

Only one of generalized gradients can be elliptic

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Abstract. Decomposing the space of k -tensors on a manifold M into the components invariant and irreducible under the action of $GL(n)$ (or $O(n)$ when M carries a Riemannian structure) one can define generalized gradients as differential operators obtained from a linear connection ∇ on M by restriction and projection to such components. We study the ellipticity of gradients defined in this way.

Introduction. We decompose a connection ∇ on an n -dimensional C^∞ -manifold M (in particular, a Riemannian connection on a Riemannian manifold (M, g)) into the sum of first order differential operators $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ acting on covariant k -tensors, $k = 1, 2, \dots$, and arising from the decomposition of the space T^k of k -tensors into the direct sum of irreducible $GL(n)$ -invariant (or, in the Riemannian case, $O(n)$ -invariant) subspaces. Following [SW] we shall call them $GL(n)$ - and $O(n)$ -gradients, respectively.

Some of the gradients $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ have important geometric meaning. The best known is the exterior derivative d corresponding to skew-symmetric tensors. Its role in geometry and topology of manifolds cannot be overestimated. Another one, known as the Ahlfors operator $S : T^1 \rightarrow S_0^2$, is defined for 1-forms ω by the splitting

$$\nabla\omega = \frac{1}{2}d\omega + S\omega - \frac{1}{n}\delta\omega \cdot g$$

and corresponds to the subbundle of traceless symmetric 2-tensors. It appears to play an important role in conformal and quasi-conformal geometry (see the recent papers [ØP], [P], etc.).

In Section 1, we recall (after H. Weyl [We]) the theory of Young diagrams and schemes and define our operators $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$. In Section 2, we consider

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the ellipticity of operators corresponding to $GL(n)$ -invariant subspaces. We distinguish a suitable extension of a Young diagram α and show that $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is elliptic if and only if β is a distinguished extension of α . In Section 3, we get some particular ellipticity results for operators corresponding to $O(n)$ -invariant subspaces. We end with some remarks.

Similar problems could be considered for any connection ∇ ,

$$\nabla : C^\infty(\xi) \rightarrow C^\infty(T^*M \otimes \xi),$$

in any vector bundle ξ over a manifold M and any Lie group G acting simultaneously in T^*M and ξ . Splitting ξ and $\tilde{\xi} = T^*M \otimes \xi$ into the direct sums of irreducible G -invariant subbundles, $\xi = \bigoplus_\alpha \xi_\alpha$ and $\tilde{\xi} = \bigoplus_\beta \tilde{\xi}_\beta$, G -gradients could be defined as

$$\nabla^{\alpha\beta} = \tilde{\pi}_\beta \circ \nabla \circ \iota_\alpha,$$

where $\iota_\alpha : \xi_\alpha \rightarrow \xi$ and $\tilde{\pi}_\beta : \tilde{\xi} \rightarrow \tilde{\xi}_\beta$ are the canonical maps. One of interesting examples of this sort is the classical Dirac operator D which could be considered as an elliptic $Spin(n)$ -gradient in a spinor bundle over a manifold equipped with a spinor structure. Ellipticity of general G -gradients will be studied elsewhere.

1. Young diagrams. Let W be a vector space (over \mathbb{R} or \mathbb{C}) of dimension n . Fix $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and take a sequence of integers $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_r)$, $\alpha_1 \geq \dots \geq \alpha_r \geq 1$, $\alpha_1 + \dots + \alpha_r = k$. Such an α is called a *Young scheme of length k* . In some references a Young scheme is called a *decomposition*. It can be represented by the figure consisting of r rows of squares and such that the number of squares in the j th row is α_j .

A Young scheme can be filled with numbers $1, \dots, k$ distributed in any order. A scheme filled with numbers is called a *Young diagram*. Without loss of generality we can assume that the numbers grow both in rows and columns.

Take a Young diagram α and denote by H_α and V_α the subgroups of the symmetric group S_k consisting of all permutations preserving rows and columns, respectively. α determines the linear operator (called the *Young symmetrizer*) $P_\alpha : W^k \rightarrow W^k$, $W^k = \bigotimes_k W$, given by

$$(1) \quad P_\alpha = \sum_{\tau \in H_\alpha, \sigma \in V_\alpha} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot \tau \sigma,$$

where the action of any permutation $\varrho \in S_k$ on simple tensors is given by

$$\varrho(v_1 \otimes \dots \otimes v_k) = v_{\varrho^{-1}(1)} \otimes \dots \otimes v_{\varrho^{-1}(k)}$$

for all $v_1, \dots, v_k \in W$. It is well known that

$$(2) \quad P_\alpha^2 = m_\alpha P_\alpha$$

for some $m_\alpha \in \mathbb{N}$ and that $W_\alpha = \text{im } P_\alpha$ is an invariant subspace of W^k for the standard representation of $\text{GL}(n)$ in W^k . This representation is irreducible on W_α . Moreover,

$$(3) \quad W^k = \bigoplus_{\alpha} W_\alpha.$$

If W is equipped with a scalar product $g = \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$, then g allows defining contractions in W^k . An element w of W^k is said to be *traceless* if $C(w) = 0$ for any contraction $C : W^k \rightarrow W^{k-2}$. (In particular, all 1-tensors are traceless.) Traceless tensors form a linear subspace W_0^k of W^k . Its orthogonal complement consists of all the tensors of the form

$$(4) \quad \sum_{\sigma \in S_k} \sigma(g \otimes w_\sigma),$$

where $w_\sigma \in W^{k-2}$. For simplicity, denote the space of tensors of the form (4) by $g \otimes W^{k-2}$ so that

$$(5) \quad W^k = W_0^k \oplus (g \otimes W^{k-2}).$$

The intersection $W_\alpha^0 = W_\alpha \cap W_0^k$ is non-trivial if and only if the sum of lengths of the first two columns of a Young diagram α is $\leq n$. A diagram like this is called *admissible* and the corresponding space W_α^0 is invariant and irreducible under the $\text{O}(n)$ -action. Moreover,

$$(6) \quad W_0^k = \bigoplus_{\alpha} W_\alpha^0,$$

where α ranges over the set of all admissible Young diagrams with numbers growing both in rows and columns. Comparing (5) and (6), and proceeding with the analogous decompositions of W^{k-2} , W^{k-4} , etc., one gets the decomposition of W^k into the direct (in fact, orthogonal) sum of irreducible $\text{O}(n)$ -invariant subspaces.

2. $\text{GL}(n)$ -gradients. Let $\beta = (\beta_1, \dots, \beta_s)$ be a Young scheme of length $k+1$ obtained from α by an extension by a single square. The corresponding diagram should have $k+1$ in the added square, while the ordering in the other part of the diagram is the same as in α . We call β a *distinguished extension* of α if

$$(7) \quad s = r, \beta_1 = \alpha_1 + 1, \beta_2 = \alpha_2, \dots, \beta_s = \alpha_s.$$

In other words, β is distinguished when the added square is situated at the end of the first row.

Take an arbitrary $v \in W$ and consider a linear mapping $\otimes_v : W^k \rightarrow W^{k+1}$ defined by

$$(8) \quad \otimes_v(v_1 \otimes \dots \otimes v_k) = v_1 \otimes \dots \otimes v_k \otimes v.$$

THEOREM 1. For $v \neq 0$ the mapping

$$(9) \quad P_\beta \circ \otimes_v |_{W_\alpha} : W_\alpha \rightarrow W_\beta$$

is injective if and only if β is the distinguished extension of α .

Before the proof we make the following observations.

LEMMA 1. Assume that $i, j, i \neq j$, are in the same column of a Young diagram α . Then

$$(10) \quad P_\alpha(v) = 0,$$

whenever $v = v_1 \otimes \dots \otimes v_i \otimes \dots \otimes v_j \otimes \dots \otimes v_{k+1}$ and $v_j = v_i$.

PROOF. Denote by V_α^+ and V_α^- the subsets of V_α consisting of odd and even permutations $\sigma \in V_\alpha$, respectively, $V_\alpha^+ \cup V_\alpha^- = V_\alpha$. The mapping

$$(11) \quad \sigma \mapsto \tilde{\sigma} = \sigma \circ t_{ij},$$

where t_{ij} is the transposition, is a one-to-one map of V_α^+ onto V_α^- . If $v_i = v_j$, then

$$(12) \quad \sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha} \sigma(v) = \sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha^+} \sigma(v) - \sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha^-} \sigma(v) = 0,$$

because the terms corresponding to σ and $\tilde{\sigma}$ are the same. Now, the statement follows from formulae (1) and (12). ■

LEMMA 2. If β is the distinguished extension of α , then

$$(13) \quad P_\beta = m_\alpha \left[\text{id} + \sum_{t \in T_\alpha} t \circ \text{id} \right]$$

on $W_\alpha \otimes W$, where T_α denotes the set of all transpositions of $k+1$ with the numbers from the first row.

PROOF. Since $V_\beta = V_\alpha$ up to the canonical isomorphism and $H_\beta = H_\alpha \cup \bigcup_{t \in T_\alpha} tH_\alpha$, we have

$$(14) \quad P_\beta = \sum_{\tau \in H_\beta, \sigma \in V_\alpha} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot \tau \sigma.$$

Consequently,

$$\begin{aligned} P_\beta(P_\alpha v \otimes w) &= \sum_{\tau \in H_\beta} \tau \left(\sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot \sigma(P_\alpha v) \otimes w \right) \\ &= \sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha, \tau \in H_\alpha} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot \tau \sigma(P_\alpha v) \otimes w \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 & + \sum_{t \in T_\alpha} t \left(\sum_{\sigma \in V_\alpha, \tau \in H_\alpha} \text{sgn } \sigma \cdot \tau \sigma (P_\alpha v) \otimes w \right) \\
 & = P_\alpha^2 v \otimes w + \sum_{t \in T_\alpha} t (P_\alpha^2 v \otimes w),
 \end{aligned}$$

for any $v \in W^k$ and $w \in W$. Now, the proof is completed by applying (2). ■

LEMMA 3. If $v_1, \dots, v_l \in W$ are linearly independent, ϱ is a permutation mapping the numbers $1, \dots, \alpha_1$ onto the numbers of the first row of the diagram α , $\alpha_1 + 1, \dots, \alpha_1 + \alpha_2$ onto the numbers of the second row etc., and

$$(15) \quad \omega = \varrho^{-1}(\otimes^{\alpha_1} v_1 \otimes \dots \otimes^{\alpha_l} v_l),$$

then $P_\alpha \omega \neq 0$.

Proof. The statement follows from (1) and the following:

(i) Any two permutations σ_1 and σ_2 of V_α satisfying $\tau \sigma_1 \omega = \tau \sigma_2 \omega$ for some $\tau \in H_\alpha$ have the same sign.

(ii) Any two products obtained from ω by permuting factors are linearly dependent if and only if they are equal. ■

Proof of Theorem 1. Assume first that β is the distinguished extension of α . If $\eta \in W_\alpha$ and $P_\beta(\eta \otimes w) = 0$, then, by Lemma 2,

$$\eta \otimes w + \sum_t t(\eta \otimes w) = 0.$$

Take $w = e_1$, $\eta = \sum \eta_{i_1 \dots i_k} e_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_k}$, where $\{e_1, \dots, e_k\}$ is a basis of W . Then the last equality is equivalent to

$$\begin{aligned}
 \sum \eta_{i_1 \dots i_k} (e_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_k} \otimes e_1 + e_1 \otimes e_{i_2} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_k} \otimes e_{i_1} \\
 + \dots + e_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_{k-1}} \otimes e_1 \otimes e_{i_k}) = 0.
 \end{aligned}$$

Now, if $i_1, \dots, i_k > 1$, then $\eta_{i_1 \dots i_k} = 0$ because all the terms are linearly independent. If $i_1 = 1, i_2, \dots, i_k > 1$, then

$$\begin{aligned}
 2\eta_{1i_2 \dots i_k} e_1 \otimes e_{i_2} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_k} \otimes e_1 \\
 + (\text{terms linearly independent of the first one}) = 0,
 \end{aligned}$$

so $\eta_{1i_2 \dots i_k} = 0$.

We can repeat the reasoning for the other coefficients. Consequently, $\eta = 0$ and the mapping (9) is injective.

Assume now that β is a non-distinguished extension of α . Then, by Lemma 1,

$$P_\beta(P_\alpha \omega \otimes v_1) = 0,$$

where ω is of the form (15), while, by Lemma 3, $P_\alpha \omega \neq 0$. ■

Now, consider any connection ∇ on a manifold M and extend it to covariant k -tensor fields, $k = 1, 2, \dots$, in the standard way:

$$(16) \quad \nabla\omega(X_1, \dots, X_{k+1}) = (\nabla_{X_{k+1}}\omega)(X_1, \dots, X_k).$$

For any two diagrams α and β of length k and $k + 1$, respectively, denote by $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ the differential operator given by

$$(17) \quad \nabla^{\alpha\beta} = P_\beta \circ \nabla|T_\alpha,$$

where T_α denotes the space of all k -tensor fields ω such that $\omega(x) \in (T_x^*M)_\alpha$ for any $x \in M$. Since P_β is linear the symbol of the operator $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is given by

$$(18) \quad \sigma(\nabla^{\alpha\beta}, w^*)(\omega) = P_\beta(\omega \otimes w^*)$$

for any covector $w^* \in T_x^*M$, any $\omega \in (T_x^*M)_\alpha$ and $x \in M$. Theorem 1 together with (18) yields

COROLLARY. *The operator $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is elliptic if and only if β is the distinguished extension of α . ■*

3. $\mathbf{O}(n)$ -gradients. Given two admissible Young diagrams α and β of length k and $k + 1$, respectively, and a Riemannian connection ∇ on a Riemannian manifold (M, g) one can consider the differential operator $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ given by

$$(19) \quad \nabla^{\alpha\beta} = \pi \circ P_\beta \circ \nabla|W_\alpha^0,$$

where W_α^0 denotes the subspace of W_α consisting of all the traceless tensor fields and π is the projection of k -tensors to traceless k -tensors defined by the decomposition (5). The operator (19) differs from $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ of Section 2 but this should lead to no misunderstandings. Again, since π is a linear map, the symbol of $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is given by the formula analogous to (18):

$$(20) \quad \sigma(\nabla^{\alpha\beta}, w)(\omega) = \pi(P_\beta(\omega \otimes w))$$

for any traceless ω and $w \in TM$. (Hereafter, vectors and covectors are identified by the Riemannian structure.)

Note that since ∇ is Riemannian, $\nabla_X\omega$ is traceless for any vector field X and any traceless k -tensor ω while $\nabla\omega$ itself can have non-vanishing contractions of the form $C_{k+1}^i \nabla\omega$, where $i \leq k$. Note also, that, in general, the distinguished extension of an admissible Young diagram is admissible again. The only exception is that of a one-column diagram of length n . These observations together with results of Section 2 motivate the following

CONJECTURE. *$\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is elliptic if and only if β is the distinguished extension of α , both α and β being admissible.*

An elementary proof of the conjecture seems unlikely, because there is no algorithm providing the traceless component of k -tensors, even of the

form $\omega \otimes v$ with ω being traceless and v a single vector. However, we can prove, in an elementary way, ellipticity of $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ in some particular cases and the “if” part completely.

THEOREM 2. (i) *If α is trivial, i.e. consists of a single row or of a single column, β is the distinguished extension of α and both α and β are admissible, then the operator $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is elliptic.*

(ii) *If β is a non-distinguished extension of α , then $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is not elliptic.*

PROOF. (i) Assume first that α is a single row. Then so is β and the spaces T_α and T_β consist of symmetric tensors. From (13) and (20) it follows that the ellipticity of $\nabla^{\alpha\beta}$ is equivalent to the following statement:

(*) If ω is traceless and symmetric, v is a non-vanishing vector and

$$(21) \quad \omega \odot v \in g \otimes W^{k-1},$$

then $\omega = 0$.

Since β is admissible, $n > 1$. To prove (*) take an orthonormal frame e_1, \dots, e_n and assume, without loss of generality, that $v = e_1$. Since the symmetric algebra is isomorphic to the algebra of polynomials and the tensors in (21) are symmetric, we can replace (21) by the equality

$$(22) \quad x_1 \cdot P(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \left(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 \right) \cdot Q(x_1, \dots, x_n),$$

where P and Q are polynomials. From (22) it follows that Q is of the form $x_1 \cdot Q'$ for another polynomial Q' and therefore, $P = \sum x_i^2 \cdot Q'$. Since P corresponds to ω , the last equality shows that $\omega \in (g \otimes W^{k-2}) \cap W_0^k = \{0\}$.

Assume now that α is a single column. The space W_α consists of skew-symmetric tensors and β is admissible if and only if $k < n$. Assume that $\omega \in W_\alpha$ and

$$(23) \quad \omega \otimes v + (-1)^{k-1} v \otimes \omega \in g \otimes W^{k-1}$$

for some $v \neq 0$. (Note that, by Lemma 2, the tensor in (23) coincides with $P_\beta \omega$.) From (23) it follows that

$$(24) \quad \omega = v \wedge \eta$$

for some $(k-1)$ -form η . In fact, otherwise $\omega \otimes v \pm v \otimes \omega$, when decomposed into a sum of simple tensors, would contain a term $w_1 \otimes \dots \otimes w_{k+1}$ with all the factors w_i linearly independent while tensors of $g \otimes W^{k-1}$ do not admit terms of this sort. Moreover, one could choose η in (24) to be a $(k-1)$ -form on the orthogonal complement $\{v\}^\perp$ of the one-dimensional space spanned by v . If so, $\omega \otimes v \pm v \otimes \omega$ would contain no non-trivial terms of the form

$$(25) \quad \varrho(w \otimes w \otimes w_1 \otimes \dots \otimes w_{k-1})$$

with $\varrho \in S_{k-1}$ and $w \in \{v\}^\perp$ while all the non-zero tensors of $g \otimes W^{k-1}$ do. Consequently, $\omega = 0$.

(ii) Assume that α is admissible and put $m = \min\{\delta_1, n/2\}$, where δ_j is the length of the j th column of α . Since $\delta_1 + \delta_2 \leq n$, it follows that $\beta_2 \leq m$. Split the set $\{1, 2, \dots, k\}$ into the sum $A \cup B \cup C$ of pairwise disjoint subsets such that $\#A = \#B = m$. Set $A = \{a_1, \dots, a_m\}$, $B = \{b_1, \dots, b_m\}$ and $C = \{2m+1, \dots, n\}$.

Fix an orthonormal frame (e_1, \dots, e_n) of W and denote by ω the sum of all the terms of the form

$$(26) \quad (-1)^l \cdot e_{i_1} \otimes \dots \otimes e_{i_k},$$

where $i_r \in \{a_s, b_s\}$ when r belongs to the s th row of the Young diagram α and $s \leq m$, $i_r = c_s$ when r belongs to the s th row of α and $s > m$, and

$$l = \left\lfloor \frac{1}{2} \#\{r : i_r \in B\} \right\rfloor.$$

It is easy to see that both tensors ω and $P_\alpha \omega$ are traceless while $P_\alpha(\omega) \neq 0$.

Take any non-distinguished extension β of α and denote by s the number of the column of β which contains $k+1$. Write ω in the form

$$(27) \quad \omega = \omega_A + \omega_B,$$

where ω_A (resp., ω_B) is the sum of all the terms of the form (26) for which $i_r \in A$ (resp., $i_r \in B$) for the r which appears in the first row and s th column of α . Let $v = e_{a_1} + e_{b_1}$. Then

$$(28) \quad \sum_{\sigma \in H_\beta} \operatorname{sgn} \sigma \cdot \sigma(\omega_A \otimes e_{a_1}) = \sum_{\sigma \in H_\beta} \operatorname{sgn} \sigma \cdot \sigma(\omega_B \otimes e_{b_1}) = 0$$

by Lemma 1. Also,

$$(29) \quad \sum_{\sigma \in H_\beta} \operatorname{sgn} \sigma \cdot \sigma(\omega_A \otimes e_{b_1}) = - \sum_{\sigma \in H_\beta} \operatorname{sgn} \sigma \cdot \sigma(\omega_B \otimes e_{a_1})$$

because for any term in the first sum there exists a unique term in the second sum with e_{a_1} and e_{b_1} interchanged. Equalities (27)–(29) together with (1) and the definition of v imply that $P_\beta(\omega \otimes v) = 0$.

Finally, following the proof of Lemma 2 one can show that

$$(30) \quad P_\beta = m_\alpha \sum_{t \in T^v} \sum_{t' \in T^h} \operatorname{sgn} t \cdot t' \circ (P_\alpha \otimes \operatorname{id}) \circ t,$$

where T^h (resp., T^v) consists of the identity and all the transpositions of $k+1$ with the elements of the row (resp., column) containing it. It follows that

$$(31) \quad P_\beta(P_\alpha \omega \otimes v) = m_\alpha P_\beta(\omega \otimes v) = 0. \quad \blacksquare$$

4. Final remarks. (i) Denote by $N(k)$ the number of components in the decomposition (3). It is easy to observe that $N(1) = 1$, $N(2) = 2$, $N(3) = 4$, $N(4) = 10$, $N(5) = 26$, etc. The above observation motivates the recurrent formula

$$(32) \quad N(k) = N(k-1) + (k-1) \cdot N(k-2).$$

The authors could not find anything like this in the literature. A numerical experiment showed that (32) holds for small k , say $k \leq 20$.

(ii) As we said in Section 3, there is no explicit formula for the traceless part of a tensor. In some sense, a formula of this sort could be obtained in the following way. Put

$$(33) \quad E = \bigoplus_{\binom{k}{2}} T^{k-2}$$

and define an endomorphism $K : E \rightarrow E$ by the formula

$$(34) \quad K((\omega_{ij})) = \left(C_j^i \left(\sum_{r,s} t_r \circ t_s (g \otimes \omega_{rs}) \right) \right),$$

where t_r (resp. t_s) is the transposition of the terms 1 and r (resp., 1 and s).

K is an isomorphism. In fact, if $K(\Omega) = 0$, $\Omega = (\omega_{ij})$, then the tensor

$$(35) \quad \Theta = \sum_{r,s} t_r \circ t_s (g \otimes \omega_{rs})$$

is traceless and—because of its form—orthogonal to the space of traceless tensors, and therefore, it vanishes. Decomposing tensors ω_{ij} according to (6) and proceeding inductively one would get $\omega_{ij} = 0$ for all i and j , i.e. $\Omega = 0$.

The traceless part ω_0 of any k -tensor ω is given by the formula

$$(36) \quad \omega_0 = \omega - \Theta,$$

where Θ is given by (35) with $(\omega_{ij}) = K^{-1}((C_j^i \omega))$. In fact, from the definition of K it follows immediately that $C_j^i \Theta = C_j^i \omega$ for all i and j .

After submitting the paper, the authors, working jointly with B. Ørsted and G. Zhang, proved the Conjecture from Section 3 as well as formula (32). See *Elliptic gradients and highest weights*, Bull. Polish Acad. Sci. Math. 44 (1996), 527–535.

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