RIGIDITY AND GAP RESULTS FOR LOW INDEX PROPERLY IMMERSED SELF-SHRINKERS IN \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \)

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Abstract. In this paper we show that the only properly immersed self-shrinkers \( \Sigma \) in \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) with Morse index 1 are the hyperplanes through the origin. Moreover, we prove that if \( \Sigma \) is not a hyperplane through the origin then the index jumps and it is at least \( m + 2 \), with equality if and only if \( \Sigma \) is a cylinder \( \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \times S^k(\sqrt{k}) \) for some \( 1 \leq k \leq m - 1 \).

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1. Introduction

Let \( \Sigma^m \) be a complete connected orientable \( m \)-dimensional Riemannian manifold without boundary isometrically immersed by \( x_0 : \Sigma^m \to \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) in the Euclidean space \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \). We say that \( \Sigma \) is moved along its mean curvature vector if there is a whole family \( x_t = x(\cdot, t) \) of smooth immersions, with corresponding hypersurfaces \( \Sigma_t = x_t(\Sigma) \), such that it satisfies the mean curvature flow initial value problem

\[
\begin{aligned}
\frac{\partial}{\partial t} x(p, t) &= H(p, t) \nu(p, t) & p \in \Sigma^m \\
x(\cdot, t_0) &= x_0.
\end{aligned}
\]

Here \( H(p, t) \) and \( \nu(p, t) \) are respectively the mean curvature and the unit normal vector of the hypersurface \( \Sigma_t \) at \( x(p, t) \). When possible, we will choose the unit normal \( \nu \) to be inward pointing.

The short time existence and uniqueness of a solution of (1) was investigated in classical works on quasilinear parabolic equations. Another interesting and more challenging question is what happens to these flows in the long term. Classical examples show that singularities can happen. A major problem in literature has

Date: August 18, 2014.
been to study the nature of these singularities and it is a general principle, discovered by Huisken, that the singularities are modeled by self–shrinkers. A connected, isometrically immersed hypersurface \( x : \Sigma^m \to \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) is said to be a self–shrinker (based at \( 0 \in \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \)) if the family of surfaces \( \Sigma_t = \sqrt{-2t}\Sigma \) flows by mean curvature. Equivalently, a self–shrinker can also be characterized as an isometrically immersed hypersurface whose mean curvature vector field \( H \) satisfies the equation

\[
x^\perp = -H,
\]

where \((\cdot)^\perp\) denotes the projection on the normal bundle of \( \Sigma \). Note that we are using the convention \( H = \text{Tr}_\Sigma A \), where \( A \) denotes the second fundamental form of the immersion defined as

\[
AX = -\nabla_X \nu,
\]

with \( \nabla \) Levi–Civita connection of \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \). With this convention, the self–shrinker equation takes the scalar form

\[
\langle x, \nu \rangle = -H.
\]

Standard examples of self–shrinkers are the hyperplanes through the origin of \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \), the sphere \( S^m(\sqrt{m}) \) and the cylinders \( \Sigma = \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \times S^k(\sqrt{k}) \) for some \( 1 \leq k \leq m-1 \). Other examples of self–shrinkers are due to Angenent, \cite{2}, who constructed a family of embedded self–shrinkers that are topologically \( S^1 \times S^{m-1} \).

It is well–known that self–shrinkers in \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) can be viewed as \( f \)–minimal hypersurfaces, that is, critical points of the weighted area functional

\[
\text{vol}_f(\Sigma) = \int_{\Sigma} e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma,
\]

where \( f = |x|^2/2 \) (we refer the reader to the papers \cite{3}, \cite{8}, \cite{13} for more details on \( f \)–minimal hypersurfaces). Moreover, we say that a self–shrinker is \( f \)–stable if it is a local minimum of the weighted area functional for every compactly supported normal variation. In the instability case, it makes sense to investigate the Morse index, that is, roughly speaking, the maximum dimension of the linear space of compactly supported deformations that decrease the weighted area up to second order.

It was proved by Colding and Minicozzi, \cite{5}, that every complete properly immersed self–shrinker is necessarily \( f \)–unstable. Equivalently, every properly immersed self–shrinker has Morse index greater than or equal to 1. In the equality case, rigidity results have been proved by Hussey, \cite{12}, under the additional assumption of embeddedness. More precisely, he showed that if a complete properly embedded self–shrinker in \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) has Morse index 1, then it has to be a hyperplane through the origin. Furthermore, he also proved that if the self-shrinker is not a hyperplane through the origin, then the Morse index jumps and it has to be at least \( m+2 \), with equality if and only if the self–shrinker is a cylinder \( \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \times S^k(\sqrt{k}) \) for some \( 1 \leq k \leq m \). It is worth pointing out that there many examples of non-embedded self–shrinkers. Indeed, Abresch and Langer, \cite{11}, constructed self–intersecting curves in the plane that are self–shrinkers under the mean curvature flow. Moreover, it is possible to obtain examples of non-embedded self-shrinkers by taking products...
of these curves with Euclidean factors. Finally Drugan and Kleene, [7], recently constructed in generic dimension infinitely many immersed rotationally symmetric self-shrinkers having the topological type of the sphere ($S^n$), the plane ($\mathbb{R}^n$), the cylinder ($\mathbb{R} \times S^{n-1}$), and the torus ($S^1 \times S^{n-1}$).

The aim of this paper is to investigate if hyperplanes through the origin and cylinders remains the only hypersurfaces, among the wider family of properly immersed self–shrinkers in $\mathbb{R}^{m+1}$, having Morse index 1 and $m+2$ respectively, and if, except for them, every properly immersed self–shrinker has Morse index strictly bigger than $m+2$. Exploiting the link between stability properties of self–shrinkers and spectral properties of a suitable weighted Schrödinger operator, as well as some basic identities which naturally involve the weighted Laplacian of the self–shrinker, we provide a positive answer to the above mentioned problem. More precisely, we prove the following

**Theorem 1.1.** Let $\Sigma^n$ be a complete properly immersed self–shrinker in $\mathbb{R}^{m+1}$. Then

1. $\text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) \geq 1$ and equality holds if and only if $\Sigma$ is a hyperplane through the origin;

2. If $\Sigma$ is non–totally geodesic, then $\text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) \geq m+2$. Moreover, $\text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) = m+2$ if and only if $\Sigma = \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \times S^k(\sqrt{k})$ for some $1 \leq k \leq m-1$.

2. Some spectral theory and potential theory on weighted manifolds

2.1. Some spectral theory for weighted Schrödinger operators. A weighted manifold is a triple $\Sigma^n_f = (\Sigma^n, \langle , \rangle, e^{-f}d\text{vol}_\Sigma)$, where $(\Sigma^n, \langle , \rangle)$ is a complete $m$–dimensional Riemannian manifold, $f \in C^\infty(\Sigma)$ and $d\text{vol}_\Sigma$ denotes the canonical Riemannian volume form on $\Sigma$. In the following we collect some well-know facts about spectral theory on weighted manifolds (see e.g. [16, Chapter 3] for an exhaustive survey on spectral theory on Riemannian manifolds).

Associated to a weighted manifold $\Sigma_f$ there is a natural divergence form second order diffusion operator, the $f$–Laplacian, defined on $u$ by

$$\Delta_f u = e^f \text{div}(e^{-f} \nabla u) = \Delta u - \langle \nabla u, \nabla f \rangle.$$

This is clearly symmetric on $L^2(\Sigma_f)$ endowed with the inner product

$$(u,v)_{L^2(\Sigma_f)} = \int_\Sigma u v e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma.$$

Given $q \in L^\infty_{\text{loc}}(\Sigma)$, consider the weighted Schrödinger operator

$$Lu = -\Delta_f u - qu, \quad \forall u \in C^\infty_c(\Sigma).$$

This is again a symmetric linear operator on $L^2(\Sigma_f)$ and we set $Q$ to be the symmetric bilinear form on $L^2(\Sigma_f)$ defined as $Q(u,v) := (Lu,v)_{L^2(\Sigma_f)}$. Recall that $L$ is said to be bounded from below if

$$Q(u,u) \geq c\|u\|_{L^2(\Sigma_f)}^2, \quad c \in \mathbb{R}.$$

In particular, when $c \geq 0$, $L$ is said to be non–negative.
Given any open, relatively compact domain \( \Omega \subset \Sigma \) we define \( L_{\Omega} \) to be the operator \( L \) acting on \( C^\infty_c(\Omega) \) and we denote by \( L_{\Omega} \) its Friedrichs extension. By standard spectral theory, \( L_{\Omega} \) has purely discrete spectrum consisting of a divergent sequence of eigenvalues \( \{ \lambda_k(\Omega) \} \). The first eigenvalue of \( L_{\Omega} \) is defined by Rayleigh characterization as

\[
\lambda_1(\Omega) = \inf_{0 \neq u \in C^\infty(\Omega)} \frac{Q(u,u)}{\|u\|^2_{L^2(\Sigma_f)}}.
\]

Moreover, we define the index of \( L_{\Omega} \), \( \text{Ind}(L_{\Omega}) \), to be the number, counted according to multiplicity, of negative eigenvalues of \( L_{\Omega} \). The bottom of the spectrum of \( L \) on \( \Sigma \) is then defined as

\[
\lambda_{1}^L(\Sigma) = \inf \{ \lambda_1(\Omega) : \Omega \subset \subset \Sigma \}.
\]

Similarly, the Morse index of \( L \) on \( \Sigma \) is defined as

\[
\text{Ind}^L(\Sigma) := \sup \{ \text{Ind}(L_{\Omega}) : \Omega \subset \subset \Sigma \}.
\]

Adapting to the weighted setting arguments in [9] it is not difficult to prove the following

**Proposition 2.1.** Let \( \Sigma_f \) be a weighted manifold and let \( L = -\Delta_f - q \), \( q \in L^\infty_{\text{loc}}(\Sigma) \).

The following are equivalent:

1. \( \text{Ind}^L(\Sigma) < +\infty \);
2. There exists a finite dimensional subspace \( W \) of the weighted space \( L^2(\Sigma_f) \) having an orthonormal basis \( \psi_1, \ldots, \psi_k \) consisting of eigenfunctions of \( L \) with eigenvalues \( \lambda_1, \ldots, \lambda_k \) respectively. Moreover, each \( \lambda_i \) is negative and any function \( \phi \in C^\infty(\Sigma) \cap W^\perp \) satisfy \( Q(\phi,\phi) \geq 0 \).

Finally, in case \( L \) is essentially self–adjoint, we can relate the Morse index to the so–called spectral index of \( L \). Towards this aim we first recall that, given a self–adjoint operator \( T : D(T) \to L^2(\Sigma_f) \), its spectral index is defined as

\[
\overline{\text{Ind}}^T(\Sigma) = \sup \left\{ \dim V : V \subset D(T), \ (Tu,u)_{L^2(\Sigma_f)} < 0 \ \forall \ 0 \neq u \in V \right\}.
\]

If \( L \) is essentially self–adjoint, then there is a unique self–adjoint extension \( L_\Sigma \) of \( L \) and we can define the spectral index of \( L \) as the spectral index of its self–adjoint extension, that is

\[
\overline{\text{Ind}}^{-L}(\Sigma) := \overline{\text{Ind}}^{L_\Sigma}(\Sigma).
\]

Furthermore, since \( \Sigma \) is complete, if \( L \) is also bounded from below by a constant \( c \), then it is essentially self–adjoint. In this case \( L_\Sigma \) corresponds to the Friedrichs extension of \( L \), that is, the self–adjoint extension of \( L \) associated to the closure of the quadratic form \( Q \) with respect to the norm \( \| \cdot \|_Q \) induced by the inner product \( Q(\ , \ ) + (1-c)(\ , \ )_{L^2(\Sigma_f)} \). Moreover, it turns out that

\[
C^\infty_0(\Sigma) \|_Q = \{ u \in W^{1,2}(\Sigma_f) : |q|^{1/2}u \in L^2(\Sigma_f) \} =: \mathcal{V}_q,
\]

and hence the domain of the operator \( L_\Sigma \) is the space

\[
D(L_\Sigma) = \{ u \in \mathcal{V}_q : L_\Sigma u \in L^2(\Sigma_f) \}.
\]
where \( L \Sigma u \) is understood in distributional sense.

The relationship between the two concepts of index presented above is clarified by the following

**Theorem 2.2.** Let \( \Sigma_f \) be a weighted manifold and let \( L = -\Delta_f - q \), \( q \in L^\infty_{loc}(\Sigma) \).

(i) If \( L \) is essentially self-adjoint on \( C^\infty(\Sigma) \), then \( \widetilde{\text{Ind}}^L(\Sigma) = \text{Ind}^L(\Sigma) \);

(ii) if \( \text{Ind}^L(\Sigma) < +\infty \), then \( L \) is bounded from below, essentially self-adjoint on \( C^\infty(\Sigma) \) and \( \text{Ind}^L(\Sigma) = \widetilde{\text{Ind}}^L(\Sigma) < +\infty \).

The proof of the previous theorem is a consequence of Theorem 3.17 in [16] taking into account that \( L = -\Delta_f - q(x) \) is unitarily equivalent to the Schrödinger operator \( S = -\Delta - [(1/4 \langle \nabla f, \nabla f \rangle - 1/2 \Delta_f) - q(x)] = -\Delta - (p(x) + q(x)) \) under the multiplication map \( T(u) = e^{-f/2}u \) of \( L^2(\Sigma) \) onto \( L^2(\Sigma_f) \) (see for instance [20]).

2.2. \( f \)-parabolicity of weighted manifolds. Following classical terminology in linear potential theory we say that a weighted manifold \( \Sigma_f \) is \( f \)-parabolic if

\[
\begin{cases}
\Delta_f u \geq 0 \\
u^* = \sup_M u < +\infty
\end{cases} \Rightarrow u \equiv u^*.
\]

As a matter of fact, \( f \)-parabolicity is related to a wide class of equivalent properties involving the recurrence of the Brownian motion, \( f \)-capacities of condensers, the heat kernel associated to the drifted laplacian, weighted volume growth, function theoretic tests, global divergence theorems and many other geometric and potential-analytic properties. Here we limit ourselves to point out the following characterization.

**Theorem 2.3.** A weighted manifold \( \Sigma_f \) is \( f \)-parabolic if and only if for every vector field \( X \) satisfying

(i) \( |X| \in L^2(\Sigma_f) \),

(ii) \( (\text{div}_f X)_- \in L^1_{loc}(\Sigma_f) \)

it holds

\[
\int_\Sigma \text{div}_f(X)e^{-f} \text{dvol}_\Sigma = 0,
\]

where

\[
\text{div}_f(X) = e^f \text{div}(e^{-f}X).
\]

We refer the reader to [16] Theorem 7.27 for a detailed proof of the previous result in the unweighted setting. Although the proof of this theorem can be deduced adapting to the weighted laplacian \( \Delta_f \) the proof in [16], we provide here a shorter and more direct proof.

Proof of Theorem 2.3. We consider the warped product \( \overline{\Sigma} = \Sigma \times_h \mathbb{T} \), where \( h := e^{-f} \) and \( \mathbb{T} = \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Z} \), so that \( \text{vol}(\mathbb{T}) = 1 \). We first note that, as proven in [19] Lemma 2.6], the weighted manifold \( \Sigma_f \) is \( f \)-parabolic if and only if \( \overline{\Sigma} \) is parabolic. Moreover, as
a consequence of the Kelvin–Nevanlinna–Royden criterion (see \cite[Theorem 7.27]{16}), the parabolicity of $\Sigma$ is equivalent to the fact that, for every vector field $Y \in T\Sigma$ satisfying

(a) $|Y| \in L^2(\Sigma)$;
(b) $(\overline{\text{div}})(Y) \in L^1_{\text{loc}}(\Sigma)$

it holds
$$\int_{\Sigma} \overline{\text{div}}(Y) \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = 0.$$  

Here we have denoted by $\overline{\text{div}}$ the divergence with respect to the metric $g_{\Sigma} = \pi_\Sigma^*(g_{\Sigma}) + h^2 \pi_T^*(dt^2)$, where $\pi_{\Sigma}$ and $\pi_T$ denote the projections of $\Sigma$ onto $\Sigma$ and $T$ respectively. Given a vector field $Y \in T\Sigma$, we let $X = (\pi_{\Sigma})^*(Y)$. Taking into account that $\text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} dt$ and using the formulas for covariant derivatives on warped products (see \cite{15}), it is not difficult to prove that
$$\text{div}_f(X) = \overline{\text{div}}(Y),$$
$$\int_{\Sigma} |X|^2 e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} \leq \int_{\Sigma} |Y|^2 \text{dvol}_{\Sigma},$$
$$\int_{\Sigma} (\text{div}_f)(X) e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = \int_{\Sigma} (\overline{\text{div}})(Y) \text{dvol}_{\Sigma}. $$

Now assume that $\Sigma$ is $f$–parabolic and let $X \in T\Sigma$ be a vector field satisfying the integrability conditions $(i)$ and $(ii)$. Define $Y \in T\Sigma$ by $Y_{(x,t)} = X_x$. Then $(\pi_{\Sigma})^*Y = X$, $|X|^2 = |Y|^2$ and $Y$ satisfies the integrability conditions $(a)$ and $(b)$. Moreover, since $\Sigma$ is parabolic, it holds
$$0 = \int_{\Sigma} \overline{\text{div}}(Y) \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = \int_{\Sigma} \text{div}_f(X) e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma},$$
proving that $f$–parabolicity is a sufficient condition for the validity of the global (weighted) version of the Stokes theorem.

As for the converse, assume that for every vector field $X \in T\Sigma$ satisfying the integrability conditions $(i)$ and $(ii)$ it holds
$$\int_{\Sigma} \text{div}_f(X) e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = 0.$$  

Suppose by contradiction that $\Sigma$ is not $f$–parabolic. Thus $\Sigma$ is not parabolic and there exists $Y \in T\Sigma$ satisfying the integrability conditions in $(a)$ and $(b)$ and such that
$$\int_{\Sigma} \overline{\text{div}}(Y) \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} \neq 0.$$  

Set $X = (\pi_{\Sigma})^*(Y)$. Then $X$ satisfies the integrability conditions $(i)$ and $(ii)$. However
$$\int_{\Sigma} \text{div}_f(X) e^{-f} \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} = \int_{\Sigma} \overline{\text{div}}(Y) \text{dvol}_{\Sigma} \neq 0,$$
leading to a contradiction.  \qed
From the geometric point of view, it is well known that $f$–parabolicity is related to the growth rate of the weighted volume of intrinsic metric objects. Indeed, adapting to the diffusion operator $\Delta_f$ standard proofs for the Laplace–Beltrami operator (see for instance [10], [18]), one can prove the following

**Proposition 2.4.** Let $\Sigma_f$ be a weighted manifold. If

$$\text{vol}_f (\partial B_r(o))^{-1} \notin L^1 (+\infty),$$

then $\Sigma_f$ is $f$–parabolic.

Here $\partial B_r(o)$ denotes the geodesic ball of radius $r$ centered at a reference point $o \in \Sigma$ and

$$\text{vol}_f (\partial B_r) = \int_{\partial B_r} e^{-f} d\text{vol}_{m-1},$$

where $d\text{vol}_{m-1}$ denotes the $(m-1)$–dimensional Hausdorff measure.

Observe also that if $\text{vol}_f (\Sigma) < +\infty$, then condition (2) is automatically satisfied. Hence we conclude that any weighted manifold $\Sigma_f$ satisfying $\text{vol}_f (\Sigma) < +\infty$ is $f$–parabolic.

**Remark 2.5.** It was proved in [4] and [6] that for any complete immersed self-shrinker $x : \Sigma^m \to \mathbb{R}^{m+1}$ the following statements are equivalent:

(a) the immersion $x$ is proper;
(b) $\Sigma$ has extrinsic polynomial volume growth;
(c) $\Sigma$ has extrinsic Euclidean volume growth;
(d) $\Sigma$ has finite $f$–volume, where $f = |x|^2/2$.

In particular, the equivalence (a)–(d) shows that any complete self–shrinker properly immersed in $\mathbb{R}^{m+1}$ is $f$–parabolic, with $f = |x|^2/2$.

## 3. Characterization of low index properly immersed self–shrinkers

Let $x : \Sigma^m \to \mathbb{R}^{m+1}$ be a complete self-shrinker and set $f = |x|^2$. The function $f$ induces a weighted structure on the self-shrinker that can hence be viewed as a weighted manifold itself. Basic geometric quantities on the self-shrinker satisfy identities which naturally involve the $f$-Laplacian on $\Sigma_f$, as shown in the next

**Proposition 3.1.** Let $\Sigma^m$ be a self-shrinker in $\mathbb{R}^{m+1}$ and let $a \in \mathbb{R}^{m+1}$ be a constant vector. Then

1. the mean curvature $H$ satisfies
   $$\Delta_f H = (1 - \|A\|^2)H.$$
2. The function $g_a = \langle \nu, a \rangle$ satisfies
   $$\Delta_f g_a = -\|A\|^2 g_a.$$
3. The function $l_a = \langle x, a \rangle$ satisfies
   $$\Delta_f l_a = -l_a.$$
(4) the squared norm of the second fundamental form satisfies the Simons type formula
\[ \Delta f \|A\|^2 = 2|\nabla A|^2 + 2\|A\|^2(1 - \|A\|^2). \]

We refer the reader to \[11, Theorem 4.1\] and \[5, Theorem 5.2\] for a proof of the identities listed above.

It turns out that stability properties of self–shrinkers, viewed as critical points of the weighted area functional, are taken into account by spectral properties of the weighted Jacobi operator \( L_f \), defined as
\[ L_f u = -\Delta f u - (\|A\|^2 + 1)u. \]

To be more precise, we say that a self–shrinker \( \Sigma \) is \( f \)–stable if and only if the operator \( L_f \) is non–negative, that is if and only if
\[ \lambda_{L_f}^1(\Sigma) \geq 0. \]

Furthermore, we define the \( f \)–Index of \( \Sigma \) to be the Morse index of the Jacobi operator \( L_f \), that is
\[ \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) := \sup \{\text{Ind}(L_f \Omega) : \Omega \subset \subset \Sigma\}. \]

**Remark 3.2.** Keeping in mind Theorem 2.2 we see that if \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) < +\infty \), then the weighted Jacobi operator \( L_f \) is bounded from below, it is essentially self–adjoint and \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) = \text{Ind}^{L_f}(\Sigma) \). Moreover, the domain of the quadratic form \( Q(\cdot, \cdot) = (L_f \cdot, \cdot)_{L^2(\Sigma_f)} \) is the space
\[ \mathcal{V} = \{u \in W^{1,2}(\Sigma_f) : \|A\| u \in L^2(\Sigma_f)\}. \]

Furthermore, we point out that, if \( u \) is an eigenfunction of the Jacobi operator \( L_f \) and \( u \in W^{1,2}(\Sigma_f) \), then Lemma 9.15 in \[5\] implies that \( u \in \mathcal{V} \). Finally, if \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) < +\infty \), then \( \lambda_{L_f}^1(\Sigma) > -\infty \) and one can prove the existence of a positive \( C^2 \) function \( v \) satisfying \( L_f v = \lambda_{L_f}^1(\Sigma) v \) (see Lemma 9.25 in \[5\]). Then, applying again Lemma 9.15 in \[5\], it is straightforward to prove that any function \( \phi \in W^{1,2}(\Sigma_f) \) belongs to \( \mathcal{V} \).

In the following we collect some lemmas that will be essential for the proof of the main result of the paper.

**Lemma 3.3.** Let \( \Sigma^m \) be a properly immersed non–totally geodesic self–shrinker in \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) satisfying \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) < +\infty \). Set
\[ W := \{g_b : \Sigma \to \mathbb{R}, \ g_b(p) = \langle \nu(p), b \rangle \ \forall p \in \Sigma, \ b \in \mathbb{R}^{m+1}\}. \]

Then \( \dim W \leq m + 1 \) and, if \( \dim W = k < m + 1 \), we can find \( m + 1 \) linearly independent constant non–null vectors \( \{b_1, \ldots, b_{m+1}\} \in \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) satisfying the following properties:

(1) \( W = \text{span}\{g_{b_1}, \ldots, g_{b_k}\} \);
(2) Set \( U := \text{span}\{g_{b_1}, \ldots, g_{b_k}, l_{b_{k+1}H}, \ldots, l_{b_{m+1}H}\} \). Then
   (a) the functions \( l_j H, \ j = k + 1, \ldots, m + 1 \), are eigenfunctions of \( L_f \) corresponding to the eigenvalue \(-1\);
into account Remark 3.2, \( P \) self-shrinker satisfies
\[ \| \| = \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
that belong to \( \| \| \) has finite
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
Hence
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
in particular,
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
shows that the functions \( l \) correspond to the eigenvalue
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
In particular,
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
Proof. We note first that it is not difficult to prove that if \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
such that \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
shows that the functions \( l \) satisfy
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
Thus
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
showing that the functions \( l \) are eigenfunctions of \( \| \| \)
corresponding to the eigenvalue
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
As for part (2b), let us prove first that the functions \( g \) and \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
are linearly independent. It suffices to show that, for any non-null vectors \( b = \alpha_1 b_1 + \cdots + \alpha_k b_k, \ c = \alpha_{k+1} b_{k+1} + \cdots + \alpha_{m+1} b_{m+1} \), the functions \( g \) and \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
can not be linearly dependent. Indeed, assume by contradiction that there exists a non-zero constant \( \lambda \) such that \( g \) \( = \lambda \| \| \) \( . \) Then, in particular
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
In particular,
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
Hence \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
In order to prove that \( U \subset \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
that \( g \), \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
for any \( i = 1, \cdots, k, \ j = k + 1, \cdots, m + 1 \). Clearly, since \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
has finite \( f \)-volume, the Cauchy-Schwartz inequality implies that the functions \( g \) belong to \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
Moreover, since \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
implies that \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
hence, in particular,
\[ \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
As for the functions \( l \) \( . \) note that Lemma 25 in \[ | | \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \]
implies that any properly immersed self-shrinker satisfies \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
with \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
in particular, the function \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
belongs to the space \( \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
for any \( q \in \| \| \rightarrow \| \| , \| \| \rightarrow \| \| \)
Thus, using the self-shrinker equation,
it is straightforward to see that
\[ |b_j| |H| \leq |b_j| |x| |H| \leq |b_j| |x|^2 \in L^2(\Sigma_f) \]
\[ |\nabla(b_j H)| \leq |b_j| |x|^2 \|A\| + |b_j| |x| \in L^2(\Sigma_f). \]

Finally, it only remains to prove that \( \dim V = m + 2 \). Assume by contradiction that there exists a non-zero constant \( a \) and a function \( \phi \in U \) such that \( \phi = a \). Then
\[ 0 = \Delta_f \phi = -\|A\|^2 \phi = -\|A\|^2 a, \]
contradicting again the assumption of \( \Sigma \) being non–totally geodesic. \( \square \)

Lemma 3.4. Let \( \Sigma^m \) be a properly immersed self–shrinker in \( \mathbb{R}^{m+1} \) satisfying \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) < +\infty \). Let \( \phi \in U \), where \( U \) is defined as in the previous Lemma. Then
\[ \int_{\Sigma} \phi \|A\|^2 e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma = 0. \]

Proof. Note that the assumption of \( \Sigma \) being properly immersed implies that it is \( f \)-parabolic. Let \( \phi \in U \). Then \( |\nabla \phi| \in L^2(\Sigma_f) \) and the conclusion follows as an application of Theorem 2.3 to the vector field \( X = \nabla \phi \), keeping in mind Proposition 3.1 and Lemma 3.3. \( \square \)

We are now ready to prove the main theorem of this paper.

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Note first that if \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) = +\infty \), then the inequality \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) \geq m + 2 \) is trivially satisfied. Hence assume that \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) < +\infty \). We claim that any function \( \varphi = a + \phi \), for some \( a \in \mathbb{R} \), \( \phi \in U \), satisfies
\[ \int_{\Sigma} \varphi L_f \varphi e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma = -\int_{\Sigma} \varphi \Delta_f \varphi + (\|A\|^2 + 1) \varphi^2 e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma < 0. \]
In this case, Lemma 3.3 would imply that either \( \Sigma \) is totally geodesic (and hence a hyperplane through the origin) or \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) \geq \dim V = m + 2 \).

A straightforward computation shows that
\[ \varphi \Delta_f \varphi + (\|A\|^2 + 1) \varphi^2 = \varphi^2 + \|A\|^2 a^2 + a \phi \|A\|. \]
Applying Lemma 3.4 we get
\[ \int_{\Sigma} \phi \|A\|^2 e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma = 0. \]
Hence
\[ -\int_{\Sigma} \varphi \Delta_f \varphi + (\|A\|^2 + 1) \varphi^2 e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma = -\int_{\Sigma} \varphi^2 + \|A\|^2 a^2 + a \phi \|A\| e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma \]
\[ = -\int_{\Sigma} \varphi^2 + \|A\|^2 a^2 e^{-f} d\text{vol}_\Sigma \]
\[ < 0. \]

Finally, assume that \( \text{Ind}_f(\Sigma) = m + 2 \). Note that, since \( H \) belongs to \( V \) (see the proof of Theorem 9.36 in [5]) and \( L_f H = -2H \), Proposition 2.4 implies that \( H = a + c \phi \) for some constants \( a \) and \( c \) and for some function \( \phi \in U \). If \( c = 0 \), then
\[ 0 = \Delta_f H = (1 - \|A\|^2) H = a(1 - \|A\|^2). \]
Hence \( \|A\|^2 \equiv 1 \) and, according to a theorem of Lawson, [14], \( \Sigma \) must be a cylinder \( S^k(\sqrt{k}) \times \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \), for some \( 1 \leq k \leq m \). Assume now that \( c \neq 0 \). Then
\[
(1 - \|A\|^2)(a + c\phi) = (1 - \|A\|^2)H = \Delta_f H = c\Delta_f \phi = -c\|A\|^2 \phi.
\]
In particular, \( H = a\|A\|^2 \). If \( a = 0 \) then \( H \equiv 0 \) and \( \Sigma \) must be a hyperplane through the origin, which is absurd. Hence it must be \( a \neq 0 \). Using the Simons type formula in Proposition 3.1 we obtain
\[
a\|A\|^2(1 - \|A\|^2) = \Delta_f H = \Delta_f a\|A\|^2 = 2a|\nabla A|^2 + 2a\|A\|^2(1 - \|A\|^2).
\]
Thus \( (1 - \|A\|^2) \leq 0 \) and hence \( \|A\|^2 \) is a bounded below \( f \)-superharmonic function. Since \( \Sigma \) is \( f \)-parabolic we conclude that \( \|A\|^2 \) must be constant. In particular
\[
0 \equiv \Delta_f \|A\|^2 = \|A\|^2(1 - \|A\|^2).
\]
Thus \( \|A\|^2 \equiv 1 \) and we conclude as above that \( \Sigma \) must be a cylinder \( S^k(\sqrt{k}) \times \mathbb{R}^{m-k} \), for some \( 1 \leq k \leq m \).

\[\square\]

Acknowledgement. The author has been supported by the “Gruppo Nazionale per l’Analisi Matematica, la Probabilità e le loro Applicazioni” (GNAMPA) of the Istituto Nazionale di Alta Matematica (INdAM). Finally, the author is deeply grateful to Stefano Pigola and Michele Rimoldi for useful conversations during the preparation of the manuscript.

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