for the first time, and the locations of the four intermolecular modes have been determined. The values proposed here for these vibrational frequencies are rather different from previously accepted values, which were based on condensed phase experiments. In particular, the $v_6$ mode is found to lie at a relatively high frequency (429 cm$^{-1}$) in rough accord with calculations, but not with previous experiments. The lack of agreement between the gas and condensed phase results in the present case is perhaps not surprising, both in view of the weak binding in (NO)$_2$, which makes it especially susceptible to environmental perturbations, and in view of the sometimes considerable scatter in values among the various condensed phase experiments. In this context, it would be interesting to perform far infrared and Raman spectroscopy of the NO dimer in a neon matrix.

Our CCSD(T) ab initio calculation of the intermolecular frequencies agrees well with experiment in terms of their relative ordering, but consistently overestimates their values, due both to the neglect of anharmonicity and to an overestimation of the strength and rigidity of the intermolecular bonding in (NO)$_2$. The multiconfigurational nature of the ground electronic state of the NO dimer makes accurate ab initio calculations of its properties a very challenging problem. No experimental evidence was seen in our spectra for other isomers of (NO)$_2$, nor are any other stable isomers predicted by the CCSD(T) calculations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to M. Barnett for development of the 5 m cell, and to Z. Lu for assistance in recording the spectrum of the $v_5$ fundamental band region.

27 W. D. Allen, INTDER94, Stanford 1994 version. INTDER is a set of codes for performing general curvilinear transformations of coordinates and force constants, as well as harmonic frequency analyses.