

At the heart of the degree formula lies the following theorem, which should remind you strongly of a fundamental property of degree.

Theorem. If $X = \partial W$ and $f: X \rightarrow Y$ extends smoothly to all of W , then $\int_X f^* \omega = 0$ for every k -form ω on Y . (Here X and W are compact, all three manifolds are oriented and $k = \dim X = \dim Y$.)

Proof. Let $F: W \rightarrow Y$ be an extension of f . Since $F = f$ on X ,

$$\int_X f^* \omega = \int_{\partial W} F^* \omega = \int_W F^* d\omega.$$

But ω is a k -form on a k -dimensional manifold, so $d\omega = 0$. (All $k + 1$ forms on k -dimensional manifolds are automatically 0.) Q.E.D.

k -dimensional manifolds, then for every k -form ω on Y

$$\int_X f_0^* \omega = \int_X f_1^* \omega.$$

Proof. Let $F: I \times X \rightarrow Y$ be a homotopy. Now

$$\partial(I \times X) = X_1 - X_0,$$

so

$$0 = \int_{\partial(I \times X)} (\partial F)^* \omega = \int_{X_1} (\partial F)^* \omega - \int_{X_0} (\partial F)^* \omega$$

(0 according to the theorem). But when we identify X_0 and X_1 with X , ∂F becomes f_0 on X_0 and f_1 on X_1 . Q.E.D.

A local version of the degree formula around regular values is very easily established, and its proof shows most concretely the reason why the factor $\deg(f)$ appears.

Lemma. Let y be a regular value of the map $f: X \rightarrow Y$ between oriented k -dimensional manifolds. Then there exists a neighborhood U of y such that the degree formula

$$\int_S f^* \omega = \deg(f) \int_Y \omega$$

is valid for every k -form ω with support in U .

Proof. Because f is a local diffeomorphism at each point in the preimage $f^{-1}(y)$, y has a neighborhood U such that $f^{-1}(U)$ consists of disjoint open sets V_1, \dots, V_N , and $f: V_i \rightarrow U$ is a diffeomorphism for each $i = 1, \dots, N$ (Exercise 7, Chapter 1, Section 4). If ω has support in U , then $f^* \omega$ has support in $f^{-1}(U)$; thus

$$\int_X f^* \omega = \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{V_i} f^* \omega.$$

But since $f: V_i \rightarrow U$ is a diffeomorphism, we know that

$$\int_{V_i} f^* \omega = \sigma_i \int_U \omega,$$

the sign σ_i being ± 1 , depending on whether $f: V_i \rightarrow U$ preserves or reverses orientation. Now, by definition, $\deg(f) = \sum \sigma_i$, so we are done. Q.E.D.

Finally, we prove the degree formula in general. Choose a regular value y for $f: X \rightarrow Y$ and a neighborhood U of y as in the lemma. By the Isotopy Lemma of Chapter 3, Section 6, for every point $z \in Y$ we can find a diffeomorphism $h: Y \rightarrow Y$ that is isotopic to the identity and that carries y to z . Thus the collection of all open sets $h(U)$, where $h: Y \rightarrow Y$ is a diffeomorphism isotopic to the identity, covers Y . By compactness, we can find finitely many maps h_1, \dots, h_n such that $Y = h_1(U) \cup \dots \cup h_n(U)$. Using a partition of unity, we can write any form ω as a sum of forms, each having support in one of the sets $h_i(U)$; therefore, since both sides of the degree formula

$$\int_X f^* \omega = \deg(f) \int_Y \omega$$

are linear in ω , it suffices to prove the formula for forms supported in some $h(U)$.

So assume that ω is a form supported in $h(U)$. Since $h \sim \text{identity}$, then $h \circ f \sim f$. Thus the corollary above implies

$$\int_X f^* \omega = \int_X (h \circ f)^* \omega = \int_X f^* h^* \omega.$$

As $h^* \omega$ is supported in U , the lemma implies

$$\int_X f^* (h^* \omega) = \deg(f) \int_Y h^* \omega.$$

Finally, the diffeomorphism h is orientation preserving; for $h \sim \text{identity}$ implies $\deg(h) = +1$. Thus the change of variables property gives

$$\int_Y h^* \omega = \int_Y \omega,$$

and

$$\int_X f^* \omega = \deg(f) \int_Y \omega.$$

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