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WARM, DENSE MOLECULAR GAS IN THE ISM OF STARBURSTS, LIRGS, AND ULIRGS

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Received 2004 December 16; accepted 2005 April 18

ABSTRACT

The role of star formation in luminous and ultraluminous infrared galaxies (LIRGs, $L_{IR} \geq 10^{11} L_\odot$; ULIRGs, $L_{IR} \geq 10^{12} L_\odot$) is a hotly debated issue: while it is clear that starbursts play a large role in powering the IR luminosity in these galaxies, the relative importance of possible enshrouded AGNs is unknown. It is therefore important to better understand the role of star-forming gas in contributing to the infrared luminosity in IR-bright galaxies. The $J = 3$ level of $^{12}$CO lies 33 K above ground and has a critical density of $\sim 1.5 \times 10^4$ cm$^{-3}$. The $^{12}$CO $J = 3-2$ line serves as an effective tracer for warm, dense molecular gas heated by active star formation. Here we report on $^{12}$CO $J = 3-2$ observations of 17 starburst spiral galaxies, LIRGs, and ULIRGs, which we obtained with the Heinrich Hertz Submillimeter Telescope on Mount Graham, Arizona. Our main results are as follows. (1) We find a nearly linear relation between the infrared luminosity and warm, dense molecular gas such that the infrared luminosity increases as the warm, dense molecular gas to the power 0.92; we interpret this to be roughly consistent with the recent results of Gao & Solomon. (2) We find $L_{IR}/M_{\rm H_2, warm, dense}$ ratios ranging from $\sim 38$ to $\sim 482 L_\odot/M_\odot$ using a modified CO-H$_2$ conversion factor of $8.3 \times 10^{19}$ cm$^{-2}$ (K km s$^{-1}$)$^{-1}$ derived in this paper.

Subject headings: galaxies: active — galaxies: ISM — galaxies: starburst — ISM: molecules — submillimeter

1. INTRODUCTION

An important result from the Infrared Astronomical Satellite (IRAS) observatory was the discovery of large numbers of galaxies that emit predominantly in the infrared. The IRAS Bright Galaxy Survey (BGS; flux-limited, $f_{12\mu m} \geq 5.4$ Jy; Soifer et al. 1987, 1989) reported on infrared fluxes of 330 galaxies. An interesting subset of these objects, coined luminous infrared galaxies (LIRGs, $L_{IR} \geq 10^{11} L_\odot$) and ultraluminous infrared galaxies (ULIRGs, $L_{IR} \geq 10^{12} L_\odot$), serves as a unique tool to better understand the temporal evolution of starburst phenomena (the field is reviewed by Sanders & Mirabel 1996). As evidenced by morphological studies, ULIRGs are likely the product of galaxy mergers, or strongly interacting galaxies (Sanders et al. 1988; Lawrence et al. 1989; Leech et al. 1994). While many LIRGs are also merger remnants, they can also be gas- and/or dust-rich spiral galaxies.

The source of infrared luminosity in ULIRGs and high-luminosity LIRGs has been under contention for quite some time. The luminous activity from the central regions in LIRGs/ULIRGs suggests either a massive starburst, a dust-enshrouded active galactic nucleus (AGN), or some combination of the two. High-resolution $(\sim 1''$) millimeter observations have shown large amounts of molecular gas concentrated in the nuclear regions of these galaxies (e.g., Scoville et al. 1989; Bryant & Scoville 1999). Numerical simulations have shown that galaxy mergers can efficiently drive gas toward the nuclear regions of the remnants (Barnes & Hernquist 1991; Mihos & Hernquist 1996). Nearly all bright IRAS galaxies have been found to be rich in molecular gas (Taney et al. 1990; Sanders et al. 1991, hereafter SSS91). This molecular gas is not only the nascent birthplace for massive star formation, but it may also act as fuel for a hidden AGN. In addition, the processes may be linked. Several authors have suggested that the large amounts of gas may lead to the buildup of large nuclear star clusters that may augment the formation for a central AGN (Scoville et al. 1989, 2000; Surace et al. 1998; Evans et al. 1999).

Strong constraints must be placed on the interstellar medium (ISM) in LIRGs/ULIRGs in order to better understand the source of luminosity and their role in the evolutionary sequence of galaxies. Rotational transitions in carbon monoxide are often used as a tracer for molecular gas in the ISM. The first extensive studies of the molecular gas in LIRGs/ULIRGs via $^{12}$CO (hereafter CO) line emission were presented by Tinney et al. (1990) and SSS91. These authors analyzed CO $J = 1-0$ emission from a sample galaxies with $L_{IR} \geq 10^{10} L_\odot$.

Of particular interest in the ISM is the properties of warm, dense gas, as it is this gas that directly traces star formation. Because CO $J = 1-0$ can be excited at relatively low temperatures $(\sim 5$ K above ground) and densities $(\sim 10^3$ cm$^{-3}$), it serves as a good tracer for total molecular gas, but is relatively insensitive to the warmer, denser gas directly involved in the star formation process. In contrast, high-lying rotational transitions of CO directly trace warm, dense gas. The $J = 3$ level of CO lies 33 K above ground and has a relatively high critical density of $1.5 \times 10^4$ cm$^{-3}$. The CO $J = 3-2$ transition can serve as a tracer of dense molecular gas heated by active star formation, and thus as a diagnostic for the starburst phenomena in these galaxies. Sensitivity to the presence of dense gas is important in determining the evolutionary state of LIRGs/ULIRGs. For example, in the well-studied galaxy Arp 220, Solomon et al. (1992) presented single-dish data taken in CO $J = 1-0$, HCO$^+$ $J = 1-0$, and HCN $J = 1-0$. The CO $J = 1-0$ spectra shows a single peak, while the emission lines from the high-density tracers HCO$^+$ and HCN each showed two peaks. Taniguchi & Shioya (1998) discussed the double-horned profile seen in the high-density tracers HCO$^+$ and HCN as corresponding to the starburst regions associated with two separate nuclei in this galaxy. This model was further supported by high-resolution observations by Sakamoto.
et al. (1999). It is therefore evident that high-density gas tracers are vital to the understanding of molecular gas in LIRGs and ULIRGs.

Several previous surveys of LIRGs and ULIRGs have relied on millimeter wave studies of HCN $J = 1-0$ in order to probe the properties of the dense molecular component of these objects (e.g., Solomon et al. 1992; Gao & Solomon 2004b and references therein). However, the low-lying levels of HCN do not necessarily trace gas that is both warm and dense. For example, the $J = 1-0$ emission of HCN traces densities of $n(H_2) \gtrsim 3 \times 10^4$ cm$^{-3}$; however, it only lies at a temperature of $\sim 4.25$ K above the ground state. Thus, while observations of this transition will reveal the physical conditions of dense molecular gas, both cool and warm, it does not necessarily probe the gas heated by active star formation. In order to study properties of the gas directly involved in star formation, one must look toward lines that have a high excitation temperature, as well as a high critical density.

While there have been numerous studies of CO $J = 1-0$ emission (Sanders & Mirabel 1996 and references therein), there are relatively few studies of LIRGs and ULIRGs in higher lying CO transitions. Rigopoulou et al. (1996) reported a CO $J = 2-1$ survey of six ULIRGs, and Yao et al. (2003) presented the first survey of CO $J = 3-2$ emission of LIRGs and ULIRGs from the Scuba Local Universe Galaxy Survey (SLUGS). Recent high-resolution studies of warm, dense molecular gas in individual LIRGs have been performed by Iono et al. (2004) and Wang et al. (2004).

In order to better understand the role of star formation in LIRGs and ULIRGs, and how it varies with infrared luminosity, we have conducted a survey of CO $J = 3-2$ emission as a tracer for warm, dense molecular gas in 17 normal starburst spiral galaxies, LIRGs, and ULIRGs detected by the IRAS BGS survey. We made these observations at the 10 m Heinrich Hertz Submillimeter Telescope (HHSMT) on Mount Graham. A similar study has been recently performed by Gao & Solomon (2004a, 2004b), using HCN $J = 1-0$ as a tracer for dense molecular gas. In § 2 we present the observations and data; in § 3 we discuss the excitation conditions via the CO $J = 3-2$/CO $J = 1-0$ line ratio; in § 4 we interpret the line profiles; in § 5 we discuss the data with respect to the dominant source of infrared luminosity (starburst vs. AGN); and in § 6 we summarize.

### 2. SAMPLE SELECTION AND OBSERVATIONS

The galaxies in this study were selected from the IRAS BGS sample, which was flux limited at $f_{60 \mu m} \geq 5.4$ Jy. All but two of the objects observed here have previously shown strong CO $J = 1-0$ emission (Mirabel et al. 1990; Tinney et al. 1990; SSS91; Yao et al. 2003) and were therefore known to be rich in molecular gas. The galaxies were originally selected in their respective CO $J = 1-0$ surveys from the IRAS BGS surveys and, in the case of Yao et al. (2003), from the SLUGS survey. The galaxies in these papers were chosen for position on the sky and thus were not biased for any particular galaxy properties. Our goal was to observe a number of galaxies over a wide IR luminosity range: we observed 17 galaxies ranging in IR luminosity from $10.41 < \log (L_{IR}) < 12.39$, spanning from starburst spiral galaxies to ULIRGs. The infrared luminosities and 60 $\mu$m fluxes may be found in Table 1. All of the galaxies were chosen such that they were not redshifted out of the atmospheric transmission windows near 345 GHz. We additionally took care to observe objects whose CO emitting region would be unresolved within the 23$''$ HHSMT beam (see also § 3). We selected objects with a declination greater than $\sim -1^\circ$. The full list of objects observed can be found in Table 1.

We observed our sample of 17 galaxies on the HHSMT over three runs in 2003 November, 2004 March, and 2005 January. We used the facility 345 GHz Superconductor-Insulator Superconductor (SIS) receiver using both polarizations. The acousto-optical spectrometer (AOS) was used as the back end, with a

#### Table 1: Observation Information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>R.A. (J2000.0)</th>
<th>Decl. (J2000.0)</th>
<th>cz (km s$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>Distance (Mpc)</th>
<th>Date Observed</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>log L$<em>{IR}$ (L$</em>{\odot}$)</th>
<th>$f_{60 \mu m}$ (Jy)</th>
<th>Detection?</th>
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<td>20 46 30.6</td>
<td>2315</td>
<td>31.9</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>48 17 38.5</td>
<td>2168</td>
<td>35.09</td>
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<td>55 39 46.9</td>
<td>1142</td>
<td>18.19</td>
<td>2004 Mar</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>15 45 10.3</td>
<td>2404</td>
<td>37.04</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>85 45 09.8</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>35.83</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4687</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6234</td>
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<td>39 11 26.29</td>
<td>5371</td>
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<td>53 14 00</td>
<td>10233</td>
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<td>61 21 22</td>
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<td>23 29 22.7</td>
<td>5450</td>
<td>79.90</td>
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<td>–02 54 55</td>
<td>26257</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>2005 Jan</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>32.13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Notes.—All objects are in order of increasing IR flux. Units of right ascension are hours, minutes, and seconds, and units of declination are degrees, arcminutes, and arcseconds.

a Distances given are proper distances and are taken from Sanders et al. (2003) except for NGC 7817, which is from SSS91. Values for $cz$ are taken from the same references.

b References are for $J = 1-0$ data. An asterisk (*) denotes no CO $J = 1-0$ observations that we could find.

c $L_{IR}$ and 60 $\mu$m flux from Sanders et al. 2003, except for NGC 7817, which was not given.

References.—(1) Sanders et al. 1991; (2) Tinney et al. 1991; (3) Yao et al. 2003; (4) Mirabel et al. 1990; (5) Gao & Solomon 2004b.
usable bandwidth of 1 GHz and velocity resolution of 0.85 km s\(^{-1}\). For calibration sources, we observed Orion, W3OH, and IRC 10216. Telescope pointing was checked every hour with observations of planets. The observations were made in beam-switching mode, with a throw of 60\(^\circ\) and a chopping frequency of 4 Hz. Typical integration time was ~4 hr, which yielded signal-to-noise ratios (S/Ns) of about 10 in most sources. Note, that due to time constraints, we were not able to achieve this level of S/N for every object. In addition, some of the higher luminosity objects fell at a redshift such that their observed frequencies were near atmospheric water lines, decreasing the S/N. The weather conditions were good, with a typical \(\tau\) at 225 GHz of ~0.1. We detected CO \(J = 3–2\) emission in 15 out of the 17 galaxies in our sample.\(^3\)

The data reduction was performed using the GILDAS CLASS package. We subtracted a linear baseline from the data, excluding points in the emission line from the fit. The data were then co-added, weighted by the rms noise of each spectrum. We smoothed the data to a resolution between 3.2 and 25.6 km s\(^{-1}\), depending on the noise levels. We converted from an antenna temperature, \(T_a\), to main-beam temperature, \(T_{mb}\), by scaling by the main-beam efficiency, \(\eta_{mb}\), using \(T_{mb} = T_a/\eta_{mb}\). Main-beam efficiencies were measured to be ~0.50 at the CO \(J = 3–2\) line frequency during the 2004 March observing run. Observing parameters may be found in Table 1.

While the galaxies were all resolved within our 23\(^\circ\) beam, the nuclear gas and dust emitting regions were not. In Figure 1, we show the HHSMT beam print overlaid on the optical images taken from the Digitized Sky Survey (DSS)\(^4\) and the images taken from the Two Micron All Sky Survey (2MASS). In the same figure we show the CO \(J = 3–2\) spectrum we obtained for each object in this study. The objects are arranged in order of increasing \(L_{IR}\).

3. CO \(J = 3–2/CO J = 1–0\) LINE RATIO

The ratio of intensities (K km s\(^{-1}\)) of the CO \(J = 3–2\) line to the CO \(J = 1–0\) line, \(R_3\), serves as a probe of the excitation temperature and optical depth of the emitting gas. A high ratio (\(\gtrsim 1\)) indicates the gas is warm and optically thin. Because the CO \(J = 3–2\) and CO \(J = 1–0\) observations were taken at different telescopes with different beam sizes, certain considerations must be taken into account when comparing the line intensities. Both the beam size, \(b\), and angular extent of the sources on the sky, \(\theta\), play a role in determining the ratio,

\[
R_3 = \frac{I_{32}(s^2 + b^2_{32})}{I_{10}(s^2 + b^2_{10})},
\]

where \(I\) is the intensity (K km s\(^{-1}\)),

\[
I_{CO} = \int T_{mb}(CO) dV.
\]

\(^3\) Please note that, while we did not detect emission in NGC 3583, Yao et al. (2003) detected emission with peak temperature of ~0.1 K. Baseline problems in our data prevented us from ascertaining whether we saw a line or simply baseline ripple.

\(^4\) The Digitized Sky Surveys were produced at the Space Telescope Science Institute under US government grant NAG W-2166. The images of these surveys are based on photographic data obtained using the Oschin Schmidt Telescope on Palomar Mountain and the UK Schmidt Telescope. The plates were processed into the present compressed digital form with the permission of these institutions.

In recent high-resolution (2\(^\prime\)–3\(^\prime\)) millimeter wave observations of seven LIRGs, Bryant & Scoville (1999) find that nearly all of the detected CO \(J = 1–0\) emission is concentrated within the central 1.6 kpc in six of the seven objects. Because it is unlikely that there will be significant CO \(J = 3–2\) emission where there is no CO \(J = 1–0\), we assume that all of the emitting gas in our sample is confined within the same region and, with the distances to each object, compute the angular extent of emitting gas for each object.

The CO \(J = 1–0\) data were taken at the IRAM 30 m telescope, Kitt Peak 12 m telescope, the Nobeyama Radio Observatory, and the Swedish-European Submillimeter Telescope (SEST: Mirabel et al. 1990; Tinney et al. 1990; SSS91; Yao et al. 2003). The beam size of the 10 m HHSMT at 345 GHz is ~23\(^\prime\).

The \(R_3\) ratios are presented in Table 2. Our mean value of \(R_3\) is 0.50. In a survey of CO \(J = 3–2\) emission in 28 nearby galaxies, Mauersberger et al. (1999) found a mean value of \(R_3\) of 0.63. Similarly, Yao et al. (2003) found a mean \(R_3\) of 0.66 in their survey of 60 LIRGs/ULIRGs. The average \(R_3\) for our objects is larger than the average value seen in Galactic molecular clouds of 0.4 (Sanders et al. 1993). The spread in the ratios in Table 2 suggest a variety of excitation conditions in the molecular gas in our sample of galaxies.

4. LINE PROFILES

The observed line profiles allow us to gain a better understanding of the kinematics of the emitting molecular gas. Krugel et al. (1990) examined simple models of galaxies in order to explain their line profiles. They assumed the gas was distributed in a disk and constructed isothermal models of galaxies gridded in radius and azimuth. They allowed the clouds to rotate around the center like a rigid body out to a distance, \(R_\text{cr}\), set as a free parameter and then forced the velocity to 200 km s\(^{-1}\). We use the results of these models to illustrate possible kinematic signatures found in our observed line profiles. The line profiles of the objects in our sample tend to fall into three general categories: single-Gaussian (e.g., NGC 2276), double-peaked (e.g., Arp 220), and three-component (e.g., NGC 3079). These can all be explained by models in which the beam is larger than the emitting region, and a part of the flat rotation curve is included. While it is clear from Figure 1 that we have resolved the optical emitting region of all of the galaxies in this sample, as described in § 3, the bulk of the CO-emitting gas likely remains unresolved within the 23\(^\prime\) beam. Here, we discuss the line profiles of the objects in this study and how they relate to other observations from the literature.

Single-Gaussian Profiles. The single Gaussian line profile has a width that varies based on viewing angle: if the galaxy is face-on, then the line width is dominated by the turbulent velocity among the emitting clouds. If, however, there is an inclination angle of \(i < 90^\circ\), then the effects of the rotation of the galaxy are evident in the line width.

NGC 7817.---The optical and 2MASS images (Fig. 1) indicate that our observations of the circumnuclear star-forming region are unresolved in this spiral galaxy. The CO \(J = 1–0\) line profile appears to have a possible double peak, which would be consistent with the fact that we are viewing this galaxy slightly edge-on (SSS91).

NGC 2276, NGC 6701.---The narrow single-Gaussian line profiles for these galaxies are likely due to viewing these spiral galaxies ~face-on.

NGC 834.---The CO \(J = 1–0\) profile in this spiral (Chini et al. 1996; Hattori et al. 2004) is difficult to interpret due to
Fig. 1.—Left to right for each three-panel row: DSS image with the 23" HHSMT beam overlaid; 2MASS image with the 23" HHSMT beam overlaid; CO J = 3–2 emission line obtained at the HHSMT in this study.
Fig. 1.—Continued
Fig. 1.—Continued
noise (SS91; Young et al. 1995). It appears to be double-horned in CO $J = 1–0$. A large ring of star-forming gas is seen in Hα maps by Hattori et al. (2004): this ring may be the origin of the 1–0 double peak. This double peak may emerge in a CO $J = 3–2$ spectrum with a higher S/N.

IRAS 23436+5257, IRAS 07251–0248.—The emission lines presented here for these galaxies are the first to be published. The objects appear to be disturbed and/or interacting galaxies (Fig. 1).

UGC 5101.—The CO $J = 3–2$ spectrum presented here has an asymmetric profile with a high-velocity bulge. The CO $J = 1–0$ line appears to be a more symmetric Gaussian (Gao & Solomon 2004b). The CO $J = 1–0$ spectrum, in contrast, has a clear, double-horned profile (Solomon et al. 1997). Armus et al. (2004) discuss the presence of a buried AGN in this galaxy through the detection of the [Ne v] 14.3 μm line. Farrah et al. (2003) describe this object as having an enshrouded AGN, which plays a large role in contributing to the near-IR flux, but becoming more negligible at longer wavelengths. Many other authors have discussed the possibility of an enshrouded AGN in this object (e.g., Imanishi et al. 2001, 2003 and references therein). Sanders et al. (1988) interpret the morphology as a late-stage merger. Near-Infrared Camera and Multi-Object Spectrometer (NICMOS) images show only a single nucleus (Scoville et al. 2000), making it unlikely that the possible double peak is due to individual nuclei from progenitor galaxies in a merger. High-resolution mapping will help us to interpret this line profile better.

IRAS 17208–0014.—Gao & Solomon (2004a) present HCN $J = 1–0$ observations of this object, and Rigopoulou et al. (1996) present CO $J = 2–1$ observations of this object. Our profile appears consistent with both sets of data. The object has the optical spectrum of an H II region (Veilleux et al. 2002). Scoville et al. (2000) and Farrah et al. (2003) classify IRAS

Fig. 1.—Continued
Double-Horned Profiles. The double-horned profile was evident in many of our objects as well. There are two distinct subcategories: those with symmetric peaks (e.g., NGC 3094 and Arp 220) and those where one peak is higher than the other (e.g., NGC 992). Krugel et al. (1990) model the symmetrical, double-peaked objects as galaxies that are unresolved, with the bulk of the emitting gas confined to a circumnuclear ring. However, as discussed in § 1 and below, there may be alternative explanations for NGC 828 and Arp 220. The asymmetric double-peak profile is more enigmatic. Krugel et al. suggest that if the gas is distributed symmetrically in the galaxy’s disk, such profiles might arise if the observation is centered off the center of the disk. Alternatively, this profile may arise if the LIRG/ULIRG has two distinct nuclei from a merger, and if the emitting molecular gas from one has a larger velocity dispersion than the other.

NGC 3094.—While our data for this object are sufficiently noisy that a double peak is not clear, higher resolution data from Yao et al. (2003) show the double peak to be evident. Imanishi (2000) classifies this object as having a highly obscured AGN.

NGC 992.—While the CO J = 3–2 spectrum shows an asymmetric double-horned profile, the CO J = 1–0 profile is inconclusive. The general shape is similar, but noise dominates the features enough to make it difficult to ascertain whether or not there are two individual peaks in the 1–0 profile (SSS91). The galaxy appears to be a spiral (Chini et al. 1996) undergoing a starburst (Ashby et al. 1995). It is likely, following the modeling of Krugel et al. (1990), that the asymmetric line profile arises from a telescope pointing offset from the center of the CO disk.

NGC 828.—Hattori et al. (2004) observed Hα in this object and describe it as a disturbed spiral galaxy. Kinematic evidence from high-resolution CO J = 1–0 mapping suggests that this galaxy is an ongoing merger (Wang et al. 1991); CO J = 1–0 spectra (SSS91; Young et al. 1995) appear to display two peaks, although the double horn is significantly more asymmetric than is seen in the two major peaks in the 3–2 spectra presented in this study.

NGC 7771.—The observation may be slightly off from the optical center (DSS images; Fig. 1), although the entire gas emitting region appears to remain unresolved within the beam (2MASS images; Fig. 1). The CO J = 1–0 profile appears to be single-Gaussian. The double peak is likely due to the rotational structure of the galaxy.

Arp 220.—This object is well studied in the literature, and we only briefly discuss the line profile. As discussed in § 1, the CO J = 1–0 spectrum of Arp 220 shows a single Gaussian peak, while the spectrum from high-density tracers (e.g., HCN J = 1–0, CO J = 3–2) reveal a double peak. The double peaks are interpreted to belong to each nucleus of the progenitor galaxies (Taniuchi & Shioya 1998).

Triple-Peaked Profiles. Of our sample, NGC 3079 and NGC 6286 were best fitted by three Gaussians; when fitted to a single Gaussian, the full widths at half-maximum (FWHMs) of these objects are ∼450 km s−1. Krugel et al. (1990) observed a similar feature in the starburst galaxy Mrk 1034 and modeled this as the spectral signature of a resolved galaxy where the inclination was such that both the central core and the extended gas with a flat rotation curve were being observed. This type of model produces the symmetric spectra seen in some of our observations, with the height of the central peak rising with respect to the two outer peaks as the inclination angle of the galaxy drops.

NGC 3079.—This galaxy appears to fit the Krugel et al. (1990) model. Indeed, the 2MASS image shows that the beam extends significantly beyond the nuclear dust and gas emitting region. Tinney et al. (1990) presented a CO J = 1–0 spectrum of NGC 3079 compiled from a map; the profile appears to be an asymmetric double horn.

NGC 6286.—The optical and 2MASS images reveal this observation to be of an edge-on spiral. The asymmetric line profile was best fitted by three Gaussians, although it is likely to be simply a double-horned spectrum that was observed off of the CO emission center. Indeed, the CO J = 1–0 line profile appears more symmetric, although the presence of more than one peak is difficult to determine given the noise (SSS91).

5. SOURCE OF INFRARED LUMINOSITY

The search for the driving source of high-luminosity LIRGs and ULIRGs has been the subject of numerous observational and theoretical studies. While it is clear that there is active star formation in these objects, there remains evidence that dust-enshrouded
active nuclei may play an important role as well (e.g., Yun & Scoville 1998). In this section, we investigate the source of IR luminosity in the high-luminosity LIRGs and ULIRGs in our sample.

5.1. $L_{\text{IR}}$ Versus $L_{\text{CO},J=3-2}$

Correlations between infrared luminosity and the luminosity due to high-density tracers such as HCN have been discussed extensively (Solomon et al. 1992; Gao & Solomon 2004a, 2004b). In a recent survey of normal (spiral) galaxies, LIRGs, and ULIRGs, Gao & Solomon (2004b) found a linear relationship between $L_{\text{IR}}$ and $L_{\text{HCN}}$ over 3 orders of magnitude in infrared luminosity; this suggests that, over the IR luminosity range spanned [log($L_{\text{IR}}$) ≤ 12.36], the dense molecular gas (and thus high-mass star formation) is the dominant form of IR emission in both the LIRGs and ULIRGs. In addition, Carilli et al. (2005) have shown for high-redshift ULIRGs that the correlation between IR luminosity and HCN luminosity is nearly as well. These correlations suggest that at some level, the dense ISM and infrared luminosity in these objects are intertwined. Since CO $J = 3-2$ is an indicator of warm, dense gas, we use our data set combined with those of other works to further test this hypothesis. Similar to the Gao & Solomon study, we probe infrared luminosities up to log($L_{\text{IR}}$) = 12.39.

We obtained values for $L_{\text{IR}}$ from SSS91 and the IRAS Revised Bright Galaxy Survey (Sanders et al. 2003). We calculated $L_{\text{CO}}$ using

$$L_{\text{CO}} \approx \pi/(4 \ln 2) \theta_{\text{mb}}^2 d_2^2 \times (1 + z)^{-3},$$

(3)

where $\theta_{\text{mb}}$ is the FWHM of the telescope Gaussian beam and $d_2$ is the luminosity distance. The data for $L_{\text{CO}}$ are presented in Table 2. So that we may increase the number of objects in our analysis, we included 14 objects that we detected (please see caption of Fig. 2 concerning exclusions), as well as 40 objects studied by Yao et al. (2003). In order to account for calibration differences in the data sets, we used Arp 220 as a common calibrator and scaled our $L_{\text{CO}}$ values such that the Arp 220 CO luminosities matched. This scaling factor was 0.26.

We present $L_{\text{IR}}$ versus $L_{\text{CO},J=3-2}$ in Figure 2. We fitted the data using a linear $\chi^2$ minimization routine and recovered for the fit,

$$\log(L_{\text{IR}}) = 0.92(\pm 0.07) \log(L_{\text{CO},J=3-2}) + 3.28(\pm 0.60).$$

(4)

This result is consistent with the linear slope found by Gao & Solomon (2004a, 2004b).

If the observed far-infrared emission is produced primarily by heating from massive stars, the star formation rate (SFR) can be given as a function of $L_{\text{IR}}$ (Kennicutt 1998),

$$\text{SFR}(M_\odot \ \text{yr}^{-1}) \approx 2 \times 10^{-10} (L_{\text{IR}}/L_\odot).$$

(5)

Previous studies of the relationship between $L_{\text{IR}}$ and $L_{\text{CO},J=1-0}$ have found a nonlinear relationship such that the infrared luminosity increases as the CO $J = 1-0$ luminosity to ~1.25. Because $L_{\text{CO},J=1-0}$ is proportional to the total molecular gas mass (Appendix A of SSS91), this has been interpreted as an increase in star formation efficiency (SFE), defined as the SFR over the total molecular gas mass, as a function of SFR (e.g., Solomon et al. 1992): $L_{\text{IR}}/CO$ $J = 1-0$ serves as a tracer for SFE as a function of all available molecular gas, and $L_{\text{IR}}/HCN$ $J = 1-0$ serves as a tracer for SFE as a function of all available dense, star-forming gas (e.g., Gao & Solomon 2004b).

In contrast, CO $J = 3-2$ traces warm, dense gas heated by embedded stars (§1), and thus $L_{\text{IR}}/CO$ $J = 3-2$ probes the infrared luminosity as a function of recent star formation. It follows then that the linear relationship seen between $L_{\text{IR}}$ and $L_{\text{HCN}}$ implies that the SFR per unit dense molecular gas mass remains constant through log($L_{\text{IR}}$) ≤ 12.3; this result is confirmed by our observed relationship between $L_{\text{IR}}$ and $L_{\text{CO},J=3-2}$, which shows a nearly constant SFR as a function of warm, dense molecular gas heated by active star formation. These observations strengthen the conclusion of Gao & Solomon (2004b) that the IR luminosity in LIRGs and ULIRGs up to an IR luminosity of at least log($L_{\text{IR}}$) ~ 12.3 is primarily driven by heating from O and B stars.

The observed linear relationships suggest that star formation does play an important role in powering the infrared luminosity in LIRGs and ULIRGs. However, it may be that this relationship breaks down at higher IR luminosities as possible AGN contribution becomes more important. As an example, we extrapolate our fit to observations of hyperluminous infrared galaxies (HILIRGs). Extrapolating from our fit, a galaxy with log($L_{\text{IR}}$) ~ 13 would require ~4×10^{10} $M_\odot$ of warm, dense molecular gas in the nuclear regions. For comparison, the HILIRG FSC 10214+4274 has $L_{\text{FIR}} = 1.8 \times 10^{14} L_\odot$ and CO $J = 3-2$-traced warm, dense gas mass of $M_{\text{H}_2} = 2.2 \times 10^{11} M_\odot$ (an upper limit, as the luminosity may have been enhanced by gravitational lensing; Close et al. 1995); similarly, HILIRG FSC 15307+3252 has $L_{\text{FIR}} = 1.3 \times 10^{13} L_\odot$ and has an upper limit of warm, dense gas mass (as measured from CO $J = 4-3$ observations) of $M_{\text{H}_2} \leq 10^{10} M_\odot$. Both are believed to have central AGNs as their main source of infrared luminosity (Yun & Scoville 1998).

The disparity in the measured versus predicted amount of warm, dense gas in these HILIRGs suggests that, at higher infrared luminosities, there may exist a strong deviation from the...
fit described by equation (4), which may be evident from the higher luminosity points in Figure 2. This implies that the infrared emission may grow nonlinearly with increasing emission from warm, dense molecular gas.

It may be that there is an interplay between an AGN and star formation contribution to \( L_{\text{IR}} \). The case has been mounting for an evolutionary sequence between hierarchical mergers and AGN formation (e.g., Scoville 2003). It has recently become clear that most galaxies contain supermassive black holes (Kormendy & Richstone 1995 and references therein). There is also evidence that there is a connection between black hole growth and central ISM physics in the remnants of galaxy mergers. Recent SPH simulations have shown that AGN feedback in galaxy merger remnants can rapidly quench star formation after the initial merger-induced starburst (Springel et al. 2005a, 2005b). Starbursts may be the dominant source of IR luminosity in less IR-luminous galaxies, while the AGN contribution becomes more important in higher luminosity objects. Quenching of star formation owing to AGN feedback may be responsible for a steepening of the slope in the \( L_{\text{IR}} \) versus \( L_{\text{CO}} \) plot for the galaxies with \( \log(L_{\text{IR}}) \gtrsim 12.3 \) \( L_\odot \). Indeed, some 35%–50% of ULIRGs with \( L_{\text{IR}} \gtrsim 10^{12.3} \) \( L_\odot \) show AGN activity from optical and NIR spectra (Tran et al. 2001; Veilleux et al. 2002). This luminosity is approximately where our sample of LIRGs and ULIRGs ends and is a location for a possible deviation from the fit in Figure 2. In addition, Farrah et al. (2002) discuss coeval starburst and AGN activity in a sample of SCUBA HLIRG sources.

More \( CO \ J = 3–2 \) observations of ULIRGs with \( L_{\text{IR}} \gtrsim 10^{12.3} \) \( L_\odot \) are needed to test these hypotheses. Theoretical models testing these concepts will be presented in an upcoming paper.

5.2. \( L_{\text{IR}} \) Versus Mass of Star-forming Molecular Gas

One of the main arguments for the existence of a dust-enshrouded AGN as the main power source in luminous infrared galaxies is an SFE (\( L_{\text{IR}}/M_{\text{H}} \)) larger than that seen in normal spiral galaxies. If the sole source of energy is a nuclear starburst, then, assuming a reasonable initial mass function, there should be an Eddington-like limit on the SFE given by \( SFE < 0.03 \). For objects with ratios significantly higher than this are likely to require an additional source of energy (Scoville et al. 1997; Scoville 2003).

The warm, dense gas mass is obtained using a modified version of the linear relation between the CO luminosity and \( M_{\text{H}} \) (Young & Scoville 1982; Tinney et al. 1990; SSSS91) (K \( \text{ms}^{-1} \text{pc}^{-2} \)). Following Gao & Solomon (2004b), we employ a Large Velocity Gradient (LVG) model in order to derive a CO (\( J = 3–2 \))-H\(_2\) conversion factor. For a kinetic temperature of 35 K, the model provides curves of \( n(\text{H}_2) \) and \( N(\text{H}_2) \) as a function of \( L_{\text{CO} 3–2} \) and \( L_{\text{IR} 1–0} \). For our galaxy sample, the curves yield an average \( N(\text{H}_2)/L_{\text{CO} 3–2} \) of \( 8.3 \times 10^{19} \text{cm}^{-2} \) (K \( \text{ms}^{-1} \text{pc}^{-2} \)). We then find

\[
M_{\text{H}_2 \text{ warm}} = 1.33 \times L_{\text{CO} 3–2} M_\odot \quad (\text{K} \text{ms}^{-1} \text{pc}^{-2})^{-1}. \tag{6}
\]

While the ratio of infrared luminosity to total gas mass may be a strong indicator as to the source of infrared luminosity, it is the dense gas mass that is expected to more directly trace star formation. Thus, a prudent test is to examine the ratio of \( L_{\text{IR}} \) to \( M_{\text{H}_2 \text{ dense}} \). Gao & Solomon (2004a, 2004b) found that this ratio remains between \( \sim 20 \) and \( \sim 200 \), independent of total IR luminosity for normal spiral galaxies, LIRGs, and ULIRGs. They additionally reported that the average \( L_{\text{IR}} \) to \( M_{\text{H}_2 \text{ dense}} \) ratio in their sample was \( \sim 90 \) \( L_\odot /M_\odot \), comparable to molecular cloud cores (Mooney & Solomon 1988). These ratios were found through analysis of HCN \( J = 1–0 \). We find an average \( L_{\text{IR}}/M_{\text{H}_2 \text{ dense}} \) of \( \sim 160 \) \( L_\odot /M_\odot \).

We present the ratio \( L_{\text{IR}}/M_{\text{H}_2 \text{ dense}} \) for our sample of LIRGs in Table 2. As is evident, none of the objects have a ratio \( L_{\text{IR}}/M_{\text{H}_2} \gg 500 L_\odot /M_\odot \). It is important to note the sensitive dependency of this number on the CO-H\(_2\) conversion factor. In addition, it is not clear that the CO to \( H_2 \) conversion factor is the same in all galaxies. Better constraints on variations in the conversion factor are necessary in order to use this method to make a robust statement concerning the source of IR luminosity.

6. SUMMARY

We have presented single-dish CO \( J = 3–2 \) observations of a sample of starbursts, LIRGs, and ULIRGs in order to study properties of the warm, dense, star-forming gas. We detected emission in 15 out of 17 galaxies within our noise limits. We have found a nearly linear relationship between the infrared luminosity and the amount of warm, dense gas, confirming the recent results by Gao & Solomon (2004a, 2004b) for galaxies with \( \log (L_{\text{IR}}) \lesssim 12.3 \). We have derived a CO-H\(_2\) conversion factor for \( CO \ J = 3–2 \) in LIRGs/ULIRGs of \( 8.3 \times 10^{19} \text{cm}^{-2} \) (K \( \text{ms}^{-1} \text{pc}^{-2} \)).

We would like to thank the entire HHSMT staff for continual support. We additionally acknowledge R. S. Bussmann, Abigail Hedden, and Elaina Hyde for their assistance during observations. We thank the referee for helpful comments that have greatly improved the quality of this manuscript, and for a prompt review. D. N. would like to thank Padel Papadopoulos and Bob Stupak for helpful conversations, and acknowledges the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program for funding during part of this study. The HHSMT is operated by the Arizona Radio Observatory (ARO), Steward Observatory, University of Arizona, with partial funding from the Research Corporation. This research has made use of the NASA IPAC Extragalactic Database (NED), which is operated by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. This research has made use of the NASA IPAC Infrared Science Archive, which is operated by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

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In Table 4, for NGC 3245, the value of log $L_{\text{X, generic}}$ (col. [6]) should be 39.16, not 36.16. All other values in the table are correct, and the correct value was used in all of the calculations and plots.

In the last section of Table 2, “Narrow-Line Type 1 Seyfert Galaxies,” and in this section only, the units for column (4), the bolometric luminosities, are Watts, not ergs s$^{-1}$, as in the rest of the table.

In equation (6) the constant $5.71 \times 10^8$ should be $5.71 \times 10^9$ in both cases. The correct form of equation (6) is thus:

$$f = \begin{cases} 
1 + \sqrt{5.71 \times 10^8 \frac{L_\odot}{L_{\text{FIR}}}} & L_{\text{FIR}} > L_c, \\
0.75 \left(1 + \sqrt{5.71 \times 10^8 \frac{L_\odot}{L_{\text{FIR}}}} \right) & L_{\text{FIR}} \leq L_c.
\end{cases}$$

The correct formula was used in all calculations and plots. We would also like to reference A. M. Hopkins et al. (ApJ, 599, 971 [2003]), in addition to Bell (2003), for this formula.