CONJECTURES ON CONGRUENCES OF BINOMIAL COEFFICIENTS MODULO HIGHER POWERS OF A PRIME NUMBER

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Abstract. Some congruences modulo p^3 and p^2, for a prime p involving binomial coefficients are stated. These appear to be novel.

A few years ago, the author and Vogrinc proved [SV10, SV11] that for a prime number p and $n > p$, the following holds

$$\binom{n}{p} \equiv \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \right\rfloor \pmod{p},$$

along with several other results on the periodicity of such a sequence. In fact, the following more stronger statement was proved by the author and Laugier [LS14]: for a prime p and natural numbers $n > p$ and $k \geq 1$, the following holds

$$\binom{n}{p^k} \equiv \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p^k} \right\rfloor \pmod{p}.$$

The periodicity of binomial coefficients is a fascinating object of study, and has been studied extensively (see the references in [SV10, SV11, LS14] for example). Some other work that the author and Laugier did in this direction can be found in the unpublished manuscript [LS12].

What the author and his collaborators did not study were relations for higher powers of p involving binomial coefficients and floor functions; so here in this note we make the following conjectures.

Conjecture 1. *For a prime $p > 3$ and natural number $n \geq 1$, the following is true*

$$\binom{pn-1}{p} \equiv n-1 \pmod{p^3}.$$

Conjecture 2. *We have for all $n \geq 1$,*

$$\binom{3^\ell n-k}{n} \equiv \left\lfloor \frac{3^\ell n-k}{3} \right\rfloor \pmod{3^2},$$

where $k \equiv 0, 1 \pmod 3$ and $\ell \geq 1$.

Some remarks are in order:

(1) Bailey [Bai90] proved a related result

$$\binom{pn}{p} \equiv n \pmod{p^3},$$

although his techniques do not seem to work for our cases. In fact, he proved a much more general result in his paper which we do not state here.

(2) It seems that Conjecture 2 can be extended further. Is the following true?

$$\binom{p^\ell n-k}{n} \equiv \left\lfloor \frac{p^\ell n-k}{p} \right\rfloor \pmod{p^3},$$

for $k \equiv 0, 1 \pmod p$, $\ell \geq 1$ (and for possibly other values of k).

(3) Even more complicated supercongrunces can be conjectured, for higher powers of p, but with different floor functions. Such congruences for p^3 are well studied, but not with the floor function, as is the case here.

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