BULLETIN OF THE
AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY
Volume 80, Number 2, March 1974

PARAMETRICES AND ESTIMATES FOR THE $\bar{\partial}_b$ COMPLEX ON STRONGLY PSEUDOCONVEX BOUNDARIES

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Communicated May 21, 1973

0. **Introduction.** Here we briefly sketch the background of the problem to be considered, and refer to Folland-Kohn [4] for definitions and proofs.

Let X be the boundary of a strongly pseudoconvex region in a complex manifold of complex dimension $n+1$, or more generally a real manifold of dimension $2n+1$ with a strongly pseudoconvex partially complex structure. We then have the tangential Cauchy-Riemann complex

$$0 \longrightarrow \Lambda^{0,0} \xrightarrow{\bar{\partial}_b} \Lambda^{0,1} \xrightarrow{\bar{\partial}_b} \cdots \xrightarrow{\bar{\partial}_b} \Lambda^{0,n} \longrightarrow 0$$

where $\Lambda^{0,j}$ is the space of j-forms of purely antiholomorphic type. If we impose a Riemannian metric on X, we can form the formal adjoint ϑ_b of $\bar{\partial}_b$ and thence the Laplacian $\square_b = \bar{\partial}_b\vartheta_b + \vartheta_b\bar{\partial}_b$. $\square_b$ is nonelliptic; however, according to a theorem of Kohn, for $1 \leqq j \leqq n-1$, $\square_b$ satisfies the estimates

$$\|\phi\|_{s+1} \leqq c_s(\|\square_b\phi\|_s + \|\phi\|_0), \qquad s = 0, 1, 2, \cdots, \tag{1}$$

for all $\phi \in \Lambda^{0,j}$ with compact support. (Here $\| \ \|_s$ is the L^2 Sobolev norm of order s.) These estimates imply that $\square_b$ is hypoelliptic; moreover, if X is compact, the nullspace $\mathscr{N}$ of $\square_b$ is finite-dimensional and there is an operator G on $\Lambda^{0,j}$ satisfying

$$\|G\phi\|_{s+1} \leqq c_s \|\phi\|_s \qquad (\phi \in \Lambda^{0,j}, s = 0, 1, 2, \cdots)$$

and

$$G\square_b = \square_b G = I - P$$

where P is the orthogonal projection onto $\mathscr{N}$.

Kohn's method unfortunately gives no clue as to how to compute G. Our purpose here is to construct G (modulo smoothing operators) as an

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AMS (MOS) subject classifications (1970). Primary 35B45, 35C15, 35H05, 35N15, 47G05; Secondary 32F15, 43A80, 44A25.

Key words and phrases. Tangential Cauchy-Riemann operators, subelliptic operators, regularity of solutions, fundamental solutions, integral operators, analysis on the Heisenberg group, L^p estimates, Lipschitz estimates.

explicit integral operator and to derive sharp estimates for $\bar{\partial}_b$ from this representation. Our method will be to construct an exact fundamental solution for $\Box_b$ on a particular manifold—which incidentally yields some interesting examples of hypoelliptic behavior—and then to transfer this solution to a general X.

1. **Analysis on the Heisenberg group.** Let $N \subset \boldsymbol{C}^{n+1}$ be the real hypersurface

$$N = \left\{ \zeta \in \boldsymbol{C}^{n+1} : \sum_1^n |\zeta_j|^2 = \operatorname{Im} \zeta_0 \right\}$$

N is the boundary of the generalized upper half-plane $\{\zeta : \sum_1^n |\zeta_j|^2 < \operatorname{Im} \zeta_0\}$, which is holomorphically equivalent to the unit ball in $\boldsymbol{C}^{n+1}$. We take $(x_1, \cdots, x_n, y_1, \cdots, y_n, t)$ as coordinates on N where $x_j = \operatorname{Re} \zeta_j$, $y_j = \operatorname{Im} \zeta_j$, $t = \operatorname{Re} \zeta_0$; we also write $z_j = x_j + iy_j$ and $z = (z_1, \cdots, z_n)$.

N is strongly pseudoconvex; moreover, N has a natural identification with a nilpotent Lie group (the Heisenberg group; cf. [7]). The group law is given by

$$(z, t)(z', t') = \left(z + z', t + t' + 2 \operatorname{Im} \sum_1^n z_j \bar{z}'_j \right).$$

It is easy to verify that

$$X_j = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j} + 2y_j \frac{\partial}{\partial t}, \qquad Y_j = \frac{\partial}{\partial y_j} - 2x_j \frac{\partial}{\partial t}, \qquad T = \frac{\partial}{\partial t}$$

form a basis for the Lie algebra of N. Also, the forms $d\bar{z}_1, \cdots, d\bar{z}_n$ are a left-invariant basis for the antiholomorphic one-forms on N.

$\bar{\partial}_b$ is a left-invariant operator on N, and it is not hard to compute it explicitly. If we set $Z_j = \frac{1}{2}(X_j - iY_j) = (\partial/\partial z_j) + i\bar{z}_j(\partial/\partial t)$, then

$$\bar{\partial}_b\left(\sum_J \phi_J \, d\bar{z}^J \right) = \sum_J \sum_{k=1}^n (\bar{Z}_k \phi_J) \, d\bar{z}_k \wedge d\bar{z}^J.$$

Here J is a multi-index and $d\bar{z}^J$ denotes a wedge product of $d\bar{z}$'s.

We impose the left-invariant metric on N which makes $Z_1, \cdots, Z_n$, $\bar{Z}_1, \cdots, \bar{Z}_n$, T orthonormal. Straightforward computation shows that the action of $\Box_b$ on $\Lambda^{0,j}$ is given by

$$\Box_b\left(\sum_J \phi_J \, d\bar{z}^J \right) = -\sum_J (\mathscr{L}_{n-2j} \phi_J) \, d\bar{z}^J$$

where, for $\alpha \in \boldsymbol{C}$,

$$\mathscr{L}_\alpha = \frac{1}{2} \sum_1^n (Z_k \bar{Z}_k + \bar{Z}_k Z_k) - i\alpha T.$$

The study of $\Box_b$ is therefore reduced to the study of the left-invariant scalar operators $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$, $\alpha=n, n-2, \cdots, -n$.

We introduce the norm function $\rho(z, t)=(|z|^4+t^2)^{1/4}$ on N, which arises naturally in the study of singular integrals on N **[6]**. In **[3]** Folland showed that there is a constant $c_0\neq 0$ such that $c_0^{-1}\rho^{-2n}$ is a fundamental solution for $\mathscr{L}_0$. From homogeneity and symmetry considerations it is then natural to search for a fundamental solution for $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$ of the form $\phi_\alpha(z, t)=\rho^{-2n}(z, t)f(t/\rho^2)$. The equation $\mathscr{L}_\alpha\phi_\alpha=\delta$ (where δ is the point mass at 0) leads to an ordinary differential equation for f which can be solved explicitly, and the candidate for a fundamental solution turns out to be

$$\phi_\alpha(z, t) = (t + i\,|z|^2)^{-(n+\alpha)/2}(t-i\,|z|^2)^{-(n-\alpha)/2}.$$

THEOREM 1.

$$\mathscr{L}_\alpha\phi_\alpha = c_\alpha\delta \quad \textit{where } c_\alpha = \frac{-i^{-\alpha}2^{2-2n}\pi^{n+1}}{\Gamma(\frac{1}{2}(n+\alpha))\Gamma(\frac{1}{2}(n-\alpha))}.$$

COROLLARY. *$\mathscr{L}_\alpha$ is hypoelliptic if and only if* $\pm\alpha\neq n, n+2, n+4, \cdots$.

For, if $\pm\alpha\neq n, n+2, n+4, \cdots$, then $c_\alpha\neq 0$ and $c_\alpha^{-1}\phi_\alpha$ is a fundamental solution for $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$ which is C^∞ away from 0, whence $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$ is hypoelliptic. Otherwise, $c_\alpha=0$, so that ϕ_α is a nonsmooth solution of $\mathscr{L}_\alpha\phi_\alpha=0$.

The family of operators $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$ bears some resemblance to an example of Grušin **[5]** which also involves hypoellipticity of an operator for "almost all" values of a parameter.

The occurrence of the "bad values" of α can be explained in terms of the representation theory of N. According to the Stone-von Neumann theorem, for each real $\lambda\neq 0$ there is a unique irreducible representation π_λ of N on $L^2(\boldsymbol{R}^n)$ such that $\pi_\lambda(X_j)=-\partial/\partial\xi_j$, $\pi_\lambda(Y_j)=4i\lambda\xi_j$, $\pi_\lambda(T)=i\lambda$ where $\xi_1, \cdots, \xi_n$ are coordinates on $\boldsymbol{R}^n$, and $L^2(N)$ is a direct integral of these representations. (See **[2]**.) Setting $\eta=2|\lambda|^{1/2}\xi$, we have

$$\pi_\lambda(\mathscr{L}_\alpha) = |\lambda| \sum_1^n [(\partial^2/\partial\eta_j^2) - \eta_j^2] + \lambda\alpha.$$

Thus $\pi_\lambda(\mathscr{L}_\alpha)$ is invertible for (almost) all λ if and only if $\pm\alpha$ is not an eigenvalue of the n-dimensional Hermite operator $\sum_1^n [\eta_j^2-(\partial^2/\partial\eta_j^2)]$. But these eigenvalues are well known to be $n, n+2, n+4, \cdots$.

If α is not an exceptional value, the equation $\mathscr{L}_\alpha u=f$ is solved for reasonable f by $u=f*(c_\alpha^{-1}\phi_\alpha)$, where $*$ denotes convolution on the group N. We can use this fact to derive sharp versions of the estimates (1) for $\mathscr{L}_\alpha$. If $U\subset N$ is open, $1\leqq p\leqq\infty$, $k\in\boldsymbol{R}$, let $L_k^p(U)$ be the L^p Sobolev space of order k on U. For $k=0, 1, 2, \cdots$, we define $S_k^p(U)$ to be the space of all

$f\in L^p_{k/2}(U)$ such that $D^\gamma f\in L^p(U)$ for all $|\gamma|\leqq k$ where

$$D=(X_1,\cdots,X_n,Y_1,\cdots,Y_n).$$

S^p_k has an obvious norm.

THEOREM 2. *Given $U\subset N$, $V\subset\subset U$, $\pm\alpha\neq n,n+2,n+4,\cdots$ and f a function on U, let u be any solution of $\mathscr{L}_\alpha u=f$ on U. If $f\in S^p_k(U)$ and $1<p<\infty$ then $u\in S^p_{k+2}(V)$; also, if $f\in L^p(U)$, $q^{-1}=p^{-1}-(n+1)^{-1}$, and $1<p<q<\infty$, then $u\in L^q(V)$.*

The essential point of the proof is the fact that the distribution derivatives $D^\gamma\phi_\alpha$ ($|\gamma|=2$) and $T\phi_\alpha$ are singular integral kernels à la Knapp-Stein [**6**] (plus, perhaps, multiples of δ), and the corresponding convolutions are known to be bounded on L^p, $1<p<\infty$ (cf. [**1**], [7]). The L^p-L^q estimates were announced in Stein [**8**].

2. **General strongly pseudoconvex manifolds.** Let X be a strongly pseudoconvex $(2n+1)$-manifold as in §0. We choose a nonvanishing real vector field T which is complementary to the complex directions on X, so that $\boldsymbol{C}TX=T_{1,0}X\oplus T_{0,1}X\oplus\boldsymbol{C}\cdot T$. Replacing T by $-T$ if necessary, the Levi form $\langle\ ,\ \rangle$ on $T_{1,0}X$ given for $Z_1,Z_2\in C^\infty(T_{1,0}X)$ by

$$[Z_1,\bar Z_2]=-2i\langle Z_1,Z_2\rangle T \text{ modulo } C^\infty(T_{1,0}X\oplus T_{0,1}X)$$

is positive definite. We extend $\langle\ ,\ \rangle$ to a Hermitian metric on X by requiring $T_{1,0}X\perp T_{0,1}X\perp T$ and $\langle T,T\rangle=1$, and consider the Laplacian $\Box_b$ associated to this metric. We work locally and fix once and for all an orthonormal frame $Z_1,\cdots,Z_n$ for $T_{1,0}X$. Further we denote the dual frame for $T^*_{1,0}X$ by $\omega_1,\cdots,\omega_n$.

In this setup X looks locally like the Heisenberg group modulo small error terms, in the sense provided by the following two lemmas.

LEMMA 1. *If $\phi=\sum_J\phi_J\bar\omega^J\in\Lambda^{0,j}$, then*

$$\Box_b\phi=\sum_J[-\tfrac12\sum(Z_k\bar Z_k+\bar Z_kZ_k)+(n-2j)iT](\phi_J)\bar\omega^J$$

modulo terms of order one and zero not involving differentiation in the T direction.

LEMMA 2. *For each $\xi\in X$ there exist local coordinates $x_1^\xi,\cdots,x_n^\xi$, $y_1^\xi,\cdots,y_n^\xi$, t^ξ on a neighborhood U_ξ of ξ, which are centered at ξ and depend smoothly on ξ, such that with $z_k^\xi=x_k^\xi+iy_k^\xi$, on U_ξ the vector fields Z_k and T take the form*

$$Z_k=\frac{\partial}{\partial z_k^\xi}+i\bar z_k^\xi\frac{\partial}{\partial t^\xi}+\sum\left(a_{km}\frac{\partial}{\partial z_m^\xi}+b_{km}\frac{\partial}{\partial\bar z_m^\xi}\right)+c_k\frac{\partial}{\partial t^\xi},$$

$$T=\frac{\partial}{\partial t^\xi}+\sum\left(\alpha_m\frac{\partial}{\partial z_m^\xi}+\beta_m\frac{\partial}{\partial\bar z_m^\xi}\right)+\gamma\frac{\partial}{\partial t^\xi}$$

where a_{km}, b_{km}, α_m, β_m, *and* γ *vanish to first order at* ξ, *and* c_k *vanishes to first order in* t^ξ *and to second order in* z^ξ_m *and* $\bar{z}^\xi_m$, $m=1, \cdots, n$.

These coordinates are constructed using exponentials of linear combinations of Z_k, $\bar{Z}_k$, and T. In case X is realized as a hypersurface in a complex manifold M, we can also construct them by restricting certain distinguished holomorphic coordinates on M to X.

We can now construct a parametrix for $\Box_b$ on $\Lambda^{0,j}$, $1 \leqq j \leqq n-1$. By applying a partition of unity it suffices to consider forms supported in a fixed compact set V. Let $\Omega = \{(\eta, \xi) \in X \times X : \eta \in U_\xi\}$, and choose $\psi \in C_0^\infty(\Omega)$ which $=1$ on a neighborhood of the diagonal in $V \times V$. Define the double form $K_j \in \Lambda^{0,j} \boxtimes \Lambda^{2n+1-j}$ by

$$K_j(\eta, \xi) = -c_{n-2j}^{-1} \psi(\eta, \xi)(t^\xi(\eta) + i\,|z^\xi(\eta)|^2)^{j-n} \times (t^\xi(\eta) - i\,|z^\xi(\eta)|^2)^{-j} \sum_J \bar{\omega}^J(\eta) \otimes (*\bar{\omega}^J)(\xi).$$

Define the operator K on $\{\phi \in \Lambda^{0,j} : \operatorname{supp} \phi \subset V\}$ by

$$K\phi(\eta) = \int_\xi K_j(\eta, \xi) \wedge \phi(\xi),$$

and set $S = I - \Box_b K$. With the Sobolev spaces $S_k^p = S_k^p(V)$ defined as in §1, we then have

THEOREM 3. *K is bounded from S_k^p to S_{k+2}^p $(1<p<\infty)$ and from L^p to L^q $(q^{-1}=p^{-1}-(n+1)^{-1}$, $1<p<q<\infty)$. S is bounded from S_k^p to S_{k+1}^p $(1<p<\infty)$ and from L^p to L^q $(q^{-1}=p^{-1}-\frac{1}{2}(n+1)^{-1}$, $1<p<q<\infty)$.*

COROLLARY. *$I - \Box_b K(\sum_0^{m-1} S^k) = S^m$ is bounded from S_k^p to S_{k+m}^p.*

Thus we have a right inverse to $\Box_b$ modulo smoothing operators of arbitrarily high order. The corresponding left inverse is obtained by using the adjoint operator K^*; the analogues of Theorem 3 and its corollary hold here also. (The main point is to observe that the coordinates of Lemma 2 are essentially symmetric in ξ and η.)

It is also possible to obtain estimates for K and S in terms of the non-isotropic Lipschitz norms introduced in Stein **[8]**.

Details and proofs will appear in a later publication.

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