

11. Note on Some Whitehead Products

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1. Introduction. For standard generators $\theta \in \pi_q(S^n)$ the problem whether Whitehead products $[\theta, \iota_n]$ are 0 or not has been investigated by various authors [1], [2], [7], [8]. In this note we are concerned with the question whether $[\theta, \iota_n] \in \theta_* \pi_{n+q-1}(S^q)$ or not. Following the Toda notation [13] our main result is stated as follows.

Theorem. $[\theta, \iota_n]$ does not lie in the image of $\theta_* : \pi_{n+q-1}(S^q) \rightarrow \pi_{n+q-1}(S^n)$ for the following θ :

$\eta_n, n \equiv 0, 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 5$; $\eta_n^2, n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$; $\nu_n, n \equiv 1, 3 \pmod{8}$ and $n \geq 9$ or $n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 6$; $\nu_n^2, n \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 6$; $\sigma_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 13$ or $n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 10$; $8\sigma_n, n \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 10$; $\varepsilon_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 13$; $\bar{\nu}_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 13$; $\mu_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 13$; $\rho_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 21$; $\kappa_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 21$; $\omega_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 21$; $\bar{\rho}_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 21$; $\zeta_n, n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 6$; $\bar{\kappa}_n, n \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 25$ or $n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 8$; $\bar{\zeta}_n, n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 6$; $\nu_n^*, n \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $n \geq 18$; $\eta_n \sigma_{n+1}, n \equiv 0, 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 12$; $\eta_n \mu_{n+1}, n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 12$; $\eta_n \rho_{n+1}, n \equiv 0, 1 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 20$; $\eta_n \eta_{n+1}^*, n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 24$; $\eta_n \bar{\rho}_{n+1}, n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$ and $n \geq 24$.

Consequently, from a theorem of James [4] we may deduce

Corollary. There exist no Poincaré complexes of the form $(S^n \cup_{\theta} e^{q+1}) \cup e^{n+q+1}$, where θ are elements exhibited in Theorem.

2. Special cases of Toda's propositions. Some of the following lemmas are obtained as corollaries of Propositions 11.10 and 11.11 of Toda [13], but proofs may be given which are based on the results of James [3], Kervaire [6] and Paechter [12].

Lemma 2.1. For $n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}, n \geq 4$, there exists $\tau_{n-1} \in \pi_{2n-1}(S^{n-1})$ such that $E\tau_{n-1} = [\eta_n, \iota_n]$ and $H(\tau_{n-1}) = \eta_{2n-3}^2$.

Remark. This is obtained from Proposition 11.10, i) of [13] for $\alpha = \eta_{2n-4}$. According to [13], [10] we may take $\tau_3 = \nu' \eta_6, \tau_7 = \sigma' \eta_{14}, \tau_{11} = \theta', \tau_{15} \equiv \eta^{*'} \pmod{E\pi_{30}(S^{14})}$ and $\tau_{19} = \bar{\beta}$.

Proof. Introduce the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 & & \pi_{2n-2}(S^{n-2}) & \cong & \pi_{2n-2}(S^{n-2}) & & \\
 & & \downarrow E & & \downarrow E^3 & & \\
 \pi_n(R_{n-1}) & \xrightarrow{J} & \pi_{2n-1}(S^{n-1}) & \xrightarrow{E^2} & \pi_{2n+1}(S^{n+1}) & & \\
 \uparrow \partial_1 & & \downarrow H_1 & & \downarrow H_3 & & \\
 \pi_{n+1}(R_{n+1}, R_{n-1}) & \xrightarrow{\partial_2} & \pi_n(R_{n-1}, R_{n-2}) & \xrightarrow{i} & \pi_n(R_{n+1}, R_{n-2}) & \xrightarrow{j} & \pi_n(R_{n+1}, R_{n-1}) \\
 & & \parallel & & \parallel & & \parallel \\
 & & \pi_n(S^{n-2}) & & \pi_n(V_{n+1,3}) = Z_2 & & \pi_n(V_{n+1,2}) = Z_2 \\
 \rightarrow \pi_{n-1}(S^{n-2}) & \rightarrow \pi_{n-1}(V_{n+1,3}) & \rightarrow \pi_{n-1}(V_{n+1,2}) & & & & \\
 \parallel & \parallel & \parallel & & & & \\
 Z_2 \text{ or } Z & Z_4 \text{ or } Z & Z_2 \text{ or } 0 & & & &
 \end{array}$$

in which row and columns are exact and the diagram commutes up to sign by James [3]. The values of homotopy groups of Stiefel manifolds are taken from Paechter [12]. We see that j is bijective, hence we may find $t \in \pi_{n+1}(R_{n+1}, R_{n-1})$ with $\partial_2 t = \eta_{n-2}^2$. Since $H_3 E^2 J \partial_1 t = 0$, there is a $t' \in \pi_{2n-2}(S^{n-2})$ with $E^3 t' = E^2 J \partial_1 t$. Since $E: \pi_{2n-1}(S^{n-1}) \rightarrow \pi_{2n}(S^n)$ is monic by $[\eta_{n-1}^2, \iota_{n-1}] = 0$, it follows that $\tau_{n-1} = J \partial_1 t - E t'$ is what we wanted.

We now see from the well known information of vector fields on spheres that, if we write $n+1 = m \cdot 2^c \cdot 16^d$ where m is odd ≥ 3 and $0 \leq c \leq 3$ then there exists $\tau_{n-\rho+1}^{(\rho-1)} \in \pi_{2n-\rho}(S^{n-\rho+1})$, $\rho = 2^c + 8d$, such that $[\iota_n, \iota_n] = E^{\rho-1} \tau_{n-\rho+1}^{(\rho-1)}$ and $H(\tau_{n-\rho+1}^{(\rho-1)}) \neq 0$ in $\pi_{2n-\rho}(S^{2n-2\rho+1})$. Special cases of this fact are needed in the sequel.

Consider the bundles $U_{n+1} \rightarrow S^{2n+1}$ and $Sp_{n+1} \rightarrow S^{4n+3}$ with characteristic classes $\gamma'_{2n} \in \pi_{2n}(U_n)$, $\gamma''_{4n+2} \in \pi_{4n+2}(Sp_n)$. In the light of the results of Ôguchi [11] and James-Whitehead [5] we may take for $\tau_{2n}^{(1)} \in \pi_{4n}(S^{2n})$ and $\tau_{4n}^{(3)} \in \pi_{8n+2}(S^{4n})$ (n : even) the images under Hopf-Whitehead homomorphisms.

Lemma 2.2. For n even, $\tau_{2n}^{(1)}$ is of order 2 and $E\tau_{2n}^{(1)} = [\iota_{2n+1}, \iota_{2n+1}]$, $H(\tau_{2n}^{(1)}) = \eta_{4n-1}$.

Remark. This lemma is related to Proposition 11.10, ii) of [13] with $\alpha = \iota_{4n-2}$. According to [13, 10], we may take $\tau_4^{(1)} = \nu_4 \eta_7$, $\tau_8^{(1)} = \sigma_8 \eta_{15} + \bar{\nu}_8 + \varepsilon_8$, $\tau_{12}^{(1)} = \theta$, $\tau_{16}^{(1)} \equiv \eta_{16}^* + \omega_{16} \pmod{\sigma_{16} \mu_{23}}$, $\tau_{20}^{(1)} = \bar{\beta}$. Note that $\pi_{2n}(R_{2n}) = (Z_2)^3$ or $(Z_2)^2$ by [6].

Lemma 2.3. For n even, $E^3 \tau_{4n}^{(3)} = [\iota_{4n+3}, \iota_{4n+3}]$ and $H(\tau_{4n}^{(3)}) = r \nu_{8n-1}$, where $r = \pm 1, \pm 3$.

Remark. According to [13], [9] we may take $\tau_8^{(3)} = \sigma_8 \nu_{15}$, $\tau_{16}^{(3)} = \nu_{16}^* + \hat{\xi}_{16}$, $[\iota_{23}, \iota_{23}] = E^3 \sigma_{20}^*$.

Lemma 2.4. For $n \equiv 0 \pmod 4$, $n \geq 4$, $\pi_{2n+3}(U_{n-1}) \cong \pi_{2n+3}(U_n)$, $\pi_{2n+3}(U_n)$ is cyclic with generator $\gamma'_{2n} \nu_{2n}$ and $\pi_{2n+3}(U_{n-1})$ is generated by u_{2n+3}^{n-1} whose image under the J -homomorphism is denoted by $\bar{\tau}_{2n-2} \in \pi_{4n+1}(S^{2n-2})$. Then $E^3 \bar{\tau}_{2n-2} = [\nu_{2n+1}, \iota_{2n+1}]$ and $H(\bar{\tau}_{2n-2}) = \nu_{4n-5}^2$.

3. Proof of Theorem.

Proposition 3.1. *Suppose that $\beta \in \pi_q(S^{4k+1})$ satisfies $\eta_{8k-3}^2(E^{4k-2}\beta) \neq 0$, where $q \leq 8k-4$. If $E^2: \pi_{q+4k-3}(S^{q-2}) \rightarrow \pi_{q+4k-1}(S^q)$ is epic (e.g., $q \geq 4k+2$), then $[\eta_{4k}\beta, \iota_{4k}] \notin \eta_{4k}\beta\pi_{q+4k-1}(S^q)$.*

Proof. We may write $\beta = E^2\beta'$. By Lemma 2.1, $[\eta_{4k}\beta, \iota_{4k}] = [\eta_{4k}, \iota_{4k}]E^{4k-1}\beta = E(\tau_{4k-1}E^{4k-2}\beta)$. Assume that $E(\tau_{4k-1}E^{4k-2}\beta) = E(\eta_{4k-1}E(\beta'\alpha))$. Then, since the kernel of $E: \pi_{q+4k-2}(S^{4k-1}) \rightarrow \pi_{q+4k-1}(S^{4k})$ coincides with $[\pi_q(S^{4k-1}), \iota_{4k-1}]$, we have

$$\tau_{4k-1}E^{4k-2}\beta = \eta_{4k-1}E(\beta'\alpha) + [\iota_{4k-1}, \iota_{4k-1}]E^{4k-2}\gamma, \quad \gamma \in \pi_q(S^{4k-1}).$$

By taking the Hopf invariant of both sides, we have a contradiction $\eta_{8k-3}^2(E^{4k-2}\beta) = 0$.

Proposition 3.2. *Suppose that $\theta \in \pi_q(S^{4k+1})$ satisfies $\eta_{8k-1}E^{4k-1}\theta \notin 2\pi_{q+4k-1}(S^{8k-1})$ (e.g. $\eta_{8k-1}E^{4k-1}\theta \neq 0$ and the order of each element of $\pi_{q+4k-1}(S^{8k-1})$ equals 2 or is prime to that of θ), where $q \leq 8k-2$. If $E^2: \pi_{q+4k-2}(S^{q-2}) \rightarrow \pi_{q+4k}(S^q)$ is epic (e.g. $q \geq 4k+3$), then $[\theta, \iota_{4k+1}] \notin \theta\pi_{q+4k}(S^q)$.*

Proof. Assume that $[\theta, \iota_{4k+1}] = \theta E^2\alpha$, $\alpha \in \pi_{q+4k-2}(S^{q-2})$. Since $[\theta, \iota_{4k+1}] = [\iota_{4k+1}, \iota_{4k+1}]E^{4k}\theta = E(\tau_{4k}^{(1)}E^{4k-1}\theta)$ by Lemma 2.2 and since the kernel of $E: \pi_{q+4k-1}(S^{4k}) \rightarrow \pi_{q+4k}(S^{4k+1})$ is generated by $[\pi_q(S^{4k}), \iota_{4k}]$, we have, for $\bar{\theta}$ with $E^2\bar{\theta} = \theta$,

$$\tau_{4k}^{(1)}E^{4k-1}\theta = E(\bar{\theta}\alpha) + [\iota_{4k}, \iota_{4k}]E\gamma, \quad \gamma \in \pi_{q+4k-2}(S^{8k-2}).$$

Taking the Hopf invariant of both sides yields $\eta_{8k-1}E^{4k-1}\theta \in 2\pi_{q+4k-1}(S^{8k-1})$, which contradicts our assumption.

Proposition 3.3. *Suppose $E\theta \in \pi_q(S^n)$ satisfies $2E^{n-1}\theta \neq 0$, where n is even and $q \geq n+1$. Then $[E\theta, \iota_n] \notin (E\theta)_*\pi_{n+q-1}(S^q)$.*

Proof. Assume $[E\theta, \iota_n] = (E\theta)\alpha$; then $\alpha = E\alpha'$ for some $\alpha' \in \pi_{n+q-2}(S^{q-1})$. Taking the Hopf invariant, we get $2E^{n-1}\theta = 0$.

Proposition 3.4. *Let $n \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$, $n \geq 6$. Then $[\nu_n^2, \iota_n] \notin \nu_n^2\pi_{2n+5}(S^{n+6})$.*

Proof. By Proposition 11.11, ii) of Toda [13], there is a $\tilde{\nu}_n \in \pi_{2n+3}(S^{n-2})$ such that $[\nu_n^2, \iota_n] = E^2\tilde{\nu}_n$ and $H(\tilde{\nu}_n) \equiv \varepsilon_{2n-5}$. Assume that $[\nu_n^2, \iota_n] = \nu_n^2 E^2\alpha$, which implies that there is an integer x such that $E\tilde{\nu}_n = E(\nu_{n-2}^2 E\alpha) + x[\sigma_{n-1}, \iota_{n-1}] = E(\nu_{n-2}^2 E\alpha) + x(E\tau_{n-2}^{(1)})\sigma_{2n-3}$ by Lemma 2.2. It follows that

$$\tilde{\nu}_n = \nu_{n-2}^2 E\alpha + x\tau_{n-2}^{(1)}\sigma_{2n-4} + y[\tilde{\nu}_{n-2}, \iota_{n-2}] + z[\varepsilon_{n-2}, \iota_{n-2}]$$

for some integers y and z . This leads to a contradiction $\varepsilon_{2n-5} \equiv x\eta_{2n-5}\sigma_{2n-4} = x(\tilde{\nu}_{2n-5} + \varepsilon_{2n-5})\eta_{2n-5}\sigma_{2n-4}$ for $n \geq 10$.

We now proceed to prove the theorem. Take $\beta = \iota_{4k+1}$ ($k \geq 3$) in Proposition 3.1. Since any element of $\pi_{8k-1}(S^{4k})$ is expressible as $E\gamma + x[\iota_{4k}, \iota_{4k}]$, we see that $E^2: \pi_{8k-2}(S^{4k-1}) \rightarrow \pi_{8k}(S^{4k+1})$ is epic. Thus the assertion for $[\eta_{4k}, \iota_{4k}]$ ($k > 2$) follows. The case $k=2$ follows from the fact that $[\eta_8, \iota_8] = (E\sigma')\eta_{16}$ and $\eta_8\sigma_9 = (E\sigma')\eta_{16} + \tilde{\nu}_8 + \varepsilon_8$. Applying Proposition 3.1 to $\beta = \eta_{4k+1}$ ($k \geq 2$), σ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 3$), μ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 3$), ρ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 5$), η_{4k+1}^* ($k \geq 6$),

ρ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 6$) and observing relations $\eta_{8k-3}^3 = 4\nu_{8k-3}$, $\eta_{8k-3}^2 \sigma_{8k-1} = \nu_{8k-3}^3 + \eta_{8k-3} \varepsilon_{8k-2}$, $\eta_{8k-3}^2 \mu_{8k-1} = 4\bar{\varepsilon}_{8k-3}$, $\eta_{8k-3}^2 \rho_{8k-1} = \sigma_{8k-3} \eta_{8k+4} \mu_{8k+5}$, $\eta_{8k-3}^2 \eta_{8k-1}^* = 4\nu_{8k-3}^*$, $\eta_{8k-3}^2 \rho_{8k-1} = 4\bar{\varepsilon}_{8k-3}$, the cases involving η_{4k} are settled.

We may apply Proposition 3.2 by taking for θ η_{4k+1} ($k \geq 1$), σ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 3$), $\eta_{4k+1} \sigma_{4k+2}$ ($k \geq 3$), $\bar{\nu}_{4k+1}$ ($k \geq 3$), ε_{4k+1} ($k \geq 3$), μ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 3$), κ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 5$), ρ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 5$), $\rho_{4k+1} \rho_{4k+2}$ ($k \geq 5$), ω_{4k+1} ($k \geq 5$), κ_{4k+1} ($k \geq 6$). Here we note that $\eta_{8k-1} \kappa_{8k} = \bar{\varepsilon}_{8k-1} \notin 2\pi_{8k+14}(S^{8k-1}) = \{2\rho_{8k-1}\} + Z_{15}$, $\eta_{8k-1} \rho_{8k} = \sigma_{8k-1} \mu_{8k+6}$, $\eta_{8k-1} \rho_{8k} \notin 2\pi_{8k+17}(S^{8k-1}) = \{2\nu_{8k-1}^*\}$.

We shall show that $[\nu_{8k+1}, \iota_{8k+1}] \notin \nu_{8k+1} \pi_{16k+4}(S^{8k+4})$, $k \geq 1$. Assume $[\nu_{8k+1}, \iota_{8k+1}] = \nu_{8k+1} \alpha$. Since $[\iota_{8k}, \iota_{8k}]$ is of infinite order, we may write $\alpha = E^4 \alpha'$, $\alpha' \in \pi_{16k}(S^{8k})$. By Lemma 2.4, $E^3 \bar{\tau}_{8k-2} = E^3(\nu_{8k-2} E \alpha')$, and $\pi_{16k+5}(S^{16k+1}) = \pi_{16k+4}(S^{16k-1}) = 0$ gives

$$\pi_{16k+1}(S^{8k-2}) \xrightarrow{E} \pi_{16k+2}(S^{8k-1}) \xrightarrow{E} \pi_{16k+3}(S^{8k}) \xrightarrow{E} \pi_{16k+4}(S^{8k+1}),$$

in which the kernel of the first E is generated by $[\nu_{8k-2}^2, \iota_{8k-2}]$, so that we get $\bar{\tau}_{8k-2} = \nu_{8k-2} E \alpha' + x[\nu_{8k-2}^2, \iota_{8k-2}]$. This is a contradiction, because the Hopf invariant of the right hand side is 0.

Next we show that $[\nu_{8k+3}, \iota_{8k+3}] \notin \nu_{8k+3} \pi_{16k+8}(S^{8k+6})$, $k \geq 1$. Assume that $[\nu_{8k+3}, \iota_{8k+3}] = \nu_{8k+3} \alpha$. Since $\pi_{16k+5}(S^{8k+3})$ is finite, $E: \pi_{16k+4}(S^{8k+2}) \rightarrow \pi_{16k+5}(S^{8k+3})$ is epic, hence $\alpha = E^4 \alpha'$. By Lemma 2.3, we have $E^3(\tau_{8k}^{(3)} \nu_{16k+2}) = E^3(\nu_{8k} E \alpha')$. Since $\pi_{16k+9}(S^{16k+5}) = \pi_{16k+8}(S^{8k+3}) = 0$, it follows that $\tau_{8k}^{(2)} \nu_{16k+2} = \nu_{8k} E \alpha' + x[\nu_{8k}^2, \iota_{8k}]$. By taking the Hopf invariant, a contradiction arises.

Finally we show that, for $n \equiv 2 \pmod 4$, $n \geq 10$, $[8\sigma_n, \iota_n] \notin 8\sigma_n \pi_{2n+6}(S^{n+7})$, which completes the proof of the theorem. By Proposition 11.11, (ii) of Toda [13] there exists $\beta \in \pi_{2n+4}(S^{n-2})$ such that $[8\sigma_n, \iota_n] = E^2 \beta$, $H(\beta) \in \{\eta_{2n-5}, 2\iota_{2n-4}, 8\sigma_{2n-4}\}$, i.e., $H(\beta) \equiv \mu_{2n-5} \pmod{\eta_{2n-5} \pi_{2n+4}(S^{2n-4})}$. Assume that $[8\sigma_n, \iota_n] = E^2(8\sigma_{n-2} E \alpha)$, $\alpha \in \pi_{2n+3}(S^{n+4})$. Then

$$E\beta \equiv E(8\sigma_{n-2} E \alpha) \pmod{\{[\nu_{n-1}, \iota_{n-1}], [\varepsilon_{n-1}, \iota_{n-1}]\}}.$$

Since the indeterminacy is equal to $\{(E\tau_{n-2}^{(1)})\bar{\nu}_{2n-3}, (E\tau_{n-2}^{(1)})\varepsilon_{2n-3}\}$ by Lemma 2.2, we get

$$\beta \equiv 8\sigma_{n-2} E \alpha \pmod{\{\tau_{n-2}^{(1)} E \pi_{2n+3}(S^{2n-5}), [\iota_{n-2}, \iota_{n-2}] \pi_{2n+3}(S^{2n-5})\}},$$

which leads to a contradiction in taking the Hopf invariant (Note that, for $n=10$ $\pi_{24}(S^{15}) = (Z_2)^3$).

Added in proof. Using Proposition 11.10, i) of [13] we can show that, for $E^2 \alpha \in \pi_q(S^n)$ of order 2 with $\eta_{2n-3}(E^{n-1} \alpha) \neq 0$, where $n \equiv 0 \pmod 4$, $n+2 \leq q \leq 2n-5$, we have $[E^2 \alpha, \iota_n] \notin (E^2 \alpha) \pi_{n+q-1}(S^q)$. This may be applied to ε_n ($n \geq 16$), $\bar{\nu}_n$ ($n \geq 16$), μ_n ($n \geq 16$), κ_n ($n \geq 20$) and ρ_n ($n \geq 24$).

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