

# Fuel-rich n-heptane oxidation: A shock tube and laser absorption study



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## ABSTRACT

The chemical kinetics of n-heptane (n-C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>16</sub>) – an important reference compound for real fuels – oxidation are well studied at stoichiometric and lean conditions. However, there is only limited information on the n-heptane chemical kinetics in fuel-rich combustion. In order to verify the accuracy of chemical kinetic models at these conditions, the oxidation of rich n-heptane mixtures has been investigated. Combustion of n-C<sub>7</sub>H<sub>16</sub>/O<sub>2</sub>/Ar mixtures at equivalence ratios,  $\phi$ , of 2.0 and 3.0 behind reflected shock waves has been studied at temperatures ranging from 1066 to 1502 K and at pressures ranging from 1.4 to 6.2 atm. Reaction progress was monitored by recording pressure and absorption time-histories of ethylene (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>) and n-heptane at a location 2 cm from the endwall of a 14-cm inner diameter shock tube. Ethylene and n-heptane absorption time-histories were measured, respectively, using absorption spectroscopy at 10.532  $\mu$ m from a tunable CO<sub>2</sub> laser and at around 3.4  $\mu$ m from a continuous wave distributed feedback interband cascade laser (ICL). The measured absorption time-histories were compared with modeled predictions from the Lawrence Livermore National Lab (LLNL) detailed n-heptane reaction mechanism. To the best of our knowledge, current data are the first time-resolved n-heptane and ethylene concentration measurements conducted in a shock tube at these conditions.

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## 1. Introduction

Recent research has pursued the combustion and performance advantages of in-cylinder reforming processes where fuel is injected into O<sub>2</sub>-deficient engine operating conditions, to convert a portion of the fuel into products containing significant levels of small-chained partially-oxidized hydrocarbons. The presence of reformate can extend knock limit and dilution tolerance of SI combustion [1,2]. By exploiting the properties of reformate with well-understood engine technologies, such as dilute SI combustion and compression ratio, light-duty vehicle fuel economy can be increased towards legislated fuel economy mandates (e.g., CAFE 2025 [3]). One such method is fuel injection in the negative valve overlap (NVO) period in order to convert a portion of the fuel into short-chain hydrocarbons (e.g., ethylene) by partial oxidation and thermal cracking. These products may then be used to control the combustion properties of the fuel and air mixture introduced

into the other cylinders [4]. In an NVO environment, the mixture within the cylinder is often fuel-rich [2]. Other strategies known as spark-assisted HCCI (SA-HCCI) and spark assisted compression ignition (SACI) have been pursued as well [5]. In this case, HCCI heat release is obtained after a stoichiometric NVO assisted by spark initiation. The recent dedicated exhaust gas recirculation strategy (D-EGR) [6] uses one of cylinders to produce a reformate and can result in fuel savings of up to 10%. Fuel rich conditions also exist in other common combustion environments, such as diesel engine sprays and in aircraft gas turbines.

It has been found that the concentration of reformate species is strongly dependent on the injected fuel type and the time available for reactions [7,8]. Surprisingly, a comparison of species concentrations obtained during NVO reformate experiments including hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>), acetylene (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>2</sub>), and ethylene (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>) and those predicted with recent Lawrence Livermore National Labs (LLNL) mechanisms [9–11] did not match [4]. The model predictions failed to capture the experimental trend of increased reformate concentrations with advanced fuel injection timings. Thus, a detailed understanding of the fuel chemistry that occurs during engine relevant oxygen deficient conditions is warranted.

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**Table 1**

Summary of experimental conditions and species diagnostics used in n-heptane oxidation studies in shock tubes.

Study	Year	Pressure (atm)	Temperature (K)	Fuel loading	Equivalence ratio ( $\phi$ )	Species Diagnostics
This work	2017	1.4–1.9, 4.8–6.2	1066–1502	2%	2.0, 3.0	n-heptane: 3.403 $\mu\text{m}$ ethylene: 10.532 $\mu\text{m}$
Tekawade et al. [34]	2016	10	686–1290	0.05–0.5%	1.0	CO: 4.59 $\mu\text{m}$
Campbell et al. [33]	2015	6.1–7.4	651–823	1%	0.75	n-heptane: 3.93 $\mu\text{m}$ OH, CH <sub>2</sub> O: 306.7 nm CO <sub>2</sub> : 4.2 $\mu\text{m}$ H <sub>2</sub> O: 2.5 $\mu\text{m}$ OH*: emission
Zhang et al. [13]	2013	2, 10	1200–1500	0.38%	1.0	CH*: emission
Pyun et al. [14]	2013	1.5	1200–1600	1%	Pyrolysis	CH <sub>4</sub> : 3.43 $\mu\text{m}$ ethylene: 10.532 $\mu\text{m}$
Pilla et al. [40]	2011	1.3–3.3	1350–1950	300 ppm	Pyrolysis	ethylene: 10.532 $\mu\text{m}$
Davidson et al. [20]	2010	2	1300–1600	300 ppm	1.0	n-heptane: 3.39 $\mu\text{m}$ ethylene: 10.532 $\mu\text{m}$ OH: 306.5 nm CO <sub>2</sub> : 2.7 $\mu\text{m}$ H <sub>2</sub> O: 2.5 $\mu\text{m}$
Shen et al. [41]	2009	9–58	786–1396	0.5–1.8%	0.25, 0.5, 1.0	OH*: emission
Vasu et al. [21]	2009	15	1121–1332	750–1000 ppm	0.5	OH: 306.5 nm
Davidson et al. [29]	2007	1.6–2.0	1100–1560	100–500 ppm	1, pyrolysis	CH <sub>3</sub> : 216 nm
Smith et al. [32]	2005	2	1500–1650	0.40%	0.5, 1.0, 2.0	CH*, OH*: emission
Herzler et al. [42]	2005	50	720–1100	0.2–0.7%	0.1–0.4	CH*: emission
Gauthier et al. [30]	2004	12–25, 45–60	850–1280	1.87%	0.5, 1.0, 2.0	CH*, OH*: emission
Davidson et al. [28]	2001	2.0–3.8	1357–1784	300 ppm	0.8–1.2	OH: 306.5 nm
Ciezki et al. [25]	1993	3.2–41	660–1350	0.9–5.5%	0.5–3.0	CH*: emission

n-Heptane is a component of primary reference fuel for both diesel and gasoline, and is one of the most well studied fuels especially at stoichiometric and lean conditions [12–26]. However, there is a lack of rich n-heptane combustion studies in the literature, and those that do investigate rich mixtures do not provide concentration time-histories of intermediate species [20,21,25,27–34]. Ethylene has been shown to be produced in significant quantities during fuel-rich n-heptane combustion and is therefore of high importance for mechanism development [12,21,35]. The use of non-intrusive, laser-based diagnostics in shock tubes enables in-situ measurements of species concentration time-histories and reaction rates with high temporal resolution. Concentration time-history data from shock tubes offers rich targets for chemical kinetic model development and validation when compared to ignition delay time data or endpoint species measurements provided by gas chromatograph (GC/MS) techniques [17,36–38].

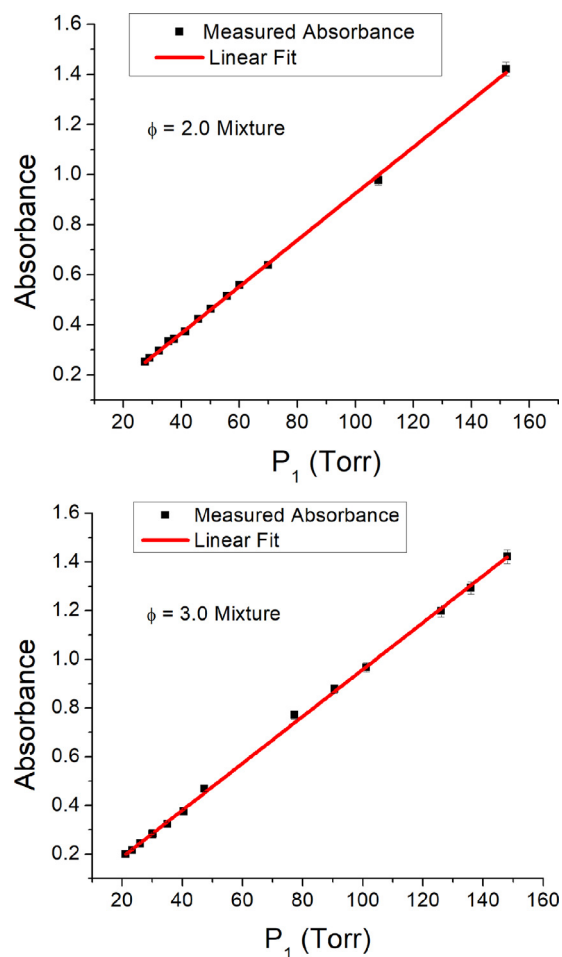
In this work, time-histories of ethylene and n-heptane absorbances were measured at pressure ranges from 1.4 to 6.2 atm over a temperature range of 1066 to 1502 K with mixtures of n-heptane and oxygen in an argon bath at equivalence ratios ( $\phi$ ) of 2.0 and 3.0 and with initial n-heptane concentration of 2% behind reflected shock waves. This work is an extension of previous experiments, detailed in [39]. Results were compared to the predictions of LLNL detailed heptane chemical kinetic mechanism, which has not been validated at equivalence ratios of above 1.0 [11]. A summary of the conditions and diagnostics used in this and previous work performed in shock tubes is provided in Table 1.

To the best of our knowledge, current data are the first time-resolved n-heptane and ethylene concentration measurements conducted in a shock tube at these conditions of high fuel loading, rich mixtures, and over a wider pressure range than previously investigated.

## 2. Experimental procedure

### 2.1. Shock tube facility

Experiments were performed in a stainless steel, heated shock tube located at the University of Central Florida (UCF) with an inner diameter of 14 cm. The details of the shock tube facility are in Refs. [43–46] and only a brief description is provided here. The shock tube facility with double diaphragm configuration is designed for producing pressures ranging from 1 to 90 atm and temperatures ranging from 600 to 4000 K. In the current work, a single diaphragm configuration was utilized; the diaphragms were



**Fig. 1.** Measured absorbance at 3.4  $\mu\text{m}$  versus initial mixture pressure in the shock tube across multiple tests.

0.127 mm and 0.381 mm thick in order to achieve test pressures ( $P_5$ ) ranging from 1.4 to 1.9 atm and 4.8 to 6.2 atm, respectively.

All measurements were performed at a test section located 2 cm away from the endwall of the driven section, which has eight optical access ports. A Kistler 603B1 piezoelectric pressure transducer with Room Temperature Vulcanization (RTV) silicone coating was installed in one access port to measure pressure in the reflected shock region. A pair of sapphire windows, 3 mm thick

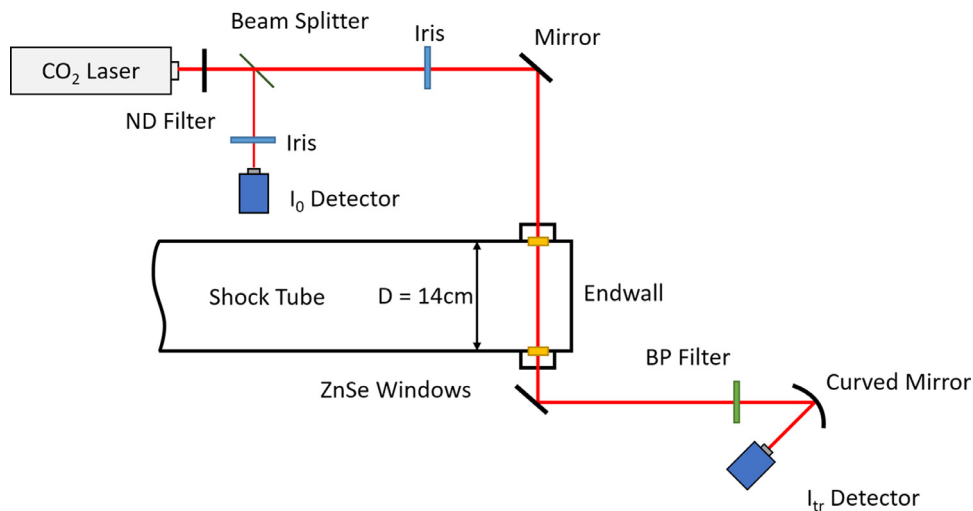


Fig. 2. Schematic of the end section of the shock tube with the laser and optical components at a 2 cm sidewall location. (BP: bandpass filter, ND: neutral density filter).

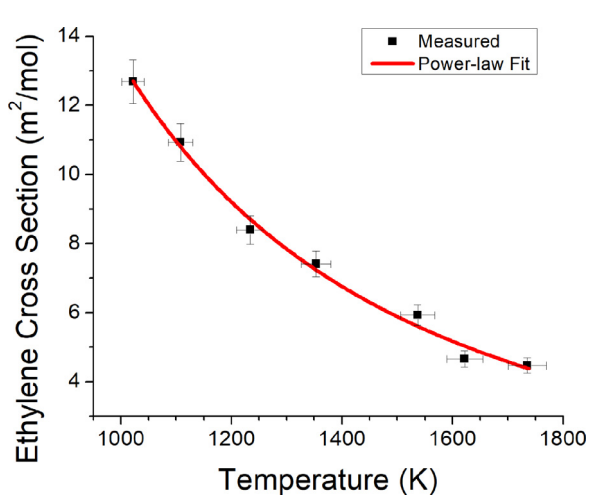


Fig. 3. Measured ethylene absorption cross section as a function of temperature for  $P = 1.4\text{--}1.9$  atm. The curve is the power-law fit described by Eq. (2).

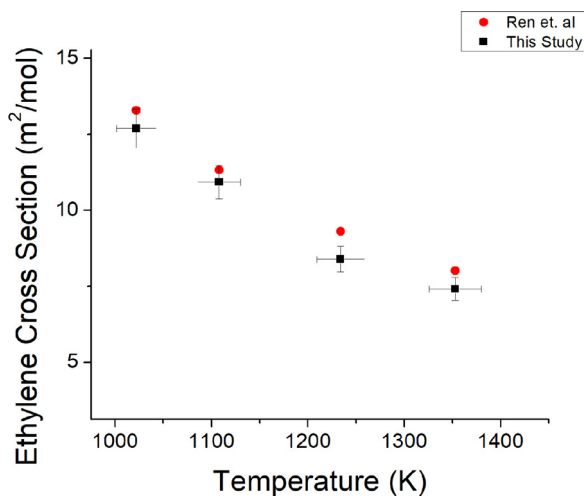


Fig. 4. Comparison of measured ethylene cross section and that given by the temperature and pressure dependent fit of Ren et al. [50] over the range of temperatures studied in experiments with pressures from 4.8 to 6.2 atm.

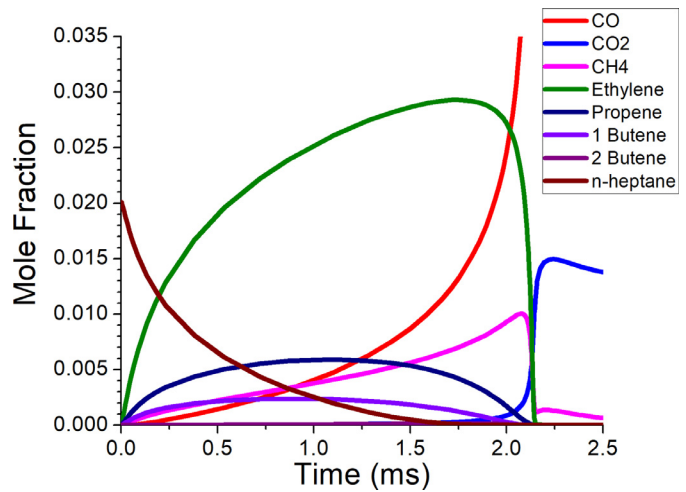


Fig. 5. Predicted time-histories for major species during the combustion of a  $\phi = 2$  n-heptane mixture at  $T_5 = 1235$  K and  $P_5 = 1.8$  atm. Ethylene is formed in much larger concentrations than possible interfering species (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).

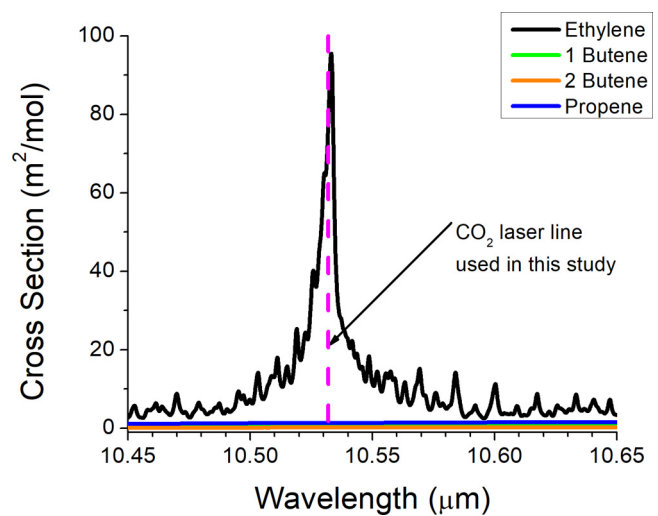
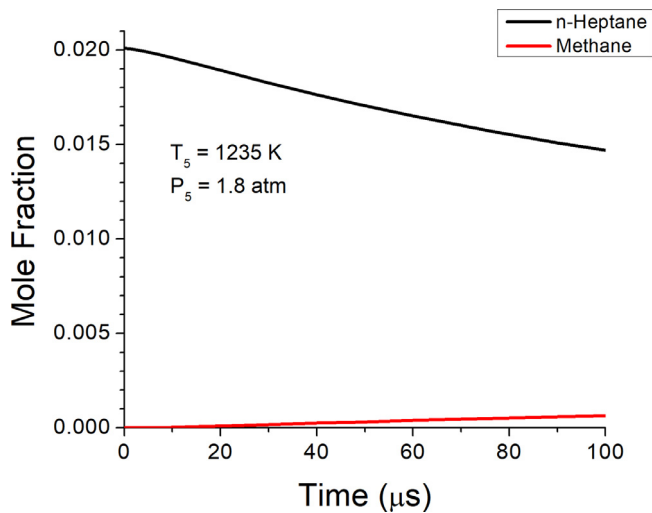
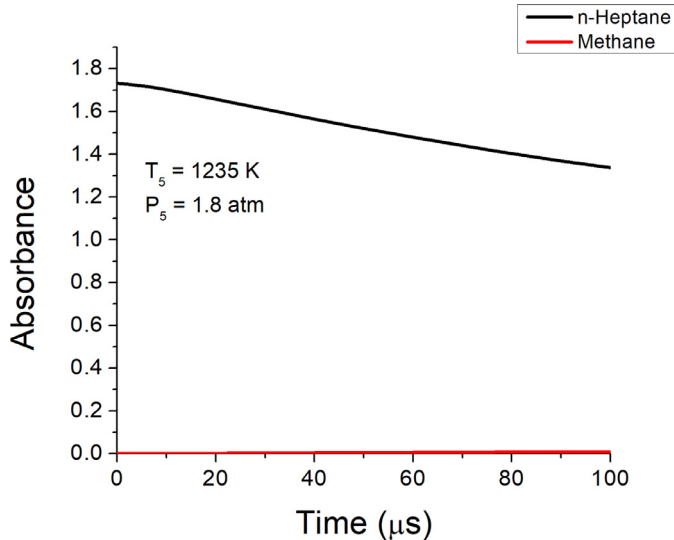


Fig. 6. The  $\text{CO}_2$  P14 line at  $10.532\ \mu\text{m}$  overlaps with a strong absorption feature of ethylene with little influence from other possible interfering species (wavelength selection at room temperature from PNNL [49]).

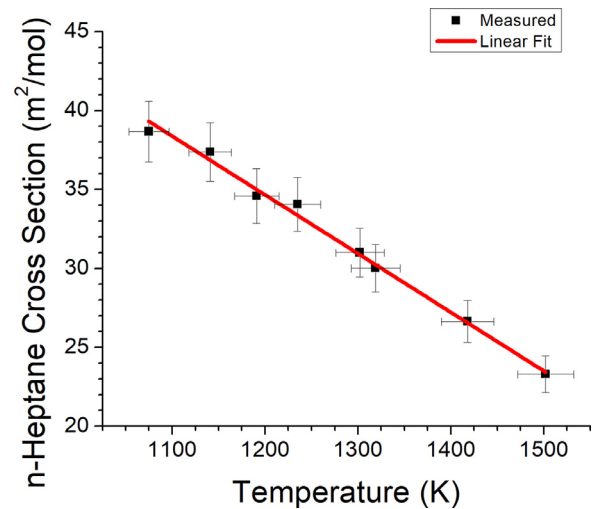


**Fig. 7.** Modeled concentration time-histories for n-heptane (black) and methane (red) at  $T_s = 1235$  K and  $P_s = 1.8$  atm (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]). (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article).

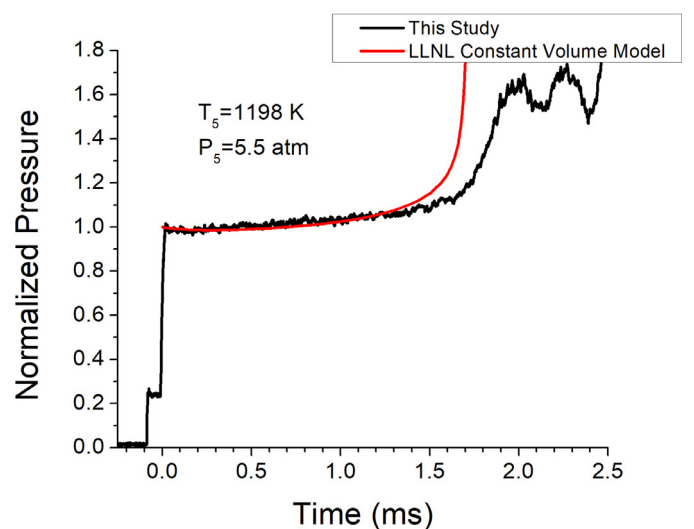
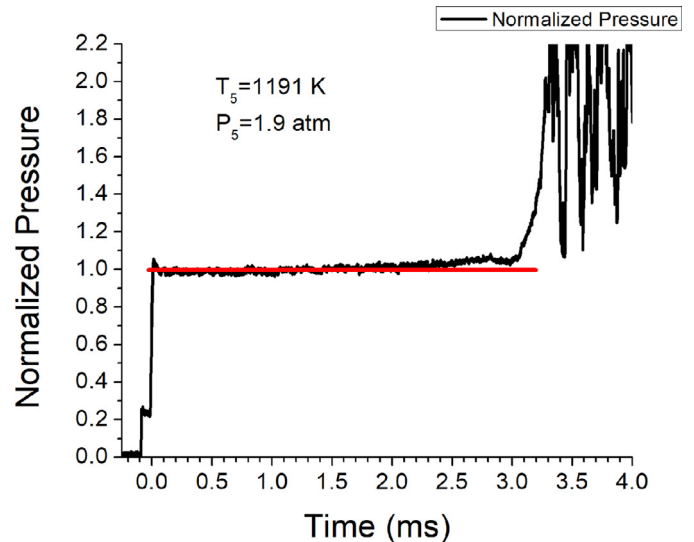


**Fig. 8.** Predicted n-heptane and methane absorbance signals for  $T = 1235$  K experiment (HITRAN [48]). At early times, the absorption of heptane dominates and interference from methane is negligible, and thus the measured signal is primarily due to n-heptane. (Simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).

and 19.05 mm in diameter, was mounted in opposing optical ports to allow for line of sight measurement of n-heptane time-histories using a  $3.4 \mu\text{m}$  laser. A separate pair of wedged ZnSe windows, 3 mm thick and 12.7 mm in diameter, were mounted in opposing ports for line of sight absorption measurements with a  $\text{CO}_2$  laser at  $10.532 \mu\text{m}$  for measuring ethylene time-histories. Two 8-channel data acquisition boards (NI PCI-6133, 2.5 MS/second/channel) were used to measure pressure and laser absorption time-histories at a rate of 2 MHz. Four piezoelectric pressure transducers (PCB113B26, 500 kHz frequency response), connected to three time interval counters (Agilent 53220A, 0.1 ns time resolution), were placed along the last 1.4 m of the shock tube to measure incident shock velocity, which was then linearly extrapolated to the endwall. Temperature and pressure ( $T_5$  and  $P_5$ ) in the reflected shock region are calculated based on the extrapolated shock velocity and the initial temperature and pressure ( $T_1$  and  $P_1$ ) in the test section using one dimensional shock relations, assuming chemically frozen,



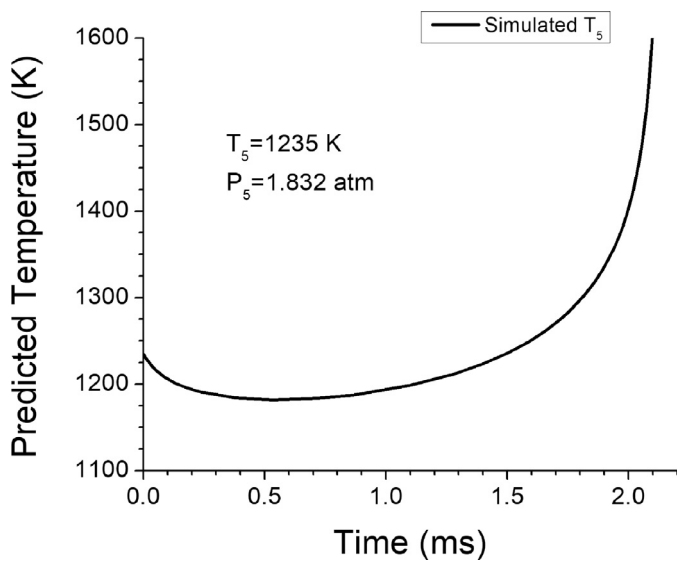
**Fig. 9.** Measured n-heptane absorption cross section as a function of temperature. The cross section is fit with a line over the temperature range used in this study.



**Fig. 10.** Pressure time histories for experiments displaying constant pressure (top) and constant volume (bottom) behavior (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).

**Table 2**  
Summary of experimental conditions.

$P_5$ (atm)	$T_5$ (K)	$X_{n-C_7H_{16}}$ (%)	$X_{O_2}$ (%)	$X_{Ar}$ (%)	$\phi$	Modeling assumption
1.9	1075	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.9	1141	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.9	1191	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.8	1235	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.7	1302	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.6	1319	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
1.7	1418	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. HP
6.2	1066	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. UV
6.0	1114	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. UV
5.7	1179	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. UV
5.5	1244	2.0	11.0	87.0	2.0	Const. UV
1.6	1132	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. HP
1.6	1233	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
1.5	1249	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
1.5	1375	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
1.4	1438	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
1.4	1502	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
5.9	1140	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
5.6	1157	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
5.5	1198	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
5.2	1302	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
5.0	1356	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV
4.8	1454	2.1	7.7	90.2	3.0	Const. UV



**Fig. 11.** Simulated temperature time history for  $\phi = 2.0$ , 2% mixture of n-heptane in oxygen and argon. The temperature changes by over 30% over the course of the experiment (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).

vibrationally equilibrated gases. Incident shock attenuation was typically less than 1%, and the uncertainty in reflected shock temperature and pressure were estimated to be less than  $\pm 2\%$  and  $\pm 3\%$ , respectively. The primary source of uncertainty in temperature and pressure is uncertainty in the reflected shock velocity, based on timer counter measurements.

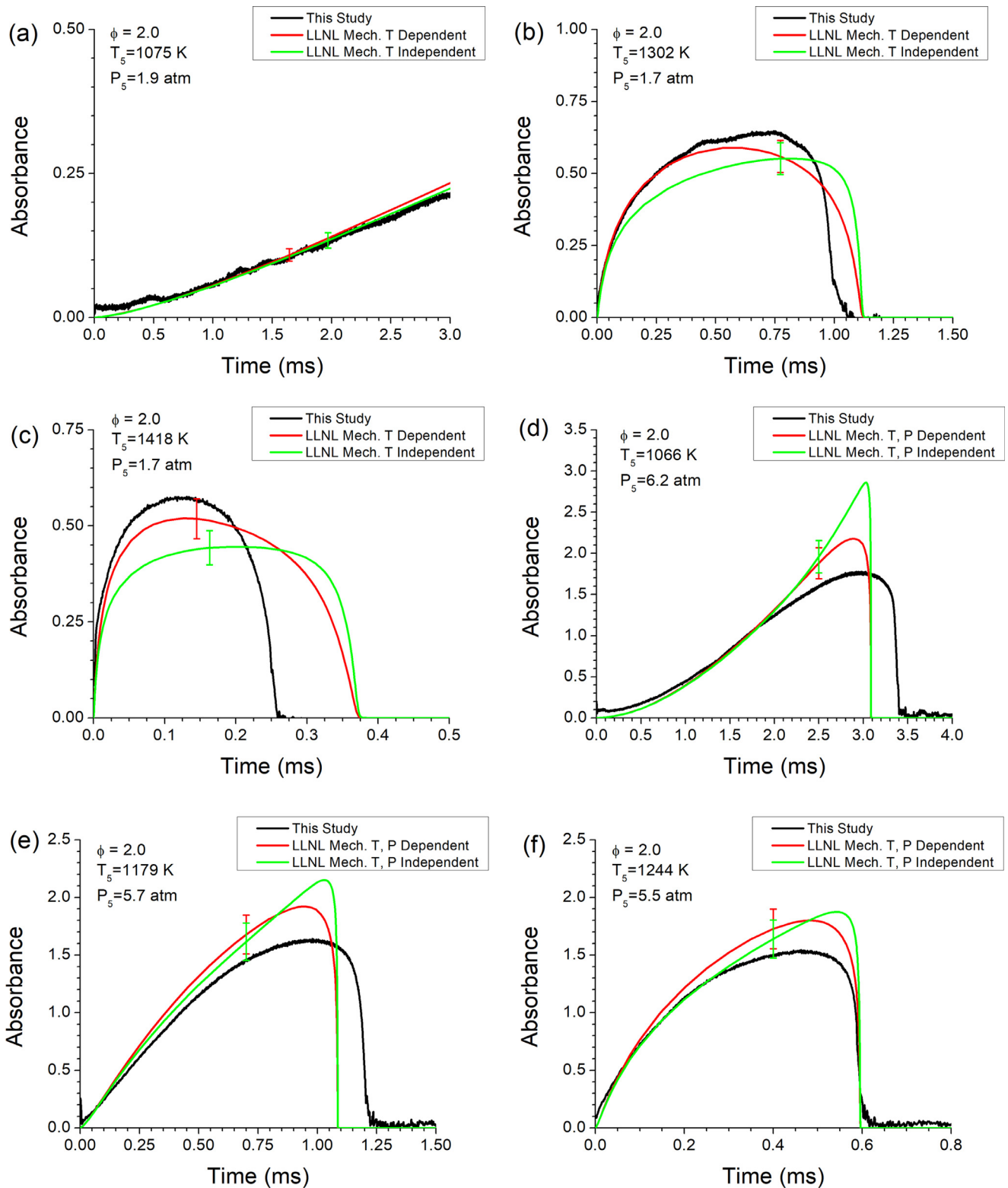
## 2.2. n-Heptane/ $O_2$ /Ar mixture preparation

Before mixture preparation and shock tube tests, the shock tube and mixing tank facilities were vacuumed by rotary vane pumps (Agilent DS102) and a turbomolecular pump (Agilent V301). Vacuum pressures were measured by a convection gauge (Lesker KJL275804LL) and an ionization gauge (Lesker KJLC354401YF)

operating between 1000 and  $1 \times 10^{-4}$  Torr and between  $5 \times 10^{-2}$  and  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  Torr, respectively. The shock tube was vacuumed to  $5 \times 10^{-5}$  Torr before each experiment was conducted, taking typically 45 min.

The shock tube facility has two (each 33 L) Teflon-coated stainless steel high purity mixing facilities and test gas mixtures were prepared manometrically in one of them. The mixing tank was heated to 120 °C using a custom-designed heating jacket before preparation of mixtures to ensure that no fuel condensed on the walls. Partial pressures were measured with 100 Torr- and 10,000 Torr-full scale baratron (MKS Baratron E27D and 628D, accuracies of 0.12% and 0.25% of reading, respectively). Research grade (purity > 99.999%) gases (Ar,  $O_2$ ) from Praxair and n-heptane (> 99%, Fisher Scientific) were used to prepare mixtures with equivalence ratio  $\phi = 2.0$  and 3.0, and 2% n-heptane initial mole fraction. During preparation, n-heptane was introduced into the mixing tank and was allowed to fully vaporize, which usually took approximately 30 min. Oxygen was preheated to 120 °C to match the mixing tank temperature before being introduced. By preheating oxygen, condensation of n-heptane was prevented and the desired equivalence ratio was achieved. Argon was then introduced into the mixing tank without pre-heating until the mixture was diluted to 2% n-heptane. Argon was used as a bath gas in order to minimize non-idealities such as reflected shock bifurcation that occur with high concentrations of polyatomic molecules in the driven gas mixture [47]. Though practical engines use  $N_2$  as the diluent, chemical kinetic simulations showed that there are only small differences between the chemical kinetics of n-heptane oxidation in argon and nitrogen baths. The mixtures were left to mix for at least six hours before any shock tube experiments were performed.

It is very important to accurately characterize mixtures made with liquid fuels due to their tendency to condense. Hence the mole fraction of n-heptane in the mixture was verified by laser absorption at  $3.4 \mu\text{m}$  (details in the next section) during shock tube filling, as shown in Fig. 1, and found to be  $2.02 \pm 0.08\%$  (95%CI) for the  $\phi = 2.0$  mixture and  $2.10 \pm 0.10\%$  (95%CI) for the  $\phi = 3.0$  mixture.



**Fig. 12.** Absorbance time-histories for ethylene. (a–c)  $\phi = 2.0$ ,  $P \cong 1.8$  atm. (d–f)  $\phi = 2.0$ ,  $P \cong 5.8$  atm. (g–i)  $\phi = 3.0$ ,  $P \cong 1.5$  atm. (j–l)  $\phi = 3.0$ ,  $P \cong 5.3$  atm. Black traces are measured absorbance. Red traces are the modeled absorbance assuming time dependent temperature and pressure (Rule 1). Green traces are the modeled absorbance assuming constant temperature and pressure over the course of the experiment, with the only variance in absorbance being due to ethylene mole fraction (Rule 2). Simulations were performed using the detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article).

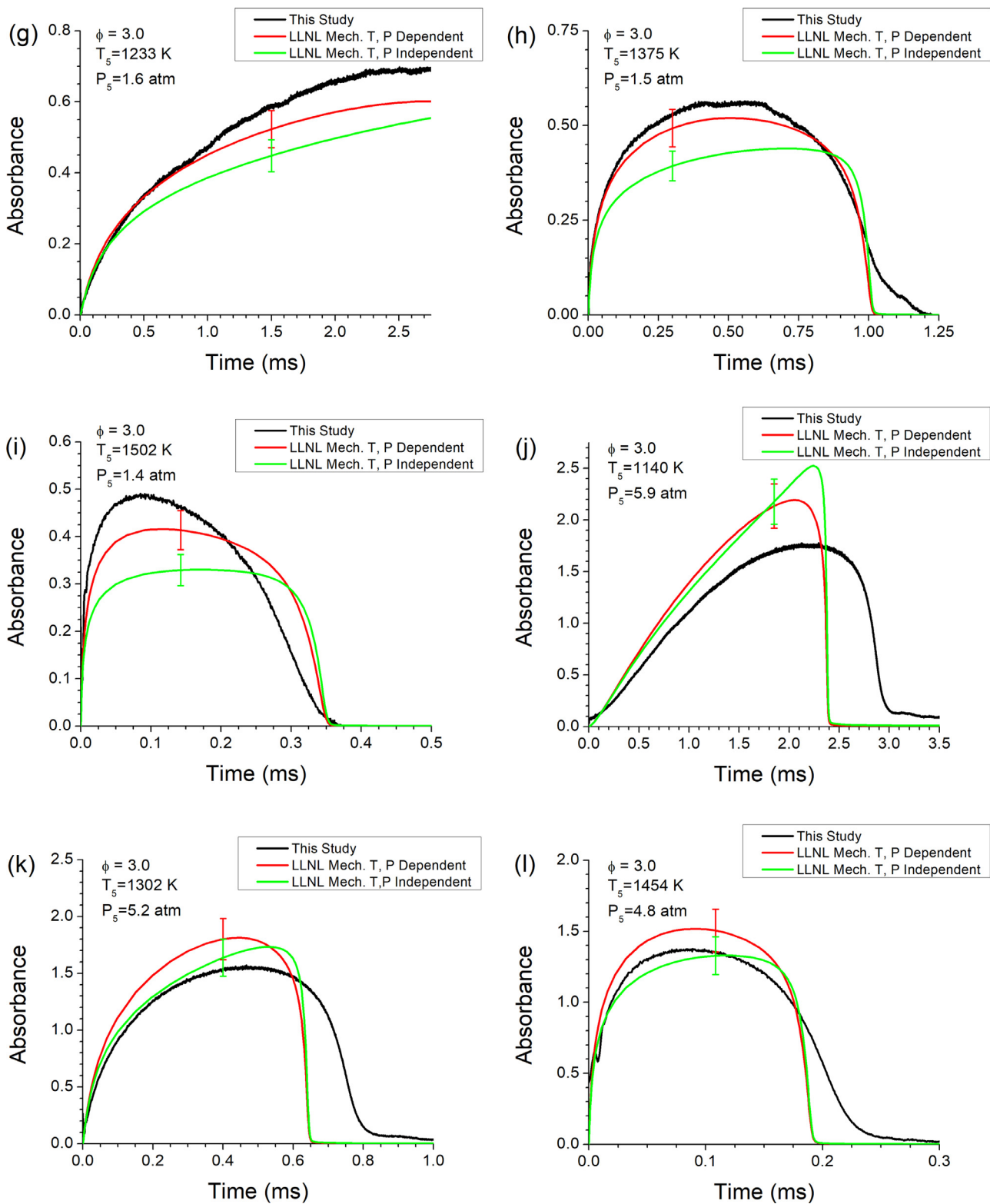


Fig. 12. Continued

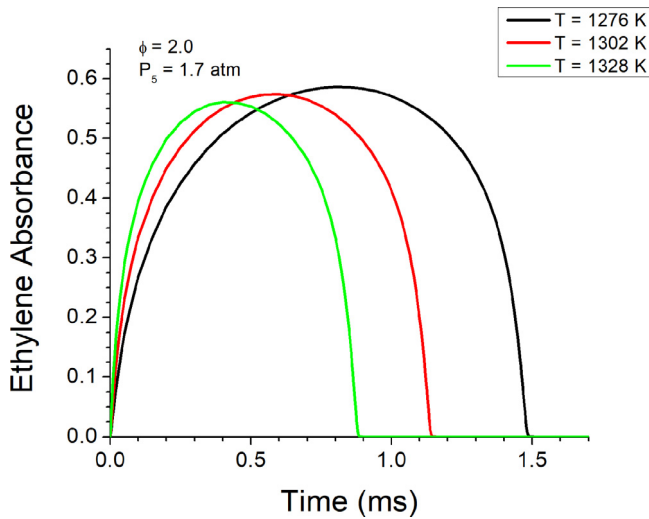
### 2.3. Ethylene and *n*-heptane laser absorption time-history measurements

#### 2.3.1. Ethylene laser scheme

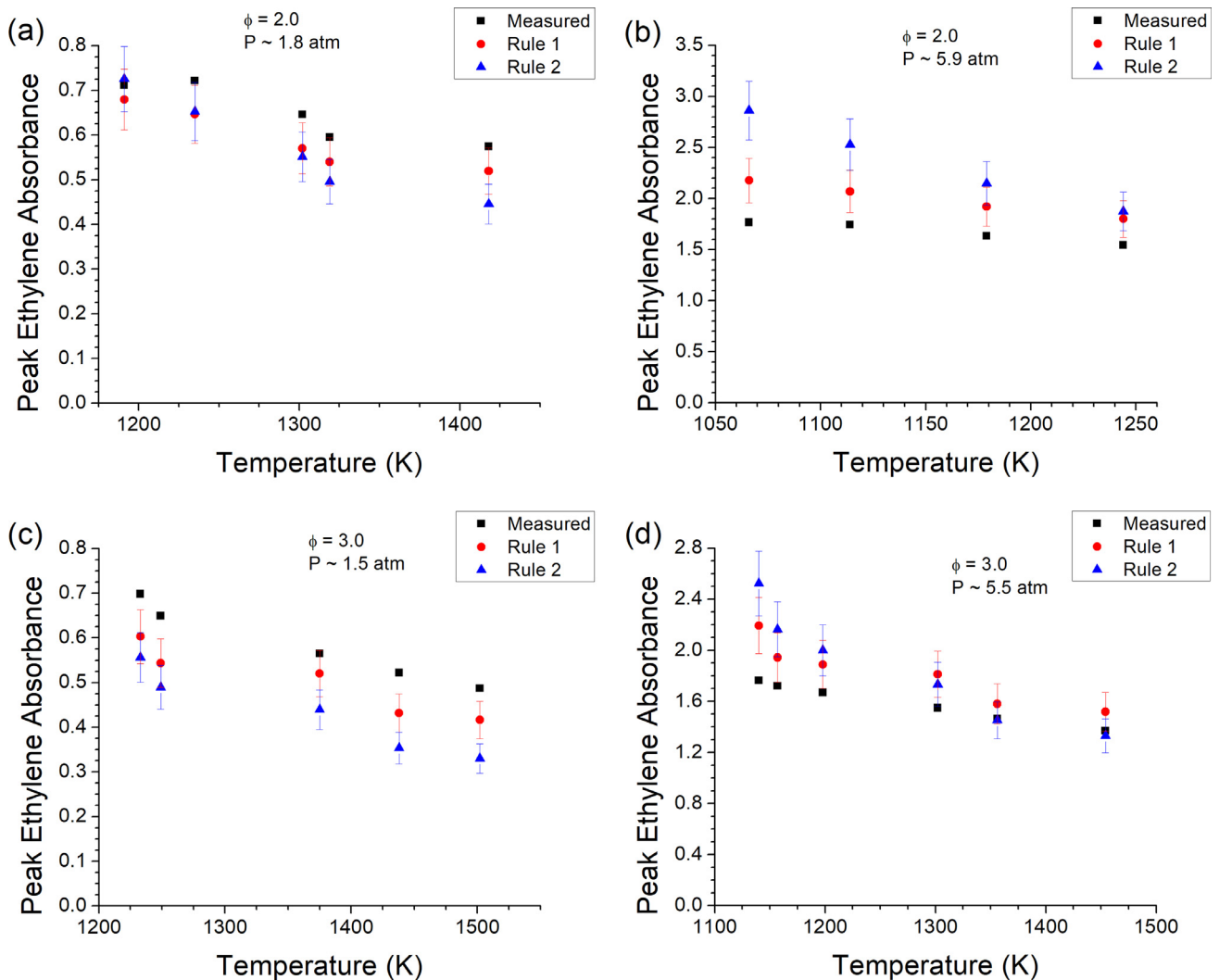
Ethylene time-histories were measured via direct absorption spectroscopy using a tunable CO<sub>2</sub> gas laser (Access Laser L4GS).

The optical setup for this diagnostic is schematically shown in Fig. 2.

The laser was more powerful than necessary for making absorption measurements, so its output intensity was reduced with a neutral density filter of optical density 1. The beam was then split into a reference beam and a signal beam by a 50/50 beam



**Fig. 13.** Modeled ethylene absorbance time-histories for a  $\phi = 2.0$  mixture at constant pressure  $P_5 = 1.7$  atm with the temperature  $T_5$  varied by  $\pm 2\%$  from 1302 K. The variance in  $T_5$  leads to a variance of approximately 30% in the time until rapid ethylene consumption.



**Fig. 14.** Peak ethylene absorbance, defined as the maximum value of measured or simulated absorbance obtained. Experiments in which ethylene concentration does not reach a maximum and subsequently decrease during the test time are omitted.

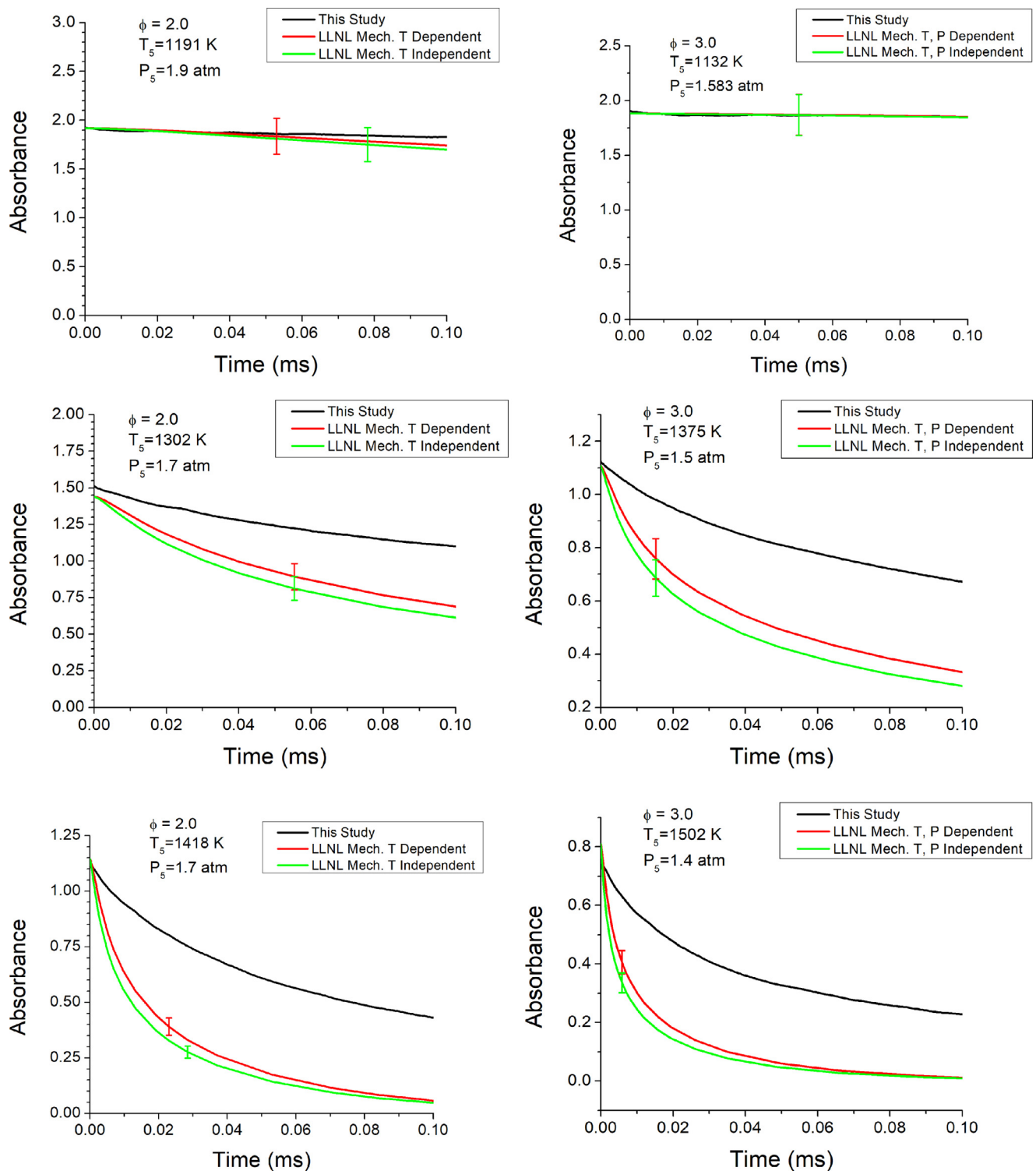
splitter. Irises were used after the beam splitter to control the intensity of the light incident on the detectors. The intensity of the reference beam ( $I_0$ ) was measured with a thermoelectrically cooled photovoltaic detector (Vigo PVI-3TE-10.6) and used to monitor laser power output fluctuations over the course of the experiment. The transmitted beam ( $I_{tr}$ ) was transmitted through the ZnSe windows in the shock tube before being filtered by a bandpass filter to reduce interference on the detector due to emissions of gas species at high temperature. The filtered transmitted beam was incident on a focusing mirror which reflected it onto a second identical photovoltaic detector, effectively increasing the detector area size and mitigating beam steering effects.

The observed absorbance of the laser is related to the mole fraction of ethylene by the Beer–Lambert law, as shown in Eq. (1):

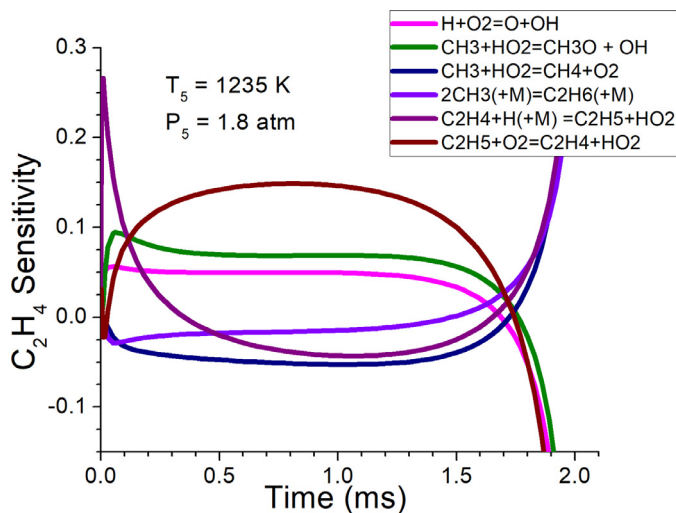
$$\alpha_\lambda = -\ln\left(\frac{I_{tr}}{I_0}\right)_\lambda = \sigma(\lambda, T, P) \frac{P_{tot}}{RT} x L, \quad (1)$$

where  $\alpha_\lambda$  is the absorbance,  $I_{tr}$  is the transmitted intensity,  $I_0$  is the reference intensity,  $\sigma$  is the absorption cross section ( $\text{cm}^2/\text{mol}$ ),  $P_{tot}$  is the total pressure (atm),  $T$  is the temperature (K),  $R$  is the ideal gas constant ( $\text{cm}^3 \text{atm}/\text{mol K}$ ),  $x$  is the mole fraction of the absorbing species, and  $L$  is the optical path length (cm).

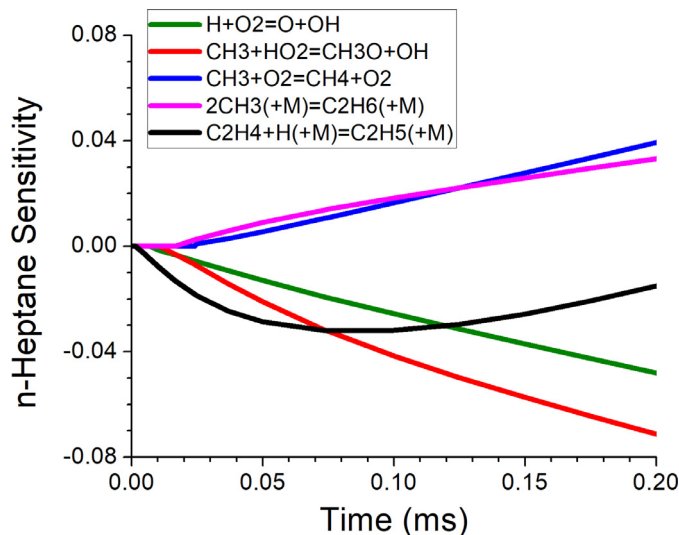




**Fig. 15.** Comparison of measured and simulated absorbance time histories due to n-heptane concentration for the first 100  $\mu$ s of selected experiments over several conditions for both  $\phi = 2.0$  and  $\phi = 3.0$  mixtures (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]). Black traces are measured absorbance. Red traces are the modeled absorbance assuming time dependent temperature and pressure (Rule 1). Green traces are the modeled absorbance assuming constant temperature and pressure over the course of the experiment, with the only variance in absorbance being due to ethylene mole fraction (Rule 2). Only traces from low pressure experiments are included, as the  $3.4 \mu\text{m}$  signal is saturated for high pressure experiments. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article).



**Fig. 16.** Sensitivity analysis results for ethylene formation. The dominant reaction responsible for the formation of n-heptane during the majority of its residence period is  $C_2H_5 + O_2 = C_2H_4 + HO_2$  (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).



**Fig. 17.** Sensitivity analysis results for n-heptane at  $T = 1235\text{ K}$  and  $P = 1.8\text{ atm}$ . For the first  $100\ \mu\text{s}$ , the reaction  $C_2H_4 + H(+M) = C_2H_5(+M)$  is the dominant reaction controlling n-heptane decay (simulations using detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51]).

The  $CO_2$  laser was tuned to the P14 line at  $10.532\ \mu\text{m}$  which coincides with a largely interference free absorption feature of ethylene from the HITRAN and PNNL databases [48,49]. The absorption cross section of ethylene is temperature dependent and has been measured by Pila et al. [40] and Ren et al. [50] at this wavelength. The ethylene absorption cross section was verified in our setup (using ethylene/Ar shock heated mixtures) for a temperature range of 1022–1735 K over pressures ranging from 1.4 to 1.9 atm. According to Ren et al., the cross section is observed to have a weak pressure dependence for pressures above 1.2 atm [50]. A purely mathematical model of the cross section in this temperature range was fit to the data as shown in Fig. 3.

The fit is described by Eq. (2) as follows:

$$\sigma(T) = A \left( \frac{T}{1000} \right)^B, \frac{\text{m}^2}{\text{mol}} \quad (2)$$

where  $A = 13.27\ \text{m}^2/\text{mol}$  and  $B = -2.00$ . This fit was used to calculate the ethylene absorption cross section at each experimental

temperature for experiments in the lower pressure range (around 1.6 atm). Estimated uncertainty in the cross section was 5% due to the combined uncertainties in temperature, pressure, initial mole fraction, path length, and measured absorbance signal. For higher pressure experiments, the cross section was not validated in the lab, but our measured data points were within 10% of the model proposed in Ren et al., as shown in Fig. 4, so their fit was used for experiments with pressures ranging from 4.8 to 6.2 atm [50]. The fit is described by Eq. (3):

$$\sigma(T, P) = \left( a_0 + a_1 \exp\left(-\frac{T}{b_1}\right) + a_2 \exp\left(-\frac{T}{b_2}\right) \right) (c_0 + c_1 P^{d_1}), \frac{\text{m}^2}{\text{mol}} \quad (3)$$

with  $a_0 = 4.8$ ,  $a_1 = 383.7$ ,  $a_2 = 103.5$ ,  $b_1 = 183.0$ ,  $b_2 = 378.8$ ,  $c_0 = 0.82$ ,  $c_1 = 0.2$ , and  $d_1 = -0.1$ .

The major combustion species were estimated using the detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] for  $T = 1235\text{ K}$  and  $P = 1.8\text{ atm}$  using Chemkin Pro [51] for a  $\phi = 2.0$ , 2% mixture of n-heptane and oxygen in an argon bath (results shown in Fig. 5). The main potential interfering species at the  $CO_2$  laser wavelength are other alkenes, such as propene and butenes. Water, while also a major combustion product, has negligible absorption at the wavelength used in this study, and therefore is not an interfering species. These other alkenes also have significantly lower absorption cross sections (PNNL [49]) at  $10.532\ \mu\text{m}$ , as shown in Fig. 6. Additionally, as shown in Fig. 5, these species are produced in significantly lower concentrations than ethylene, and combined with their weak absorption cross sections do not interfere significantly with ethylene concentration time-history measurements, with an estimated interference of 0.5%. Thus, the measurement of ethylene mole fraction was performed at  $10.532\ \mu\text{m}$  and the measured absorbance was assumed to be completely due to the presence of ethylene.

### 2.3.2. n-Heptane laser scheme

A continuous wave distributed feedback interband cascade laser (Nanoplus DFB ICL) at  $3.403\ \mu\text{m}$  was used to measure n-heptane time-histories via a direct absorption spectroscopy scheme similar to that used to measure ethylene (Fig. 2) and is discussed in detail in Koroglu et al. [43,46]. Note that methane also strongly absorbs at this wavelength and is formed during the combustion of n-heptane. However, at early times (under  $100\ \mu\text{s}$ ) methane concentration is negligible compared to that of n-heptane, as shown in Fig. 7. The predicted absorption for each species is shown in Fig. 8, in which we used the measured cross-section for n-heptane absorption and methane absorption cross section at 1235 K from HITRAN [48] in conjunction with the simulated mole fraction to calculate the absorbance signal. Even at  $100\ \mu\text{s}$ , the contribution from methane absorption to the overall signal is less than 1%. Because of the relatively low methane concentration, the absorption at this wavelength for early times can be considered to be due primarily to n-heptane. It is clear from Fig. 8 that the initial decay rate of n-heptane can be measured using the current strategy.

The temperature dependent n-heptane absorption cross section at  $3.403\ \mu\text{m}$  was measured over the range of shock tube temperatures by measuring the absorbance signal immediately after the reflected shock wave (assuming no n-heptane decomposition at time zero). A linear fit was used to determine the n-heptane absorption cross section at  $3.4\ \mu\text{m}$  for each of the experimental temperatures. The measured cross section and best fit line are shown in Fig. 9. The best fit line is described by Eq. (4) where

$$A = -0.037\ \text{m}^2/\text{mol K} \text{ and } B = 79.3\ \text{m}^2/\text{mol}.$$

$$\sigma(T) = AT + B, \frac{\text{m}^2}{\text{mol}} \quad (4)$$

#### 2.4. Chemkin Pro simulations of shock tube with chemical kinetic mechanism

Experimental data were compared to 0-D chemical kinetics simulations performed with Chemkin Pro [51] using the LLNL detailed n-heptane mechanism [11]. It is important to use the correct thermodynamic assumptions while modeling shock tube data [52–54]. In order to model the experiments accurately, thermodynamic assumptions of constant pressure and internal energy or constant volume and internal energy were used, depending on which better fit the measured pressure trace of each experiment. Some experiments behaved as constant pressure systems due to the use of driver inserts, while others behaved as constant volume systems, as shown in Fig. 10. The model which best fit the pressure trace was selected for each simulation. A percent pressure rise per millisecond modeling approach was not used, because the experiments which had a pressure rise closely matched the pressure profile of a constant volume thermodynamic assumption.

For both constant pressure and constant volume simulations, the predicted temperature of the reacting mixture was found to vary significantly over the course of the experiment. An example of this is shown in Fig. 11, which shows the simulated  $T_5$  for a constant pressure reacting system for  $\varphi = 2.0$ , 2% n-heptane/oxygen/argon mixture with  $P_5 = 1.8$  atm.

According to the chemical kinetic model, the temperature varies by over 30% during the course of the experiment. This temperature variance leads to a change in the ethylene cross section and in the number density, contributing to a change in the observed absorbance, as described by Eq. (1). Thus, in order to compare the measured ethylene mole fractions to simulation results, the expected absorbance signal that would be measured given the chemical kinetic simulated mole fraction, temperature, and pressure was calculated and directly compared with the measured absorbance of the  $\text{CO}_2$  laser. The simulated absorbance was calculated and compared to the measured absorbance, rather than the other way around, because the temperature during the experiment is not directly measured as a function of time and is only known accurately at the beginning of the experiment as a result of the ideal shock relations.

This calculation was repeated with two different sets of assumptions (Rules 1 and 2) in order to compare the impact of the temperature and pressure variance. The first procedure (Rule 1) assumed mole fraction, temperature, and pressure (and thus ethylene absorption cross section) are all functions of time and calculated expected absorbance at each time step based on the instantaneous simulated  $T$ ,  $P$ , and mole fraction. The second set of assumptions (Rule 2) was that temperature and pressure (and thus ethylene absorption cross section) were constant and equal to their initial  $T_5$  and  $P_5$  values, and that the only variance in observed absorbance was due to the change in ethylene mole fraction (as is done in typical shock tube experiments). This was equivalent to calculating the mole fraction from the measured absorbance trace, making the same assumptions about temperature and pressure.

The current data analysis procedure leads to an inherent coupling in the output results (temperature, pressure, and mole fraction) of the model. While this makes it more difficult to attribute differences between the modeled and measured results to uncertainties in the reaction rates or improper thermodynamic assumptions, the strategy outlined in this section (Rules 1 and 2) provides a better check on the accuracy of the chemical kinetic models because it accounts for the temperature influence on the absorption cross section and number density, which influence the measured absorbance. Without accounting for these effects, variations in measured signal may be erroneously attributed solely to fluctuation in mole fraction, which would lead to improper optimization of chemical kinetic models.

### 3. Results and discussions

Experiments were performed over a range of temperatures from  $T_5 = 1066$  to  $1502$  K at equivalence ratios of  $\varphi = 2.0$  and  $3.0$ , over pressure ranges  $P_5$  from  $1.4$  to  $6.2$  atm (summarized in Table 2.) Uncertainty in initial mole fractions is  $\pm 1.5\%$  of the reported value.

#### 3.1. Ethylene measurements

##### 3.1.1. Ethylene time-histories

Select traces from the experimental sets are shown in Fig. 12. The measured absorbance is plotted along with the modeled absorbance using the two sets of assumptions (Rules 1 and 2) of time dependent and constant pressure and temperature. Because the expected absorbance value is calculated from the simulated parameters, error bars are placed on the simulation traces. Estimated uncertainty in the simulated absorbance value is 10%, resulting from the combined uncertainties of pressure, temperature, path length, mole fraction, and absorbance cross section.

In general, Rule 1 yields better agreement with the measured absorbance time-histories than Rule 2. This difference is particularly prominent in the early stages of high temperature experiments for all equivalence ratios and pressures. The time-dependent assumption set (Rule 1) improves the agreement between the overall shape of the modeled and measured absorbance time-histories, as it accounts for thermodynamic effects of change in pressure and temperature that are neglected by the assumptions of Rule 2. For example, in Fig. 12(h), the maximum of the absorbance trace occurs immediately before the rapid consumption of ethylene, which is captured well by the assumptions of Rule 1. The time dependent  $T$ ,  $P$  assumption (Rule 1) set also greatly improves agreement between simulated and measured absorbances for high pressure experiments for the  $\varphi = 2.0$  mixture.

This improved agreement is not an unexpected result, as both the cross section and number density are dependent on  $T$  and  $P$ , and thus contribute to a change in measured absorbance. Furthermore, the inverse dependence of both number density and cross section on temperature lead to a compounding effect of change in absorbance with temperature, furthering the importance of considering its time varying effect.

Over the entire range of experimental conditions, there is generally good agreement between predicted and observed magnitude of absorbance. This suggests that with the thermodynamic assumptions selected to match each experiment, ethylene mole fraction and number density are well predicted by the LLNL kinetic mechanism.

As temperature increases at  $1.7$  atm, the time at which ethylene is rapidly consumed is overpredicted by the model for low pressure experiments for equivalence ratios of both  $\varphi = 2.0$  and  $\varphi = 3.0$ , with the discrepancy becoming more pronounced as temperature increases. For high pressure experiments, the model tends to under predict the time of rapid ethylene consumption for both equivalence ratios at lower temperatures and better predicts the consumption time as temperature increases.

The uncertainty in the temperature behind the reflected shock leads to uncertainty in the time of rapid ethylene consumption. A simulation of the  $\varphi = 2.0$ ,  $P_5 = 1.7$  atm experiment was performed with post reflected shock temperatures changed by 2% in either direction in order to estimate its effect on the observed chemical kinetics. The results are shown in Fig. 13.

##### 3.1.2. Peak ethylene absorbance

The peak ethylene absorbance, defined as the maximum value of the absorbance signal, was obtained for each experiment and is shown in Fig. 14.

The peak ethylene absorbance was compared to results from simulations using both Rules 1 and 2, as described above. In general, the modeled peak ethylene absorbance as calculated with Rule 1 agreed better with the experimentally measured results, except for high pressure combustion of the  $\varphi = 3.0$  mixture at temperatures above 1300 K. For both  $\varphi = 2.0$  and 3.0 mixtures, the model tends to under predict peak ethylene absorbance for the low-pressure experiments, and tends to overpredict peak ethylene absorbance for high pressure experiments. For the  $\varphi = 2.0$  experiments at  $P \cong 5.9$  atm (Fig. 14(b)), the experimental peak ethylene absorbance shows a weak linear negative temperature dependence. This is matched well by the chemical kinetic model analyzed using Rule 1, while the temperature dependence is exaggerated when analyzed using Rule 2. It should be noted that because the peak ethylene absorbance is defined as the maximum value over the course of the experiment, the times at which the maxima occur for the measured and modeled results in a single experiment vary.

### 3.2. n-Heptane initial decay rates

The initial decay rate of n-heptane was measured for the first 100  $\mu\text{s}$  of the experiment, when methane concentration is negligible (as explained earlier in Fig. 8). Figure 15 provides the measured and predicted absorbance of the 3.4  $\mu\text{m}$  laser due to n-heptane absorption, calculated with the same two sets of assumptions (Rules 1 and 2) as described before. Only traces from low pressure experiments are shown, because the absorbance signal was saturated for higher pressure experiments, owing to the combined high number density and absorption cross section.

At lower temperatures, initial n-heptane decay profile is well predicted by the LLNL mechanism for both equivalence ratios studied. As temperature increases, the initial decay rate is overpredicted by the model. It should be noted that both Rules 1 and 2 yield similar results for the predicted absorbance value (this is not unexpected, as the temperature change is small over the first 100  $\mu\text{s}$  of the experiment).

### 3.3. Sensitivity analysis

In order to understand the oxidation of n-heptane, a detailed linear sensitivity analysis was performed using the detailed LLNL n-heptane mechanism [11] with Chemkin Pro [51], where the sensitivity coefficient ( $S$ ) for  $i$ th reaction rate ( $k_i$ ) for a species is defined as:

$$S(X_{\text{species}}, k_i, t) = \left\{ \frac{dX_{\text{species}}(t)}{dk_i} \right\} \left\{ \frac{k_i}{X_{\text{species}}(t)} \right\} \quad (5)$$

The results of the sensitivity analysis for the ethylene formation during fuel rich n-heptane combustion for a 2% n-heptane in argon bath mixture at  $\varphi = 2.0$  for  $T = 1235$  K and  $P = 1.8$  atm is shown in Fig. 16. In general ethylene concentration is strongly affected by the  $\text{HO}_2$  chemistry. The reaction strongly dominating the formation of ethylene for the first 200  $\mu\text{s}$  is  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_4 + \text{H} (+\text{M}) = \text{C}_2\text{H}_5 + \text{HO}_2$  (Rxn. 1). At these initial conditions for all temperatures studied, the predicted and measured ethylene concentration time-histories were in good agreement (as seen in Fig. 12) suggesting that the rate constant values used in the mechanism are probably the right ones. After the initial 200  $\mu\text{s}$ , the main reaction responsible for ethylene formation is  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5 + \text{O}_2 = \text{C}_2\text{H}_4 + \text{HO}_2$  (Rxn. 2). Note that the agreement with the data is worsened at these conditions in some cases (e.g., Fig. 12(f)) and there is disagreement between the rate constant values used in the mechanism and in the literature recommended values [55,56]. Though improving the mechanism performance by adopting different reaction rates for Rxn. 2 is possible, updating the literature kinetic mechanism is outside

the scope of the present work and must be done carefully. Current measurements highlight the deficiency in our knowledge of the chemical kinetics of n-heptane (an important reference fuel which is also widely studied in the literature) under fuel rich conditions. Most importantly, there exists no direct experimental determination of these crucial reaction rates (Rxns. 1 and 2) for the conditions used in this study.

A n-heptane sensitivity analysis was also performed to determine the key reactions dictating its initial breakdown, as shown in Fig. 17. In general, the methyl radical chemistry plays a crucial role in n-heptane decomposition. For the first 100  $\mu\text{s}$ , the reaction  $\text{C}_2\text{H}_4 + \text{H} (+\text{M}) = \text{C}_2\text{H}_5 (+\text{M})$  was found to be the dominant reaction controlling n-heptane decay. However, a recent study measuring the rate of this reaction reported an average uncertainty of 25% [57]. The rate coefficient for this reaction was thus increased and decreased by 25% in order to see the changes in the predicted initial decay rate of n-heptane. No significant change was observed in the predicted ethylene time-history with the changed reaction rates. This is expected because 25% change in rate coefficient is not a significant deviation to cause difference in predictions and because of the weak sensitivity coefficient ( $S < 0.04$ ). A recent calculation of the rate coefficient was made by Miller and Klippenstein and is within a factor of 3 of the LLNL reaction rate [58]. Additional measurements of  $\text{CH}_3$  radical time-histories would help in identifying the reasons behind the disagreement between predicted and measured n-heptane time-histories shown in Fig. 15. However, the current data would serve as a validation target for future refinement of the LLNL kinetic model.

Current measurements reveal that there is a need to better understand fuel rich oxidation even for well-studied reference fuel components (e.g., n-heptane) and that caution must be exercised while using heptane kinetic mechanisms outside their validation limit. Effort is currently underway in our laboratory to expand the ranges of current experimental measurements to other T, P, and concentration regions. Additional intermediate species time-histories (e.g., CO,  $\text{CH}_3$ , HCHO,  $\text{CH}_4$ ,  $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6$ , etc.) will also be targeted using existing and new laser absorption schemes.

## 4. Conclusions

In this study, we provided the first ethylene and n-heptane time-histories using laser absorption spectroscopy for fuel-rich  $\varphi = 2.0$  and 3.0 mixtures of 2% n-heptane and oxygen in argon at temperatures of  $1066 < T_5 < 1502$  K over two pressure ranges from 1.4 to 1.9 atm and from 4.8 to 6.2 atm behind reflected shock waves. Concentration time-histories were compared against chemical kinetic simulations (using the Lawrence Livermore National Lab (LLNL) detailed n-heptane reaction mechanism [11]) by calculating the predicted absorbance due to a species rather than directly calculating the concentration time-history from measurements. In doing so, the effects of time dependent temperature and pressure variation, and their subsequent effects on absorption cross section and number density, were properly taken into account in 0-Dimensional shock tube simulations. Two sets of assumptions were used when calculating simulated absorbance, with one set taking into account the time-dependence of temperature and pressure, and the other assuming a constant temperature and pressure. Good agreement was found between predicted and measured absorbance time histories from ethylene absorption, with excellent agreement at early times. The time-dependent temperature and pressure assumption set yielded better agreement than the constant temperature and pressure assumption set. Initial n-heptane time histories agreed well for lower temperatures, but the model overpredicted rate of fuel consumption as temperature increased for both equivalence ratios studied. Sensitivity analysis revealed the crucial reactions that are impor-

tant for fuel rich n-heptane oxidation under current experimental conditions. Detailed investigation of the kinetic pathways and reaction rates may lead to improved predictions for rich mixtures and higher temperatures. The current data will serve as a crucial validation target for developing and refining n-heptane kinetic mechanisms – an important reference fuel for the combustion of real fuels.

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### Supplementary materials

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