

ON THE HOMOTOPY THEORY OF SIMPLICIAL LIE ALGEBRAS

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ABSTRACT. Elements λ_n , $n \geq 0$, which generate the homotopy groups of spheres in the category of simplicial Lie algebras are shown to have Hopf invariant one. This fact is shown to have strong implications for the homotopy theory of this category.

In 1958, Kan [5] constructed an algebraic model (simplicial groups) for homotopy theory. Since then, various group theoretic methods have been used to study this model. In 1965, Curtis [3] showed that the lower central series filtration of a group induces a spectral sequence for computing homotopy groups of a simplicial group. This spectral sequence starts with the homotopy groups of a simplicial Lie algebra. In this sense the homotopy theory of simplicial Lie algebras is a first approximation to ordinary homotopy theory.

The purpose of this note is to describe this approximation from the point of view of an appropriately defined analogue of the Hopf invariant. We shall be concerned with the following statements which reveal something of the simplicity of the homotopy structure of simplicial Lie algebras.

A. There are elements of Hopf invariant one for every integer $n \geq 0$.

B. The Steenrod algebra is bigraded with Sq^i having bidegree $(i, 1)$ for $i > 0$; Sq^0 is identically zero.

C. The Adams spectral sequence for spheres collapses ($E^2 = E^\infty$).

D. The homotopy groups of spheres are generated by elements of Hopf invariant one under composition.

E. The *EHP* sequence is short exact.

This note is intended as an epilogue to [1] in which a stable mod p version of the Curtis spectral sequence yielding a new (E^1, d^1) -term of the Adams spectral sequence is studied.¹ Results A–E are due to the authors of [1] and the present author. All have appeared previously [1], [9], [4], with the exception of A, which was first noted by D. Quillen. We hope, however, that the general homotopy theorist will find the Hopf invariant theme used here more intuitive.

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¹ For a homological description see [10].

1. Preliminaries. We assume some knowledge of the homotopy theory of simplicial sets and groups (e.g., May's book [6]).

Let $s\mathcal{L}$ denote the category of simplicial restricted Lie algebras \mathfrak{G} over \mathbf{Z}_2 (see [7, §6] for restricted). *Homotopy groups* $\pi_*\mathfrak{G}$ are obtained by viewing \mathfrak{G} as a chain complex with differential $\partial_n = \sum_{i=0}^n (-1)^i d_i$, thus

$$\pi_n\mathfrak{G} = H_n(\mathfrak{G}; \partial_*) = \ker \partial_n / \operatorname{im} \partial_{n+1}.$$

By the n -*sphere* of $s\mathcal{L}$ we mean LAS_n , where S_n is the simplicial set sphere, A is the free \mathbf{Z}_2 -module functor with the basepoint set equal to zero, and $L = \sum_{r \geq 1} L_r$ is the free restricted Lie algebra functor (see [11, 2.3]). With the appropriate notion of Lie homotopy, the groups $\pi_*\mathfrak{G}$ are just the Lie homotopy classes of maps $LAS_n \rightarrow \mathfrak{G}$ of $s\mathcal{L}$.

Homology and cohomology groups for $s\mathcal{L}$ are given by

$$H_0\mathfrak{G} = 0, \quad H_*\mathfrak{G} = \pi_*\overline{W}U\mathfrak{G}, \quad H^*\mathfrak{G} = \operatorname{Hom}(H_*\mathfrak{G}, \mathbf{Z}_2)$$

where \overline{W} is the Eilenberg-MacLane functor and U is the universal enveloping algebra functor [9, §§2.2–2.3]. As a functor H^{n+1} is represented by an Eilenberg-MacLane complex $K(\mathbf{Z}_2, n)$ for $s\mathcal{L}$ [9, 3.1–3.3]. Cup products are obtained from the natural diagonal map $U\mathfrak{G} \rightarrow U\mathfrak{G} \otimes U\mathfrak{G}$ of universal enveloping algebras (see [9, §§2–3] for a more complete discussion of (co-) homology).

If \mathfrak{G} is a free simplicial Lie algebra (i.e. $\mathfrak{G}_n = LM_n$ for some \mathbf{Z}_2 -module M_n , and $s_i M_n \subset M_{n+1}$) then an alternate description is

$$H_*\mathfrak{G} = \pi_{*-1}\operatorname{Ab} \mathfrak{G}, \quad * \geq 1$$

where Ab is the abelianization functor. Thus, in particular, for the sphere object LAS_n

$$H_*LAS_n = \pi_{*-1}AS_n = \mathbf{Z}_2.$$

2. The Hopf invariant. In this section we show that the maps λ_n of [1, 5.2] have Hopf invariant one. To define this notion for simplicial Lie algebras we follow Steenrod [12, p. 12]. Given a map $\alpha: LAS_{2n} \rightarrow LAS_n$ of $s\mathcal{L}$ ($n \geq 0$) we “attach a cell” by α forming a new simplicial Lie algebra $LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} \mathbf{Z}_{2n+1}$ where

$$\begin{aligned} (LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} \mathbf{Z}_{2n+1})_i &= L(AS_n)_i, & 0 \leq i \leq 2n \\ &= L((AS_n)_{2n+1} \oplus \mathbf{Z}_2(\mathbf{Z}_{2n+1})), & i = 2n + 1 \\ &= L((AS_n)_i \oplus \mathbf{Z}_2 \text{ (i-dim. degeneracies of } \mathbf{Z}_{2n+1})), & i > 2n + 1. \end{aligned}$$

The face and degeneracy operators of $LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} \mathbf{Z}_{2n+1}$ are determined

by those of LAS_n and by setting $d_0 Z_{2n+1} = \alpha(i_{2n})$, $d_i Z_{2n+1} = 0$, $i > 0$. To exclude the possibility of attaching a cell to i_n we require that $\alpha(i_{2n}) \in \sum_{r \geq 2} L_r AS_n$, in view of this:

LEMMA.

$$\begin{aligned} H^i(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}) &= Z_2, & i &= n+1, \quad 2n+2, \\ &= 0, & & \text{otherwise.} \end{aligned}$$

PROOF. Since $LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}$ is free it follows that

$$H_*(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}) = \pi_{*-1} \text{Ab}(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}).$$

But $\alpha(i_n) \in \sum_{r \geq 2} L_r AS_n$ implies that $\text{Ab}(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}) = AS_n \oplus AS_{2n+1}$ which are Eilenberg-MacLane complexes. Hence $H^*(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}) = \text{Hom}(H_*(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1}), Z_2) = Z_2 + Z_2$ as asserted.

DEFINITION. If h_{n+1} and h_{2n+2} are cocycles representing the two non-zero classes of $H^*(LAS_n \cup_{\alpha} Z_{2n+1})$ then $[h_{n+1}] \cup [h_{n+1}] = H(\alpha)[h_{2n+2}]$ where $H(\alpha) \in Z_2$. Now $H(\alpha)$ depends only on the Lie homotopy class of α and is called the *Hopf invariant* of α .

Let $\lambda_n: LAS_{2n} \rightarrow LAS_n$ be the map (see [1, 5.2]) of simplicial Lie algebras defined by $i_{2n} \rightarrow \sum s_{\alpha_n} \cdots s_{\alpha_1} i_n \otimes s_{\beta_n} \cdots s_{\beta_1} i_n$ where the sum is taken over all (n, n) shuffles of $(0, 1, \dots, 2n-1)$. If $n=0$, λ_0 is defined by $i_0 \rightarrow i_0 \otimes i_0$. For $n \geq 0$, let $i_n \otimes_{\lambda_n} i_n$ denote these shuffle products.

THEOREM. For $n \geq 0$, $H(\lambda_n) = 1$.

PROOF. Let $M = LAS_n \cup_{\lambda_n} Z_{2n+1}$. In order to compute $[h_{n+1}] \cup [h_{n+1}]$ we use the bar construction $\overline{B}NUM$ (where N is the normalization functor) instead of $\overline{W}UM$. Recall [8, Theorem 1] that there is a homology equivalence $\mathcal{G}: \overline{B}NUM \rightarrow N\overline{W}UM$. It can be shown that \mathcal{G} is a map of differential coalgebras.

Consider the chain $c = [Z_{2n+1}] + [i_n | i_n] \in \overline{B}_{2n+2} NUM$. Now $\partial c = \partial[Z_{2n+1}] + \partial[i_n | i_n] = i_n \otimes i_n + i_n \otimes i_n = 0$ and so the cocycle $h_{n+1} \cup h_{n+1}$ is not a coboundary since

$$\begin{aligned} (h_{n+1} \cup h_{n+1})(c) &= (h_{n+1} \otimes h_{n+1})\Delta c \\ &= (h_{n+1} \otimes h_{n+1})([i_n] \otimes [i_n]) = 1 \otimes 1 = 1. \end{aligned}$$

Hence $h_{n+1} \cup h_{n+1} = h_{2n+2}$.

3. Implications of the Hopf invariant. Topologically, it is well known that a map $S^{2n-1} \rightarrow S^n$ has Hopf invariant one only if $n = 2^k$. This follows from the Adem relations which imply that Sq^n is indecomposable if and only if $n = 2^k$.

The situation for $s\mathcal{E}$ is quite different. In [9, §5] we showed that Steenrod squares, Sq^i , $i \geq 0$, could be defined for $s\mathcal{E}$. These operations automatically satisfy the usual axioms and Adem relations except that Sq^0 is not necessarily the identity. It follows from representability [9, §3] that Sq^0 is either the identity or zero. However, the existence of the Hopf invariant one elements λ_n shows that Sq^{n+1} is indecomposable for all $n \geq 0$, thus $Sq^0 \neq 1$, and so $Sq^0 = 0$. Thus for example, the usual relation $Sq^1 Sq^2 = Sq^3 Sq^0 = Sq^3$ holding for the category of topological spaces now becomes $Sq^1 Sq^2 = Sq^3 Sq^0 = 0$ for $s\mathcal{E}$.

The existence of these Hopf invariant one elements also has a drastic effect on the homotopy groups $\pi_* LAS$ of the sphere spectrum for $s\mathcal{E}$. In [9, 9.1] we showed that there is an Adams spectral sequence

$$E_{*,*}^2 = \text{Ext}_{\mathfrak{A}_{\mathcal{E}}}^{*,*}(\mathbf{Z}_2, \mathbf{Z}_2) \Rightarrow \pi_* LAS$$

where $\mathfrak{A}_{\mathcal{E}}$ is the algebra of Steenrod operations for $s\mathcal{E}$. Direct computation shows $E_{*,*}^2$ to be an algebra generated by the elements $\xi_n \in \text{Ext}_{\mathfrak{A}_{\mathcal{E}}}^{1,n}$ (where ξ_n is dual to Sq^n in the admissible basis [9, 7.3]). Since $H(\lambda_n) = 1$, ξ_{n+1} persists to λ_n and $E^2 \approx E^\infty$. Hence $\pi_* LAS$ is generated by the λ_n 's under composition. This contrasts with the topological situation where J. Cohen [2] has shown that the 2-primary component of the homotopy group $\pi_*(S)$ of the (geometric) sphere spectrum is generated by the Hopf invariant one classes η , ν , and σ under composition and higher Toda brackets.

The Hopf invariant also plays a significant role with respect to the unstable homotopy groups $\pi_* LAS_n$ of spheres for $s\mathcal{E}$. These groups are related by a short exact *EHP* (or Whitehead-James) sequence

$$0 \rightarrow \pi_{*-1} LAS_{n-1} \xrightarrow{E} \pi_* LAS_n \xrightarrow{H} \pi_* LAS_{2n} \rightarrow 0$$

where E is the suspension map and H is the Hopf invariant map. These maps are defined on basis elements by

$$\begin{aligned} E(\lambda_{i_1} \cdots \lambda_{i_r} 1_{n-1}) &= \lambda_{i_1} \cdots \lambda_{i_r} 1_n, \\ H(\lambda_{i_1} \cdots \lambda_{i_r} 1_n) &= \lambda_{i_2} \cdots \lambda_{i_r} 1_{2n} \quad \text{if } i_1 = n, \\ &= 0 \quad \text{otherwise.} \end{aligned}$$

Recall that $\pi_* LAS_n$ has a \mathbf{Z}_2 -module basis consisting of all monomials $\lambda_{i_1} \cdots \lambda_{i_r} 1_n$, $i_1 \leq n$, $i_{j+1} \leq 2i_j$. A split version of this sequence was used in [1, 5.6] to compute $\pi_* LAS_n$ inductively for all n . In [4] Curtis points out that E and H are maps of differential \mathbf{Z}_2 -modules and uses this sequence to establish some nonzero homotopy groups of spheres.

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