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Arithmetical properties of a sequence arising from an arctangent sum

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Received 19 March 2007; revised 30 April 2007

Available online 30 August 2007

Communicated by David Goss

Abstract

The sequence $\{x_n\}$ defined by $x_n = (n + x_{n-1})/(1 - nx_{n-1})$, with $x_1 = 1$, appeared in the context of some arctangent sums. We establish the fact that $x_n \neq 0$ for $n \geq 4$ and conjecture that x_n is not an integer for $n \geq 5$. This conjecture is given a combinatorial interpretation in terms of Stirling numbers via the elementary symmetric functions. The problem features linkage with a well-known conjecture on the existence of infinitely many primes of the form $n^2 + 1$, as well as our conjecture that $(1 + 1^2)(1 + 2^2) \cdots (1 + n^2)$ is not a square for $n > 3$. We present an algorithm that verifies the latter for $n \leq 10^{3200}$.

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MSC: 11D79; 11A07; 11B37

Keywords: Arctangent; Recurrences; Primes of the form $1 + n^2$

1. Introduction

The evaluation of arctangent sums of the form

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \tan^{-1} h(k) \tag{1.1}$$

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for a rational function h , appears in the literature from time to time. Throughout the paper $\tan^{-1}(\cdot)$ is defined by its principal branch. In joint work with G. Boros, the third author presented in [3] a systematic study of these sums. There, the reader will find the elementary evaluation

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \tan^{-1} \frac{2}{k^2} = \frac{3\pi}{4}, \tag{1.2}$$

as well as the more advanced

$$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 2^{-k} \tan^{-1} \left(\frac{\sinh 2^k x}{\sin 2^k x} \right) = \tan^{-1} \left(\frac{\tanh x}{\tan x} \right). \tag{1.3}$$

As part of this study, the authors of [3] considered the sequence

$$x_n := \tan \sum_{k=1}^n \tan^{-1} k, \quad n \geq 1. \tag{1.4}$$

The addition formula for $\tan x$ yields the Ricatti-type equation

$$x_n = \frac{x_{n-1} + n}{1 - nx_{n-1}}, \tag{1.5}$$

with the initial condition $x_1 = 1$. We prove that $1 - nx_{n-1} \neq 0$ for $n > 1$, so that x_n is well defined. Naturally, $x_n \in \mathbb{Q}$ and the first few values are

$$\left\{ 1, -3, 0, 4, -\frac{9}{19}, \frac{105}{73}, -\frac{308}{331}, \frac{36}{43} \right\}. \tag{1.6}$$

Moreover, running (1.5) backwards, we find that $x_0 = 0$. In this paper we settle the conjecture proposed in [3] to the effect that $x_n \neq 0$ for $n \geq 4$. This proof is based on the analysis of the 2-adic valuation of x_n .

Definition 1.1. Given a prime p and an integer $x \neq 0$, write $x = p^m y$, with y not divisible by p . The exponent m is the p -adic valuation of x , denoted by $m = v_p(x)$. This definition is extended to $x = a/b \in \mathbb{Q}$ via $v_p(x) = v_p(a) - v_p(b)$. We leave the value $v_p(0)$ as undefined.

In Section 2 we provide an explicit expression for $v_2(x_n)$. This is used to prove that $x_n \neq 0$ for $n \neq 4$. The study of arithmetical properties of the sequence $\{x_n\}$ lead us to propose:

Conjecture 1.2. For $n \geq 5$, the value x_n is not an integer.

During the process of developing tables of values for $\ln \Gamma(x + iy)$, J. Todd [18] declared a positive integer m to be *reducible* if there is an identity of the form

$$\tan^{-1} m = \sum f_r \tan^{-1} n_r, \tag{1.7}$$

for some integers f_r, n_r . For example, 13 is reducible since

$$\tan^{-1} 13 = 5 \tan^{-1} 1 - \tan^{-1} 2 - \tan^{-1} 4. \tag{1.8}$$

The reducibility of m was characterized in terms of arithmetical properties of m .

Theorem 1.3. *Let $m \in \mathbb{N}$. Then m is reducible if and only if all prime factors of $1 + m^2$ occur among the prime factors of $1 + k^2$ for $1 \leq k \leq m - 1$.*

Theorem 1.4. *Let $m \in \mathbb{N}$. Then m is reducible if and only if the largest prime factor of $1 + m^2$ is less than $2m$.*

The question of whether x_n in (1.5) is an integer m corresponds to asking for a reduction of m of a specific type: all f_r must be $+1$ and the integers n_r must be in the segment $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$.

Some partial results for the resolution of Conjecture 1.2 are given in Section 4. We prove that the sequence $\{x_n: n \geq 5\}$ does not contain two consecutive elements which are integers. In this section we also explore arithmetical conditions on the element x_{n-1} , written in irreducible form as u/v , in order to obtain $x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$. Proposition 4.3 shows that $x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$ is equivalent to $v - nu$ dividing $1 + n^2$. In particular, we show that if $|x_n| \leq n$ and $1 + n^2$ is prime, then $x_n \notin \mathbb{Z}$. Note that the existence of infinitely many primes of the form $1 + n^2$ is a well-known open problem in Number Theory. Denote by \mathbb{P} the set of prime numbers and introduce

$$\pi_2(n) := \#\{1 \leq k \leq n: 1 + k^2 \in \mathbb{P}\}. \tag{1.9}$$

It is conjectured that

$$\pi_2(n) \sim 2C_{\text{quad}} \frac{\sqrt{n}}{\ln n}, \tag{1.10}$$

where

$$C_{\text{quad}} = \frac{1}{2} \prod_{p \geq 2} \left(1 - \frac{(-1)^{(p-1)/2}}{p-1}\right). \tag{1.11}$$

The expression

$$C_{\text{quad}} = \frac{3\zeta(6)}{4G\zeta(3)} \prod_{p \equiv 1 \pmod 4} \left(1 + \frac{2}{p^3 - 1}\right) \left(1 - \frac{2}{p(p-1)^2}\right) \tag{1.12}$$

gives an expression for C_{quad} in terms of primes congruent to 1 modulo 4. This is a result of D. Shanks [17]. Here G is the Catalan constant

$$G = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^k}{(2k+1)^2}. \tag{1.13}$$

Theorem 7.10 shows that the condition $|x_n| \leq n$ is valid almost all the time. Thus, for almost all primes of the form $1 + n^2$, we conclude that $x_n \notin \mathbb{Z}$.

Section 3 describes a relation between the sequence $\{x_n: n \in \mathbb{N}\}$ and the alternating sums $S_{\pm}(n)$ (see definitions in Section 3) of Newton's elementary symmetric functions,

$$S_k(n) = \sum_{1 \leq i_1 < \dots < i_k \leq n} i_1 \cdots i_k, \quad 1 \leq k \leq n, \tag{1.14}$$

of the numbers $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$. Theorem 3.6 states that

$$x_n = \frac{S_-(n)}{S_+(n)}. \tag{1.15}$$

This section also contains explicit analytic expressions for the 2-adic valuations of $S_{\pm}(n)$. In particular it is shown that $v_2(S_{\pm}(n)) \geq \lfloor \frac{n+1}{4} \rfloor$.

The point in \mathbb{Z}^2 given by

$$\rho(n) := (S_+(n), S_-(n)), \tag{1.16}$$

has an angle equal to

$$\tan^{-1} x_n = \sum_{k=1}^n \tan^{-1} k. \tag{1.17}$$

The square of the modulus is given by

$$\omega_n := |\rho(n)|^2 = (1 + 1^2)(1 + 2^2)(1 + 3^2) \cdots (1 + n^2). \tag{1.18}$$

We also consider a diophantine equation related to ω_n . In the literature, the solution to

$$1^2 + 2^2 + \dots + n^2 = m^2 \tag{1.19}$$

is known as *Lucas's square pyramid problem*. The only solutions are $(n, m) \in \{(1, 1)(24, 70)\}$. See [1] and [4] for details. Write

$$R_n(t) = (1 + t^2)(1 + 4t^2)(1 + 9t^2) \cdots (1 + n^2t^2), \tag{1.20}$$

then Lucas' problem amounts to asking whether the coefficient of t^2 in $R_n(t)$ is itself a square.

It is natural that one should investigate the remaining coefficients of R_n , to check whether these are perfect squares. The problem discussed in the present article deals with $\omega_n = R_n(1)$ which is the total sum of the coefficients of $R_n(t)$. Based on extensive numerical evidence, we propose that

Conjecture 1.5.¹ For $n \geq 4$, the value ω_n is not a square.

Note. It is worth mentioning that the data shows that ω_n is far from being a square. Many of its prime factors appear with single powers.

¹ Note added in proof: This conjecture has been established by J. Cilleruelo, Squares in $(1^2 + 1) \cdots (n^2 + 1)$, J. Number Theory (2008), doi:10.1016/j.jnt.2007.11.001.

The two conjectures presented above are related. Theorem 5.5 shows that failure of Conjecture 1.5 implies Conjecture 1.2. In Section 5, we consider the product ω_n modulo certain primes. This is used to establish Conjecture 1.5 for n in certain arithmetical progressions, for example, for $n \equiv 1 \pmod 3$. We also describe a sieve that is used to verify this conjecture up to $n \leq 10^{3200}$, in an efficient way. The algorithm is based on the simple observation that, if there is a prime p for which $v_p(\omega_n)$ is an odd number, then ω_n is not a square. Section 5 presents a connection between Conjecture 1.5 and primes of the form $1 + x^2$. We show that the existence of an integer x in the range $[\sqrt{n}, n]$, such that $1 + x^2$ is a prime, implies Conjecture 1.5.

Section 6 explores the p -adic properties of ω_n . An explicit 2-adic valuation produces a proof of Conjecture 1.5 for $n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod 4$. This section also discusses the case p odd, with $p \equiv 1 \pmod 4$.

Note. We often employ the elementary fact that a prime divisor of ω_n must be of the form $p \equiv 1 \pmod 4$. This is equivalent to the statement that the congruence $1 + j^2 \equiv 0 \pmod p$ has no solutions for $p \equiv 3 \pmod 4$. This follows from: the only primes that are representable as sums of two squares are those $p \equiv 1 \pmod 4$. The reader will find a proof in [13].

Theorem 6.5 states that

$$v_p(\omega_n) \sim \frac{2n}{p-1}, \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \tag{1.21}$$

The proof of Theorem 6.5 makes use of the solutions to the congruence

$$1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{p^i}. \tag{1.22}$$

In the base case $i = 1$, the congruence $1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod p$ has two solutions $\alpha_p \leq \alpha_p^*$ in the interval $1 \leq x \leq p - 1$. The first root α_p satisfies

$$\sqrt{p-1} \leq \alpha_p \leq (p-1)/2. \tag{1.23}$$

These two roots produce solutions to the congruences modulo p^i . For example, for modulus p^2 , we have that $1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{p^2}$. Therefore, $x = \alpha + tp$ for some $t \in \{1, 2, \dots, p\}$ (or $x = \alpha^* + tp$). The bounds on α_p show that $1 + \alpha_p^2 = pb_1$, with $b_1 \not\equiv 0 \pmod p$. The congruence $1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{p^2}$ yields $2\alpha_p t \equiv -b_1 \pmod p$ and t is uniquely determined, say $t = t_1$. We let

$$\alpha_{p^2} := \alpha_p + t_1 p. \tag{1.24}$$

This argument produces a double sequence of numbers

$$\alpha_p, \alpha_{p^2}, \alpha_{p^3}, \dots \quad \text{and} \quad \alpha_p^*, \alpha_{p^2}^*, \alpha_{p^3}^*, \dots \tag{1.25}$$

such that

$$1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{p^i} \quad \text{if and only if} \quad x \equiv \alpha_{p^i} \text{ or } x \equiv \alpha_{p^i}^* \pmod{p^i}. \tag{1.26}$$

The construction shows that

$$\alpha_{p^i} \equiv \alpha_{p^{i-1}} \pmod{p^{i-1}}. \tag{1.27}$$

The question of whether x_n is an integer suggests the study of the sequence of fractional parts defined by

$$y_n := \{x_n\} = x_n - \lfloor x_n \rfloor.$$

Figure 1 shows the sequence $\{x_n\}$ for $1 \leq n \leq 5000$, and Fig. 2 shows the corresponding fractional parts. Observe the presence of *granular* regions combined with some *solid curve* regions. This combination persists as n increases.

The sequence $\{y_n\}$ has many interesting dynamical properties. For instance, we point out the *lack of intrusion* between the curves and the granular region observed in Fig. 3. These phenomena will be considered in future work.

The last section contains miscellaneous topics and future directions inspired by the results presented in this paper.

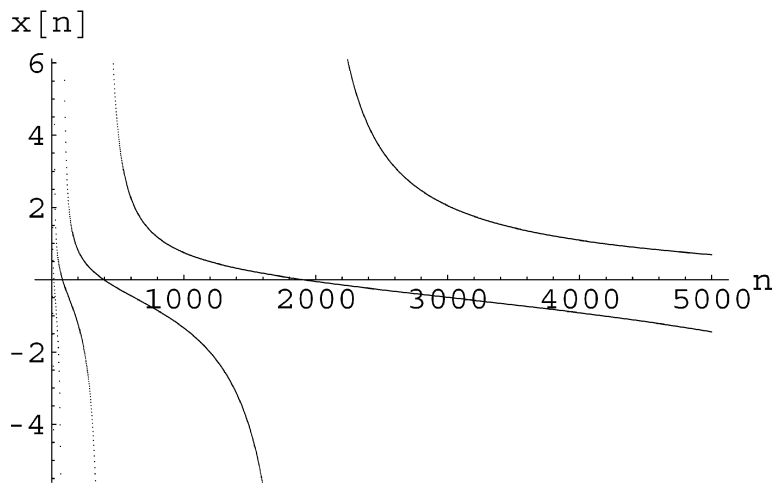


Fig. 1. The sequence x_n .

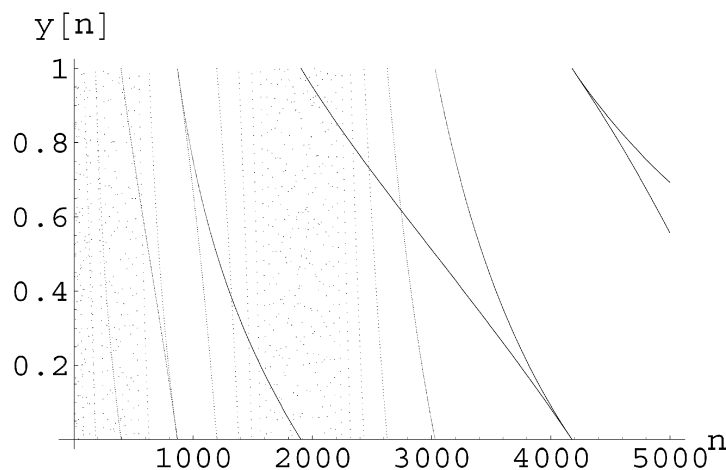


Fig. 2. The fractional part of x_n .

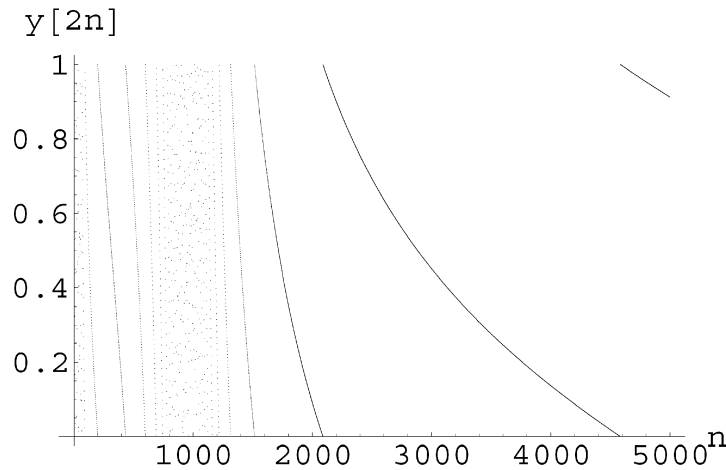


Fig. 3. The fractional part of the sequence x_{2n} .

2. The 2-adic valuations of x_n

Let $m \in \mathbb{Z}$ and p a prime number. This section begins the discussion of the properties of the p -adic valuation of x_n , defined in (1.1). The following explicit evaluation of $v_2(x_n)$ is used to establish that $x_n \neq 0$ for $n \geq 4$ by showing that $v_2(x_n)$ is well defined.

Theorem 2.1. Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $N = \lfloor \frac{n}{4} \rfloor$. The 2-adic valuation of x_n is given by

$$v_2(x_n) = \begin{cases} v_2(2N(N+1)) & \text{if } n \equiv 0, 3 \pmod{4}, \\ 0 & \text{if } n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{4}. \end{cases}$$

The demonstration of this theorem is divided into several steps. We begin with a crucial expression for x_{n+k} in terms of x_n .

Lemma 2.2. Let $n, k \in \mathbb{N}$. There exist polynomials P_k and Q_k for which

$$x_{n+k} = \frac{P_k(n)x_n + Q_k(n)}{P_k(n) - Q_k(n)x_n}. \tag{2.1}$$

The polynomials P_k, Q_k satisfy the recurrences

$$\begin{aligned} P_{k+1}(n) &= P_k(n) - (n+k+1)Q_k(n), \\ Q_{k+1}(n) &= Q_k(n) + (n+k+1)P_k(n), \end{aligned} \tag{2.2}$$

with initial conditions $P_1(n) = 1$ and $Q_1(n) = n + 1$.

Proof. An elementary inductive argument, using (1.5) in the form

$$x_{n+1} = \frac{x_n + n + 1}{1 - (n+1)x_n}, \tag{2.3}$$

gives the result. \square

We now establish Theorem 2.1 for the case $n \equiv 0 \pmod 4$.

Proposition 2.3. *Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then $v_2(x_{4n}) = v_2(2n(n + 1))$.*

Proof. The proof is divided into cases according to the value of $v_2(n)$. Write $n = 2^{v_2(n)}t$, with t odd.

Case 1: $v_2(n) = 1$. We write $t = 2m + 1$ and we need to prove

$$v_2(x_{16m+8}) = 2. \tag{2.4}$$

The proof is by induction starting at

$$v_2(x_8) = v_2\left(-\frac{36}{43}\right) = 2. \tag{2.5}$$

To continue the inductive procedure we need a relation between $x_{16(m+1)+8}$ and x_{16m+8} .

Claim: there are odd integers c_1, c_2 such that

$$x_{16(m+1)+8} = \frac{8c_1 + c_2x_{16m+8}}{c_2 - 8c_1x_{16m+8}}. \tag{2.6}$$

Lemma 2.2 gives

$$x_{16(m+1)+8} = \frac{P_{16}(16m + 8)x_{16m+8} + Q_{16}(16m + 8)}{P_{16}(16m + 8) - Q_{16}(16m + 8)x_{16m+8}}, \tag{2.7}$$

and the representation (2.6) comes from a direct symbolic calculation:

$$\begin{aligned} P_{16}(16m + 8) &= 16 \pmod{32}, \\ Q_{16}(16m + 8) &= 128 \pmod{256}. \end{aligned}$$

From (2.6) we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} v_2(x_{16(m+1)+8}) &= v_2\left(\frac{8c_1 + c_2x_{16m+8}}{c_2 - 8c_1x_{16m+8}}\right) \\ &= v_2\left(4 \cdot \frac{2c_1 + c_2\frac{1}{4}x_{16m+8}}{c_2 - 8c_1x_{16m+8}}\right) \end{aligned}$$

and, using the inductive hypothesis $v_2(\frac{1}{4}x_{16m+8}) = 0$, we conclude the proof of Case 1.

Case 2: $v_2(n) = 0$, or $v_2(n) > 1$. We aim to show that

$$v_2(x_{4n}) = v_2(2n(n + 1)), \tag{2.8}$$

where $n = 2^{v_2(n)}t$ with t odd.

We proceed by induction, for which we need the following claim.

Claim: there are odd integers α_1, α_2 such that

$$x_{4n+4} = \frac{\alpha_2 x_{4n} + 4(n+1)\alpha_1}{\alpha_2 - 4(n+1)\alpha_1 x_{4n}}. \tag{2.9}$$

This representation comes from Lemma 2.2 in the form

$$x_{4n+4} = \frac{P_4(4n)x_{4n} + Q_4(4n)}{P_4(4n) - Q_4(4n)x_{4n}}, \tag{2.10}$$

and the observation that $P_4(4n) \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$, and $Q_4(4n) \equiv 8 \pmod{16}$.

We now consider the 2-adic valuation of (2.9). First of all,

$$v_2(\alpha_2 - 4(n+1)\alpha_1 x_{4n}) = 0, \tag{2.11}$$

so that

$$v_2(x_{4n+4}) = v_2(4(n+1)\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 x_{4n}). \tag{2.12}$$

We now prove by induction that

$$v_2(x_{4n+4}) = v_2(2(n+1)(n+2)). \tag{2.13}$$

Start with

$$\begin{aligned} v_2\left(\frac{x_{4n+4}}{2(n+1)(n+2)}\right) &= v_2\left(\frac{2\alpha_1}{n+2} + \frac{\alpha_2 x_{4n}}{2(n+1)(n+2)}\right) \\ &= v_2\left(\alpha_1 + \frac{n}{n+2}(-\alpha_1 + \mu\alpha_2)\right), \end{aligned} \tag{2.14}$$

with

$$\mu = \frac{x_{4n}}{2n(n+1)}. \tag{2.15}$$

The inductive hypothesis states that $v_2(\mu) = 0$. Therefore, $v_2(\alpha_2\mu - \alpha_1) \geq 1$.

From $n = 2^{v_2(n)}t$, we see that if $v_2(n) = 0$ then n is odd and the term in (2.14) is zero. On the other hand, if $v_2 > 1$, then

$$v_2\left(\frac{n}{n+2}\right) = v_2\left(\frac{2^{v_2(n)-1}t}{2^{v_2(n)-1}t+1}\right) = v_2(n) - 1 > 0, \tag{2.16}$$

and the term in (2.14) vanishes again. For either case, the proof of Proposition 2.3 is complete. \square

Proposition 2.3 yields the result of Theorem 2.1 in the case $n \equiv 0 \pmod{4}$. The next step is to establish the result of this theorem for the case $n \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$.

Proposition 2.4. *Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then $v_2(x_{4n+3}) = v_2(2n(n + 1))$.*

Proof. We have the representation

$$x_{4n+3} = \frac{a_1 + a_2x_{4n}}{a_2 - a_1x_{4n}}, \tag{2.17}$$

with a_1 even and a_2 odd. Indeed, Lemma 2.2 yields

$$x_{4n+3} = \frac{P_3(4n)x_{4n} + Q_3(4n)}{P_3(4n) - Q_3(4n)x_{4n}}, \tag{2.18}$$

and an explicit evaluation of $P_3(4n)$ and $Q_3(4n)$ produces (2.17) with

$$a_1 = 16n(n + 1)(2n + 1) \quad \text{and} \quad a_2 = 24n^2 + 24n + 5. \tag{2.19}$$

From Proposition 2.3, we obtain that $v_2(x_{4n}) = v_2(2n(n + 1)) \geq 2$, so that $v_2(a_2 - a_1x_{4n}) = 0$. We conclude that $v_2(x_{4n+3}) = v_2(a_1 + a_2x_{4n})$. Now observe that

$$\begin{aligned} v_2\left(\frac{x_{4n+3}}{2n(n + 1)}\right) &= v_2\left(\frac{a_1}{2n(n + 1)} + a_2 \cdot \frac{x_{4n}}{2n(n + 1)}\right) \\ &= v_2\left(8(2n + 1) + a_2 \cdot \frac{x_{4n}}{2n(n + 1)}\right) = 0, \end{aligned}$$

because a_2 is an odd integer and $v_2(\frac{x_{4n}}{2n(n+1)}) = 0$. The proof of Proposition 2.4 is complete. \square

We have established Theorem 2.1 when $n \equiv 0, 3 \pmod 4$. The next proposition settles the remaining cases $n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod 4$.

Proposition 2.5. *Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and assume $n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod 4$. Then $v_2(x_n) = 0$.*

Proof. Let $m = n - 2$, so that $m \equiv 3, 0 \pmod 4$. Lemma 2.2 gives

$$\begin{aligned} x_{m+2} &= \frac{P_2(m + 1)x_m + Q_2(m + 1)}{P_2(m + 1) - Q_2(m + 1)x_m} \\ &= \frac{(m + 1)(m + 2)x_m - x_m - (2m + 3)}{(2m + 3)x_m + (m + 1)(m + 2) - 1}. \end{aligned} \tag{2.20}$$

From Propositions 2.3 and 2.4 we have that $v_2(x_m) > 0$. Then (2.20) shows that $v_2(x_n) = 0$, as claimed. \square

The proof of Theorem 2.1 is complete. In particular, the expression for $v_2(x_n)$ in that theorem shows that $v_2(x_n)$ is well defined. Hence we conclude the following main result.

Theorem 2.6. *Let $n \geq 4$. Then $x_n \neq 0$.*

Corollary 2.7. *For any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, the value $v_2(x_n)$ is well defined and the element x_n is finite. Moreover, $x_n \neq -(n + 1), 1/(n + 1)$.*

Section 7.4 contains information about the p -adic valuation of x_n .

3. A representation by symmetric functions

In this section we consider the elementary symmetric functions of the symbols

$$\mathbb{A}_n := \{\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_n\}, \tag{3.1}$$

defined by

$$S_k(\mathbb{A}_n) = \sum_{1 \leq i_1 < \dots < i_k \leq n} \lambda_{i_1} \cdots \lambda_{i_k}, \quad 1 \leq k \leq n. \tag{3.2}$$

As usual $S_0(\mathbb{A}_n) = 1$. The sequence $\{x_n\}$ is now expressed in terms of these symmetric functions for a specific choice of the symbols $\{\lambda_i\}$.

Definition 3.1. The *even* and *odd* components of the symmetric functions of \mathbb{A}_n are, respectively,

$$S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) := \sum_{k \geq 0} (-1)^k S_{2k}(\mathbb{A}_n), \quad \text{and} \quad S_-(\mathbb{A}_n) := \sum_{k \geq 0} (-1)^k S_{2k+1}(\mathbb{A}_n). \tag{3.3}$$

The next few properties are elementary.

Proposition 3.2. The generating function of the symmetric functions S_k is given by

$$G_n(z) = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + z\lambda_j) = \sum_{k=0}^n S_k(\mathbb{A}_n) z^k. \tag{3.4}$$

Moreover, the functions S_k satisfy the recurrence relation

$$S_{k+1}(\mathbb{A}_{n+1}) = S_{k+1}(\mathbb{A}_n) + \lambda_{n+1} S_k(\mathbb{A}_n). \tag{3.5}$$

The following result follows directly from (3.5).

Corollary 3.3. For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_{n+1} S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) &= S_-(\mathbb{A}_{n+1}) - S_-(\mathbb{A}_n), \\ -\lambda_{n+1} S_-(\mathbb{A}_n) &= S_+(\mathbb{A}_{n+1}) - S_+(\mathbb{A}_n), \\ \lambda_n S_+(\mathbb{A}_{n+1}) &= (\lambda_n + \lambda_{n+1}) S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) - \lambda_{n+1} (\lambda_n^2 + 1) S_+(\mathbb{A}_{n-1}), \\ \lambda_n S_-(\mathbb{A}_{n+1}) &= (\lambda_n + \lambda_{n+1}) S_-(\mathbb{A}_n) - \lambda_{n+1} (\lambda_n^2 + 1) S_-(\mathbb{A}_{n-1}). \end{aligned} \tag{3.6}$$

Corollary 3.4. Assume $\lambda_j \neq 0$ and define $\mathbb{A}_n^* = \{\lambda_1^{-1}, \lambda_2^{-1}, \dots, \lambda_n^{-1}\}$ and

$$\Lambda_n := \prod_{j=1}^n \lambda_j. \tag{3.7}$$

Then the parity-dependent identities

$$\begin{aligned} S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n}) &= (-1)^n \Lambda_n S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n}^*), & S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n}) &= (-1)^{n-1} \Lambda_n S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n}^*); \\ S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}) &= (-1)^n \Lambda_n S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}^*), & S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}) &= (-1)^n \Lambda_n S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}^*) \end{aligned} \quad (3.8)$$

hold. It follows that

$$\frac{S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n})}{S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n})} = -\frac{S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n}^*)}{S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n}^*)}, \quad \frac{S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1})}{S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1})} = \frac{S_+(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}^*)}{S_-(\mathbb{A}_{2n+1}^*)}.$$

The functions S_+ and S_- in (3.3) can be given a matrix formulation:

Lemma 3.5. *The functions S_+ and S_- satisfy*

$$\begin{pmatrix} S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) & -S_-(\mathbb{A}_n) \\ S_-(\mathbb{A}_n) & S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) \end{pmatrix} = \prod_{j=1}^n \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\lambda_j \\ \lambda_j & 1 \end{pmatrix}. \quad (3.9)$$

Proof. Consider the matrices $I + \lambda_j J$, where $J = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$. As $J^2 = -I$ and J commutes with itself and I , the product in (3.9) is $\prod_j (I + \lambda_j J)$. This results in a new matrix where the upper left and lower right entries come from terms with an even power of J and the other two entries from the terms with an odd power of J . These properties are in complete accord with the definitions of S_+ and S_- , where one represents the complex number $1 + i\lambda_j$ as $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\lambda_j \\ \lambda_j & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. \square

Choose the symbols $\lambda_k = k$ for $1 \leq k \leq n$, and for simplicity write $S_k(n)$ instead of $S_k(\mathbb{A}_n)$.

Theorem 3.6. *Assume $n \geq 0$. Then*

$$x_n = \frac{S_-(n)}{S_+(n)} \quad (3.10)$$

where

$$S_-(n) = \sum_{k=0}^{\lfloor (n-1)/2 \rfloor} (-1)^k S_{2k+1}(n) \quad \text{and} \quad S_+(n) = \sum_{k=0}^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} (-1)^k S_{2k}(n) \quad (3.11)$$

are the odd and even parts of $\{S_k(n)\}$, respectively.

Proof. The result is established by induction. Corollary 3.3, the recurrence (1.5), and the induction hypothesis yield

$$\begin{aligned} x_{n+1} &= \frac{x_n + (n+1)}{1 - (n+1)x_n} \\ &= \frac{S_-(n) + (n+1)S_+(n)}{S_+(n) - (n+1)S_-(n)}. \end{aligned}$$

This proves the assertion. \square

In this case Corollary 3.3 becomes:

Corollary 3.7. *Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then*

$$\begin{aligned} nS_+(n-1) &= S_-(n) - S_-(n-1), \\ -nS_-(n-1) &= S_+(n) - S_+(n-1). \end{aligned}$$

Moreover

$$nS_{\pm}(n+1) = (2n+1)S_{\pm}(n) - (n+1)(n^2+1)S_{\pm}(n-1). \tag{3.12}$$

The value of the 2-adic valuations of S_+ and S_- are described next.

Theorem 3.8. *The even partial sequences satisfy*

$$v_2(S_+(n)) = \left\lfloor \frac{n+1}{4} \right\rfloor, \tag{3.13}$$

and the odd components satisfy

$$v_2(S_-(n)) = \begin{cases} \lfloor \frac{n+1}{4} \rfloor & \text{if } n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{4}, \\ \lfloor \frac{n+1}{4} \rfloor + v_2(2\lfloor \frac{n}{4} \rfloor(\lfloor \frac{n}{4} + 1 \rfloor)) & \text{if } n \equiv 0, 3 \pmod{4}. \end{cases} \tag{3.14}$$

In particular, $v_2(S_+(n))$ and $v_2(S_-(n))$ are bounded from below by $\lfloor \frac{n+1}{4} \rfloor$.

Proof. The second identity in Corollary 3.3 gives

$$(n+1)S_+(n) = S_-(n+1) - S_-(n), \tag{3.15}$$

and (3.10) yields

$$(x_n + n + 1)S_+(n) = x_{n+1}S_+(n+1). \tag{3.16}$$

This identity is now used to show that

$$v_2(S_+(4m-1)) = v_2(S_+(4m)) = v_2(S_+(4m+1)) = v_2(S_+(4m+2)). \tag{3.17}$$

First let $n = 4m$ in (3.16) to produce

$$(x_{4m} + 4m + 1)S_+(4m) = x_{4m+1}S_+(4m+1). \tag{3.18}$$

Theorem 2.1 shows that $v_2(x_{4m}) > 0$ and $v_2(x_{4m+1}) = 0$, therefore

$$v_2(S_+(4m)) = v_2(S_+(4m+1)). \tag{3.19}$$

Then put $n = 4m + 1$ in (3.16) to obtain

$$(x_{4m+1} + 4m + 2)S_+(4m+1) = x_{4m+2}S_+(4m+2). \tag{3.20}$$

Theorem 2.1 shows that $v_2(x_{4m+1}) = v_2(x_{4m+2}) = 0$, so that

$$v_2(S_+(4m + 1)) = v_2(S_+(4m + 2)). \tag{3.21}$$

The final step in the proof of (3.17) comes from the second formula in Corollary 3.3 and (3.10) which yields

$$S_+(n + 1) = (1 - (n + 1)x_n)S_+(n). \tag{3.22}$$

Now replace $n = 4m - 1$ to obtain

$$S_+(4m) = (1 - 4m \cdot x_{4m-1})S_+(4m - 1). \tag{3.23}$$

This implies $v_2(S_+(4m)) = v_2(S_+(4m - 1))$.

The evaluation

$$v_2(S_+(4m)) = m \tag{3.24}$$

is now established by induction. The periodicity of $v_2(S_+)$ then produces (3.13). The value $S_+(1) = -10$ gives $v_2(S_+(1)) = 1$ and (3.17) shows that (3.24) is correct for $m = 1$. The inductive step is achieved by putting $n = 4m + 2$ in (3.22) to obtain

$$S_+(4m + 3) = (1 - (4m + 3)x_{4m+2})S_+(4m + 2). \tag{3.25}$$

Assume for the moment that

$$v_2(1 - (4m + 3)x_{4m+2}) = 1, \tag{3.26}$$

and use (3.25) to obtain

$$v_2(S_+(4m + 3)) = 1 + v_2(S_+(4m + 2)). \tag{3.27}$$

The induction hypothesis and (3.17) complete the proof of (3.24).

To prove (3.26) use (2.20) with $n = 4m$ to obtain

$$x_{4m+2} = \frac{(4m + 1)(4m + 2)x_{4m} - x_{4m} - (8m + 3)}{(8m + 3)x_{4m} + (4m + 1)(4m + 2) - 1}. \tag{3.28}$$

This can be expressed as

$$[(8m + 3)x_{4m} + t_m][1 - (4m + 3)x_{4m+2}] = 2[u_m - v_m x_{4m}], \tag{3.29}$$

with $u_m = 24m^2 + 24m + 5$, $v_m = 16m(1 + m)(2m + 1)$ and $t_m = 2(4m + 1)(2m + 1) - 1$. Thus u_m and t_m are odd and v_m is even. Theorem 2.1 shows that $v_2(x_{4m}) > 0$, so the 2-adic valuation of the right-hand side of (3.29) is 1. On the left-hand side of (3.29), the 2-adic valuation of the first term is zero, so (3.26) must hold. The proof of (3.13) is complete. The expression (3.14) follows directly from (3.10). \square

4. Conditions for integrality of the sequence $\{x_n\}$

The next goal of this paper is to examine the possibility that x_n is an integer for $n \geq 5$. Recall that the first few terms of this sequence are $\{0, 1, -3, 0, 4, -9/19\}$.

Theorem 4.1. *Let $n > 4$. Then, x_{n-1} and x_n cannot both be integers.*

Proof. Assume

$$x_n = \frac{n + x_{n-1}}{1 - nx_{n-1}}, \tag{4.1}$$

and that $x_{n-1}, x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$. Then $|x_n| \geq 1$ because it has been established that $x_n \neq 0$ for $n \neq 3$. Therefore

$$|n + x_{n-1}| \geq |1 - nx_{n-1}|. \tag{4.2}$$

The discussion of this inequality is divided into four cases according to the sign of the expressions in (4.2).

Case 1: $n + x_{n-1} \geq 0$ and $1 - nx_{n-1} \geq 0$. This is equivalent to $-n \leq x_{n-1} \leq \frac{1}{n}$. The fact that $x_{n-1} \neq 0$ produces $-n \leq x_{n-1} \leq -1$. In this case (4.2) becomes $(1 + n)x_{n-1} \geq 1 - n$. Therefore, $x_{n-1} \geq -\frac{n-1}{n+1} \geq -1$. Contradiction.

Case 2: $n + x_{n-1} \geq 0$ and $1 - nx_{n-1} \leq 0$. This implies $x_{n-1} \geq 0$. Then (4.2) becomes $n + x_{n-1} \geq nx_{n-1} - 1$, that yields $x_{n-1} \leq \frac{n+1}{n-1}$. For $n > 3$, this implies $x_{n-1} < 2$, that is, $x_{n-1} = 1$. Thus,

$$x_n = \frac{n + 1}{1 - n}, \tag{4.3}$$

and it follows that $x_n < 0$. Moreover, for $n > 3$,

$$x_n = -\frac{n + 1}{n - 1} > -2. \tag{4.4}$$

This shows that $x_n = -1$, contradicting (4.3).

Case 3: $n + x_{n-1} \leq 0$ and $1 - nx_{n-1} \geq 0$. This is equivalent to $x_{n-1} \leq -n$. In this case (4.2) becomes

$$-n - x_{n-1} \geq 1 - nx_{n-1}, \tag{4.5}$$

that is equivalent to

$$x_{n-1} \geq \frac{n + 1}{n - 1}. \tag{4.6}$$

This contradicts the fact that $x_{n-1} \leq -n$.

Case 4: $n + x_{n-1} \leq 0$ and $1 - nx_{n-1} \leq 0$. This is equivalent to $x_{n-1} \leq -n$ and $x_{n-1} \geq 1/n$. This situation does not occur. \square

The more general question of whether it is possible to have integers a, b and c such that

$$\frac{a + b}{1 - ab} = c, \tag{4.7}$$

is considered next. All integer solutions to (4.7) are determined. The authors wish to thank B. Scher for suggesting this result.

Theorem 4.2. *The values $(1, 2, -3)$ and $(0, b, b)$ with $b \in \mathbb{Z}$ are solutions to (4.7). All other integer solutions are obtained from these by using the fact that, if (a, b, c) solves (4.7), then so do $(-a, -b, -c)$, $(a, -c, -b)$, $(c, a, -b)$ and $(b, -c, -a)$.*

Proof. There are no solutions with all of $|a|, |b|, |c| \geq 2$. Indeed, it follows that

$$|a| + |b| \geq |a + b| \geq 2|1 - ab| \geq 2(|ab| - 1), \tag{4.8}$$

and this implies that $2|a||b| - 2 \leq |a| + |b|$. Thus $|a| + 2 \geq (2|a| - 1)|b| \geq 4|a| - 2$, that is, $3|a| \leq 4$. This is a contradiction.

The solutions $(0, b, b)$, $(a, 0, a)$, $(a, -a, 0)$ correspond to the trivial case in which one of the variables vanishes. The case $a = 1$ yields

$$c = \frac{1 + b}{1 - b} = -1 - \frac{2}{b - 1}, \tag{4.9}$$

and it follows that $b - 1 = \pm 1, \pm 2$. This produces the solutions

$$(1, 0, 1), (1, 2, -3), (1, -1, 0), (1, 3, -2). \tag{4.10}$$

A similar analysis can be made with $a = -1$ and also $|b| = 1$ and $|c| = 1$. The statement about the new solutions admits a direct verification. \square

Assumption. Let $n \geq 5$ be an index for which $x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$. Write

$$x_{n-1} = \frac{u}{v} \quad \text{with } \gcd(u, v) = 1. \tag{4.11}$$

We now explore some arithmetical properties of $x_{n-1} \in \mathbb{Q}$.

Proposition 4.3. *Let $n \geq 5$. Then $x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$ if and only if $v - nu$ divides $1 + n^2$.*

Proof. The result follows from $\gcd(v - nu, u) = 1$ and $x_n = n + u(1 + n^2)/(v - nu)$. \square

Lemma 4.4. *Assume $x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$ and define $c := \gcd(x_n - n, 1 + nx_n)$. Then c divides $1 + n^2$.*

Proof. The recurrence for x_n yields

$$\frac{u}{v} = \frac{x_n - n}{1 + nx_n}. \tag{4.12}$$

Therefore $x_n - n = cu$ and $1 + nx_n = cv$. From Proposition 4.3 we have $(x_n - n)(v - nu)/u = 1 + n^2$. Thus $1 + n^2 = c(v - nu)$. \square

Theorem 4.5. *Let $n \geq 5$. Assume $|x_n| \leq n$ and that $1 + n^2$ is prime. Then $x_n \notin \mathbb{Z}$.*

Proof. Suppose $x_n = m \in \mathbb{Z}$. Then (3.10) gives $mS_+(n) = S_-(n)$. Corollary 3.7 yields

$$(m - n)S_+(n - 1) = (1 + mn)S_-(n - 1). \tag{4.13}$$

The identity $1 + n^2 = (1 + mn) - n(m - n)$, shows that $c = \gcd(m - n, 1 + mn)$ divides $1 + n^2$. Similarly c divides $1 + m^2$. It follows that $c = 1$ or $c = 1 + n^2$. In the latter case, $m = n$, since $|m| \leq n$. This yields $S_-(n - 1) = 0$. Therefore $x_{n-1} = 0$ and this is a contradiction. Therefore $c = 1$. The relation (4.13) now gives

$$S_+(n - 1) = 1 + mn, \quad \text{and} \quad S_-(n - 1) = m - n. \tag{4.14}$$

Theorem 3.8 shows that 2 divides $S_+(n - 1)$ and $S_-(n - 1)$, contradicting $c = 1$. \square

Note. The hypothesis $|x_n| \leq n$ in the above theorem holds for almost every $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Theorem 7.10 actually gives a sharper bound $|x_n| \leq \lfloor \frac{n}{2} \rfloor + 1$. But Theorem 7.10 *does not* hold for every x_n .

Corollary 4.6. *Let $m \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Assume $\gcd(m - n, 1 + mn) = 1$. Then $x_n \neq m$.*

5. A related diophantine equation

The sequence

$$\omega_n := (1 + 1^2)(1 + 2^2)(1 + 3^2) \cdots (1 + n^2), \tag{5.1}$$

that appeared as the modulus of the point $\rho(n) = (S_+(n), S_-(n))$, is studied in this section. Numerical calculations suggest that ω_n is never a square. This is the content of Conjecture 1.5:

The diophantine equation $\omega_n = m^2$ has no solutions for $n \neq 3$.

The arithmetical properties of ω_n investigated in this section deal with ω_n modulo a prime p . Every odd prime divisor of a number of the form $1 + x^2$ must be congruent to 1 mod 4. See Note on page 1810. Therefore the same holds for ω_n . We consider here $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, because we intend to analyze the quadratic residues of ω_n modulo these primes.

Observe first that the simpler question, whether

$$(n + 1)! = (1 + 1)(1 + 2)(1 + 3)(1 + 4) \cdots (1 + n) \tag{5.2}$$

is a square, can be answered in the negative. This is the natural analog of Conjecture 1.5 with an immediate generalization to odd exponents. See Proposition 5.1 and the remark following it.

Note. The equation

$$n! + k = m^2 \tag{5.3}$$

was considered by H. Brocard [5,6] and then, unaware of its history, it was discussed by S. Ramanujan [16, p. 327]. B. Berndt and W. Galway [2] reported on the equation

$$\left(\frac{n! + 1}{p}\right) = 0 \text{ or } 1, \quad \text{where } p \text{ is a prime.} \tag{5.4}$$

The only solutions of (5.3) or (5.4) are $n = 4, 5, 7$. Here $\left(\frac{a}{p}\right)$ is the Legendre symbol, defined in (5.15).

Proposition 5.1. *The diophantine equation*

$$\Omega_\mu(n) := (1 + 1^\mu)(1 + 2^\mu) \cdots (1 + n^\mu) = m^2 \tag{5.5}$$

has no solutions for $n > 12$ and μ an odd prime.

Proof. Start with the factorization

$$\Omega_\mu(n) = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j) \times \frac{1 + j^\mu}{1 + j}. \tag{5.6}$$

For $n > 12$, Erdős’s proof of Bertrand’s Postulate [10] gives the existence of two primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $q \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ in the range $\lfloor n/2 \rfloor < p, q < 2\lfloor n/2 \rfloor$. This yields $p, q < n$ and $2p, 2q \geq n + 1$, so p, q divide $(n + 1)!$ but p^2, q^2 do not, i.e., $v_p((n + 1)!) = 1$ and $v_q((n + 1)!) = 1$. However one of these primes cannot divide the term involving the cyclotomic polynomial $(1 + j^\mu)/(1 + j)$. To see this, observe that the division algorithm gives

$$\frac{1 + j^\mu}{1 + j} = (1 + j)Q(j) + \mu. \tag{5.7}$$

Suppose $\mu \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, then the quantity in (5.7) has residue $\mu \not\equiv 0 \pmod{q}$. Otherwise $\mu \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, in which case exchange p and q in the previous argument. We conclude that $\Omega_\mu(n)$ cannot be a square. \square

Note. Although the proof above was given for μ prime, the result should hold for any odd integer μ . The interested reader can supply the proof.

Note. In sharp contrast to Proposition 5.1, it seems that the problem is more resilient when μ is even. The results described below offer some evidence towards the validity of Conjecture 1.5, when $\mu = 2$.

The symmetric functions S_+ and S_- defined in (3.11) are analyzed next. The first result follows directly from the definitions of G_n in (3.4).

Lemma 5.2. *Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $i = \sqrt{-1}$. Then*

$$G_n(i) = S_+(\mathbb{A}_n) + iS_-(\mathbb{A}_n). \tag{5.8}$$

The modulus of (5.8) gives the Pythagorean relation

$$\prod_{j=1}^n (1 + \lambda_j^2) = S_+^2(\mathbb{A}_n) + S_-^2(\mathbb{A}_n). \tag{5.9}$$

This, in fact, can be considered as a generalization to Euler’s product for sums of two squares:

$$\prod_{j=1}^2 (1 + \lambda_j^2) = (1 + \lambda_1 \lambda_2)^2 + (\lambda_1 - \lambda_2)^2.$$

Writing $\lambda_1 = a/b$ and $\lambda_2 = c/d$ gives the classical form

$$(a^2 + b^2)(c^2 + d^2) = (ac + bd)^2 + (ad - bc)^2. \tag{5.10}$$

This identity proves that products of numbers representable as sums of two squares are also representable as sums of squares.

The special case $\lambda_j = j$ produces

$$G_n(i) = S_+(n) + i S_-(n), \tag{5.11}$$

and the modulus of this relation yields

$$\omega_n = S_+(n)^2 + S_-(n)^2. \tag{5.12}$$

The following statement is an elementary consequence of the representation (3.10).

Proposition 5.3. *Assume that for $n \geq 5$, the term x_n is an integer m . Then*

$$\omega_n = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j^2) = (1 + m^2) S_+^2(n). \tag{5.13}$$

Proof. Immediate from (3.10) and (5.12). \square

Corollary 5.4. *Suppose $x_n = m \in \mathbb{Z}$. If $n \equiv 0, 3 \pmod{4}$, then m is even; if $n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{4}$, then m is odd.*

Proposition 5.3 implies that, if $x_n = m$ for some $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, then

$$Y_{n,m} := (1 + m^2) \omega_n, \tag{5.14}$$

is a perfect square. This cannot be excluded on general grounds: there are examples for which this happens, for instance,

$$(1 + 21^2) \omega_5 = (1 + 21^2)(1 + 1^2)(1 + 2^2)(1 + 3^2)(1 + 4^2)(1 + 5^2) = 4420^2.$$

The authors wish to thank James McLaughlin for this example.

The next result gives a sufficient condition for $x_n \notin \mathbb{Z}$.

Theorem 5.5. Assume that for $n \geq 5$, the term ω_n is a square. Then x_n is not an integer.

Proof. Proposition 5.3 implies that $Y_{n,m} = (1 + m^2)\omega_n$ is a square. If ω_n is also a square, then so is $1 + m^2$. This is impossible. Notice that although $m = 0$ would give $1 + m^2$ as a square, we know that $x_n \neq 0$ so $m = 0$ is not admissible. \square

Note. Interestingly enough, we have conjectured that the hypothesis in Theorem 5.5 never holds. See Conjecture 1.2. The remainder of the section explores the impossibility that ω_n is a square.

Modular properties. The term ω_n is now considered modulo a fixed prime p . This is used to establish that ω_n is not a square for a specific class of indices n . To illustrate the idea, take for example the case $p = 3$. In this case,

$$\omega_n \equiv \begin{cases} 1 & n \equiv 0, 2 \pmod{3}, \\ 2 & n \equiv 1 \pmod{3}. \end{cases}$$

This can be seen by writing $n = 3t + j$, with $1 \leq j \leq 3$, and observing that

$$\omega_n = \prod_{k=1}^t (1 + k^2)(1 + (k + 1)^2)(1 + (k + 2)^2) \times \prod_{k=3t+1}^{3t+j} (1 + k^2).$$

The first factor is congruent to 1 modulo 3 and the result follows by considering the three cases for j . Therefore,

Corollary 5.6. Assume $n \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. Then ω_n is not a square.

Corollary 5.10 gives a full generalization of Corollary 5.6. In preparation, the sequence ω_n is analyzed modulo p .

Theorem 5.7. Let $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ be a prime. Then the sequence

$$\omega_{p,n} := \omega_n \pmod{p},$$

is cyclic of period at most $\frac{p(p-1)}{2}$.

Proof. Since $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, the equation $1 + j^2 \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$ has no solution. On the other hand, for $1 \leq j \leq p$, the terms $1 + j^2 \pmod{p}$ are symmetric with respect to p , that is, $1 + j^2 \equiv a \pmod{p}$ if and only if $1 + (p - j)^2 \equiv a \pmod{p}$. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \prod_{j=1}^{p(p-1)/2} (1 + j^2) &\equiv \left(\prod_{j=1}^p (1 + j^2) \right)^{(p-1)/2} \pmod{p} \equiv \left(\prod_{j=1}^{p-1} (1 + j^2) \right)^{(p-1)/2} \pmod{p} \\ &\equiv \left(\prod_{j=1}^{(p-1)/2} (1 + j^2)^2 \right)^{(p-1)/2} \pmod{p} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\equiv \prod_{j=1}^{(p-1)/2} (1 + j^2)^{p-1} \pmod{p} \\ &\equiv 1, \end{aligned}$$

using Fermat's little theorem. Hence, the periodicity of ω_n modulo p is established. The period is (at most) $\binom{p}{2}$. \square

Definition 5.8. The Legendre symbol is defined by

$$\left(\frac{a}{p}\right) := \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } a \text{ is a quadratic residue mod } p, \\ -1 & \text{if } a \text{ is not a quadratic residue mod } p, \\ 0 & \text{if } p \text{ divides } a. \end{cases} \quad (5.15)$$

For a prime $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, define

$$\omega_{n,p}^* := \left(\frac{\omega_n}{p}\right) = \prod_{j=1}^n \left(\frac{1 + j^2}{p}\right). \quad (5.16)$$

Observe that $1 + j^2 \not\equiv 0 \pmod{p}$, so $\omega_{n,p}^* \neq 0$. This was explained in the Note after Conjecture 1.5.

Theorem 5.9. Let p be a prime congruent to 3 modulo 4. The function $\omega_{p,n}^*$ is cyclic of period p . Moreover, in the list

$$L_p := \left\{ \left(\frac{1 + j^2}{p}\right) : 1 \leq j \leq p \right\}, \quad (5.17)$$

the number of -1 's exceeds the number of $+1$'s by 1.

Proof. The periodicity follows from that of the Legendre symbol. To prove the second assertion, we count the possible number of $+1$'s. The result of the theorem follows now from

$$\sum_{j=1}^p \left(\frac{1 + j^2}{p}\right) = -1. \quad (5.18)$$

In order to establish this we employ the Gaussian sums

$$G_p(a) := \sum_{n=1}^p e^{2\pi i a n^2 / p}. \quad (5.19)$$

The reader will find in [15, Section 3.10, p. 151] (on the proof of quadratic reciprocity) detailed proofs of the relation

$$G_p(a) = \left(\frac{a}{p}\right) G_p(1), \quad (5.20)$$

as well as the evaluation

$$G_p(1) = \begin{cases} \sqrt{p} & \text{for } p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}, \\ i\sqrt{p} & \text{for } p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}. \end{cases} \quad (5.21)$$

Now use (5.20) to produce

$$\begin{aligned} G_p(1) \sum_{j=0}^p \left(\frac{1+j^2}{p} \right) &= \sum_{j=0}^p \sum_{n=1}^p e^{2\pi i(1+j^2)n^2/p} \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^p e^{2\pi in^2/p} \left(1 + \sum_{j=1}^p e^{2\pi i(jn)^2/p} \right) \\ &= G_p(1) + p + \sum_{n=1}^{p-1} e^{2\pi in^2/p} \sum_{j=1}^p e^{2\pi i(jn)^2/p} \\ &= G_p(1) + p + \sum_{n=1}^{p-1} e^{2\pi in^2/p} \sum_{k=1}^p e^{2\pi ik^2/p} \\ &= G_p(1) + p + (G_p(1) - 1)G_p(1) = p + G_p^2(1). \end{aligned}$$

The value $G_p(1) = i\sqrt{p}$ stated in (5.21) produces

$$\sum_{j=0}^p \left(\frac{1+j^2}{p} \right) = 0. \quad (5.22)$$

The evaluation (5.18) now follows from $\left(\frac{1}{p}\right) = 1$. \square

Note. Fix a prime $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ and introduce the notation

$$\xi_j^p := \left(\frac{1+j^2}{p} \right). \quad (5.23)$$

Consider the sequence of partial products

$$\pi_k^p := \prod_{j=0}^k \xi_j^p, \quad k = 0, 1, 2, \dots \quad (5.24)$$

The periodicity of the Legendre symbol shows that the sequence $\{\pi_k^p : k \geq 0\}$ is also of period p . Moreover,

$$\pi_0^p = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad \pi_{p-1}^p = 1, \quad (5.25)$$

given that there are an even number $(= \frac{p+1}{2})$ of -1 's in the list L_p .

The next result can be employed to show that ω_n is not a square along certain arithmetic progressions.

Corollary 5.10. *Let $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$ and assume $\pi_k^p = -1$. Then ω_n is not a square for $n \equiv k \pmod{p}$.*

Definition 5.11. A valid configuration is a sequence of $+1$'s and -1 's of length p , with $\frac{p+1}{2}$ repetitions of -1 's and $\frac{p-1}{2}$ of $+1$'s. It is also required that the sequence starts and end with $+1$.

Theorem 5.12. *The minimum number of -1 's in the sequence*

$$\Pi_p := \{\pi_k^p : 1 \leq k \leq p\} \tag{5.26}$$

is $\frac{p+1}{4}$. The maximum number is $\frac{3p-1}{4}$.

Proof. The minimum number is achieved when all the $\frac{p+1}{2}$ occurrences of -1 are at the right and this number is $\frac{p+1}{4}$. To prove this take a valid configuration and assume that it has a block of interior $+1$:

$$+1, \xi_2^p, \xi_3^p, \dots, \xi_s^p, +1, +1, \xi_{s+3}^p, \xi_{s+4}^p, \dots, \xi_{p-1}^p \tag{5.27}$$

(where we have taken two internal $+1$'s to illustrate the argument). Moving the (two) internal $+1$'s to the left does not decrease the number of -1 's in the product list Π_p . Indeed, if the partial product of the first s terms is $+1$, then the internal $+1$ simply repeat the $+1$. On the other hand, if the partial product is -1 , then the internal $+1$ have the effect of repeating this -1 , hence the total number of partial products equal to -1 increases.

The same argument shows that the maximum number of -1 's in Π_p is $\frac{3p-1}{4}$. This occurs when all the -1 's are aligned to the left of the $+1$'s. \square

Corollary 5.13. *For each prime $p \equiv 3 \pmod{4}$, there exist at least $\frac{p+1}{4}$ numbers $k_i \in \{0, 1, 2, \dots, p-1\}$ such that ω_n is not a square for $n \equiv k_i \pmod{p}$. This yields a multi-infinite family of indices n for which ω_n is not square.*

Note. The total number of possible configurations of $+1$'s and -1 's is $\binom{p-1}{(p-1)/2}$. It would be of interest to explore how the $+1$'s and -1 's are distributed in Π_p as p varies. Figure 4 shows the proportion of -1 's in Π_p ; it is around $1/2$ for p large.

6. The p -adic valuation of ω_n

In this section we consider the p -adic valuation of ω_n . Our goal is to describe some relations between n and p that guarantees $v_p(\omega_n)$ is an odd integer.

Every odd prime divisor of ω_n is congruent to 1 modulo 4. See Note on page 1810. We consider first the case $p = 2$ and then the odd primes. The case $p = 2$ admits a complete analytic solution. To evaluate $v_2(\omega_n)$, define

$$\mu_2(j) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } j \equiv 0 \pmod{2}, \\ 1 & \text{if } j \equiv 1 \pmod{2}. \end{cases}$$

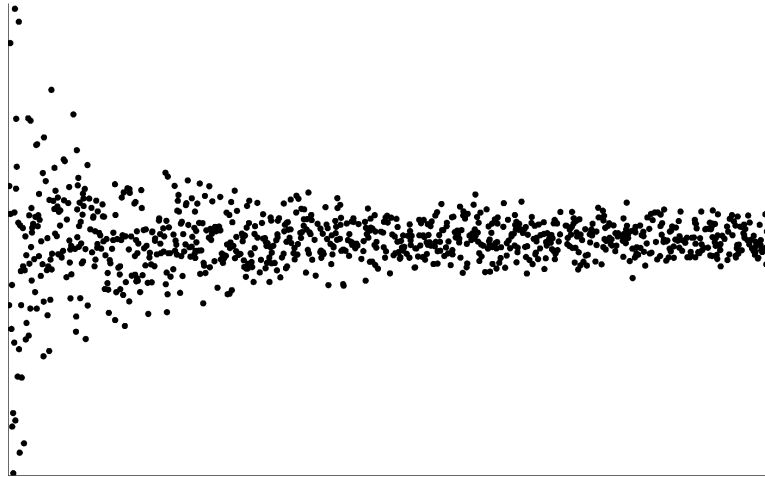


Fig. 4. Proportion of minus ones for $6 \leq p \leq 3000$. The vertical range is $0.3 \leq y \leq 0.7$.

Proposition 6.1. *The 2-adic valuation of ω_n is given by*

$$v_2(\omega_n) = \left\lfloor \frac{n+1}{2} \right\rfloor. \tag{6.1}$$

Proof. From $v_2(1 + j^2) = \mu_2(j)$, it follows that

$$v_2(\omega_n) = \sum_{j=1}^n \mu_2(j) = \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor \frac{n+1}{2} \rfloor} 1 = \left\lfloor \frac{n+1}{2} \right\rfloor. \quad \square$$

Corollary 6.2. *Suppose $n \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{4}$, then ω_n is not a square.*

Proof. For these values of n , the valuation $v_p(\omega_n)$ is odd. \square

Combining the previous corollary with Corollary 5.6 yields a result modulo 12.

Corollary 6.3. *Suppose $n \not\equiv 0, 3, 8, 11 \pmod{12}$, then ω_n is not a square.*

The next result employs the solutions to $x^2 + 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$. This congruence has two solutions in the range $2 \leq x \leq p - 1$. We denote by α_p the root that satisfies $2 \leq \alpha_p \leq \frac{p-1}{2}$. The other root is $\alpha_p^* = p - \alpha_p$. A simple argument shows the lower bound $\alpha_p \geq \sqrt{p-1}$. Moreover, this lower bound is achieved precisely when p is a prime of the form $1 + n^2$.

Theorem 6.4. *Let p be a prime, $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$. Assume $n \in \mathbb{N}$ lies in the range $\alpha_p \leq n < p - \alpha_p$. Then ω_n is not a square.*

Proof. In the product

$$\omega_n = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j^2), \tag{6.2}$$

only the term corresponding to $j = \alpha_p$ is divisible by p . Moreover, since $1 + n^2 < p^2$, we have $v_p(1 + \alpha_p^2) = 1$. \square

The previous theorem guarantees that ω_n is not a square for n in an interval of length $p - 2\alpha_p$. Therefore it is efficient for those primes p for which α_p is small. The distribution of α_p is a delicate question. We have computed the root α_p for primes of the form $p = 4m + 1$ in the range $1 \leq m \leq 20000$. The ratio of α_p to its upper bound $2m + 1$ attained its maximum value $38228/38367 \sim 0.996377$ at $m = 19183$ for the prime $p = 76733$. The minimum value $280/39201 \sim 0.00714267$ is achieved at $m = 19600$ for the prime $p = 78401$. This is the largest prime of the form $1 + n^2$ in the range considered.

A result of W. Duke et al. [8], shows that the normalized values

$$\alpha_p^{\text{nor}} := \frac{\alpha_p - \sqrt{p-1}}{(p-1)/2 - \sqrt{p-1}}, \tag{6.3}$$

are uniformly distributed on $[0, x] \times [0, 1]$ for large x .

Note. Corollary 5.13 and Theorem 6.4 are a two-pronged approach in compiling evidence in favor of Conjecture 1.5. The former gives a successive list of infinite indices n , while the latter supplies endless interval ranges for n so that ω_n is not a square.

To each prime $p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, associate the interval of \mathbb{N} defined by

$$I_p := [\alpha_p, p - 1 - \alpha_p]. \tag{6.4}$$

Thus, if $n \in I_p$, then ω_n is not a square. The authors wish to thank N. Calkin for the sieve method used in the computations described in the next paragraph.

Conjecture 1.5 would be true if

$$\bigcup_{p \equiv 1 \pmod{4}} I_p = \mathbb{N} - \{3\}. \tag{6.5}$$

For notational simplicity, write $a_p = \alpha_p$ and $b_p = p - \alpha_p - 1$, so that $I_p = [a_p, b_p]$. In order to verify Conjecture 1.5 up to a certain bound n^* , it suffices to exhibit a sequence of primes p_1, p_2, \dots, p_k so that $4 \in I_{p_1}$, each interval I_{p_j} intersects the next one, and that $b_{p_k} > n^*$. Proceed as follows: construct each p_{i+1} so that $a_{p_{i+1}}$ is just below $b_{p_i} - 1$: the way to do this is to consider, for $j = 1, 2, \dots$, the quantity $m^2 + 1$ where $m = p_i - a_{p_i} - j$: if there is a prime $q > 2m$, that divides $m^2 + 1$, then m is the smaller root of -1 , namely a_q . Hence we may take $p_{i+1} = q$ and $a_{p_{i+1}} = m$.

In practice, we look for the largest prime q appearing as a factor of $m^2 + 1$ for the first 6 values of m less than $b_{p_i} - 1$.

Start with $p_1 = 17$ and check that $a_{p_1} = 4$ and $b_{p_1} = 12$. Therefore the first interval is $I_{p_1} = [4, 12]$ and contains 4 as required. Now consider numbers of the form $m := b_{p_1} - j = 12 - j$. The case $j = 2$ gives

$$(m - 2)^2 + 1 = 101. \tag{6.6}$$

Therefore, $p_2 = 101$ and the second interval is $I_{p_2} = [10, 90]$. The process now continues with $m := 90 - j$ and, with $j = 6$, we find

$$(90 - 6)^2 + 1 = 7057. \tag{6.7}$$

We choose $p_3 = 7057$ and

$$I_{p_3} = [84, 6972]. \tag{6.8}$$

The list below provides the first six intervals. The chosen primes are $p_1 = 17$, $p_2 = 101$, $p_3 = 7057$, $p_4 = 48\,580\,901$, $p_5 = 1\,179\,713\,094\,952\,813$.

$$\begin{aligned} I_{p_1} &= [4, 12], \\ I_{p_2} &= [10, 90], \\ I_{p_3} &= [84, 6972], \\ I_{p_4} &= [6970, 48\,573\,930], \\ I_{p_5} &= [48\,573\,925, 1\,179\,713\,046\,378\,883]. \end{aligned}$$

Continuing this process, the next 8 more steps produce the following:

Computational fact. Assume ω_n is a square. Then either $n = 3$ or $n > 10^{3200}$.

Proposition 6.1 provides an exact formula for the 2-adic valuation of ω_n . The extension of this result for odd primes seems unlikely. We now establish an asymptotic result. Observe that

$$\omega_n = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j^2) = n!^2 \times \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + 1/j^2). \tag{6.9}$$

As $n \rightarrow \infty$ we have

$$\prod_{j=1}^n (1 + 1/j^2) \rightarrow \prod_{j=1}^{\infty} (1 + 1/j^2) = \frac{\sinh \pi}{\pi}.$$

This follows from the infinite product expansion

$$\frac{\sin \pi z}{\pi z} = \prod_{j=1}^{\infty} (1 - z^2/j^2) \quad \text{with } z = i. \tag{6.10}$$

We conclude that $\omega_n = O(n!^2)$. There is a famous result of Legendre [12,14] for the p -adic valuation of $n!$. It states that

$$v_p(n!) = \frac{n - s_p(n)}{p - 1} \tag{6.11}$$

where $s_p(n)$ is the sum of the base p digits of n . In particular, $s_p(n) = O(\log_p n)$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$. Therefore

$$v_p(n!) \sim \frac{2n}{p-1}. \tag{6.12}$$

The same is true for $v_p(\omega_n)$.

Theorem 6.5. *Let p be an odd prime congruent to 1 mod 4. Then*

$$v_p(\omega_n) \sim \frac{2n}{p-1}.$$

Proof. Consider first the contribution of α_p . Count the number of terms N_1 in the product for ω_n that are divisible by p . Recall that $1 + j^2 \equiv 0 \pmod p$ if and only if $j \equiv \alpha$ or $\alpha^* = p - \alpha \pmod p$. Therefore, each interval of length p contains two such indices. The contribution of α_p is

$$N_1 = \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \right\rfloor + \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \alpha_p + \lfloor \frac{n}{p} \rfloor p \leq n, \\ 0 & \text{if } \alpha_p + \lfloor \frac{n}{p} \rfloor p > n. \end{cases} \tag{6.13}$$

Therefore $N_1 \geq \lfloor \frac{n}{p} \rfloor$. Similarly, by considering the elements α_{p^i} described (1.25), one sees that the number of terms in $[1, n]$ divisible by p^i is at least $\lfloor \frac{n}{p^i} \rfloor$. Therefore, the contribution of α_p to $v_p(\omega_n)$, denoted by $v_p(\omega_n, \alpha_p)$, is at least

$$v_p(\omega_n, \alpha_p) \geq \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p^k} \right\rfloor = \sum_{k=1}^{z_{p,n}} \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p^k} \right\rfloor,$$

where $z_{p,n} = \lfloor \log_p n \rfloor$. Now

$$\begin{aligned} v_p(\omega_n, \alpha_p) &\geq \sum_{k=1}^{z_{p,n}} \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p^k} \right\rfloor \geq \sum_{k=1}^{z_{p,n}} \left(\frac{n}{p^k} - 1 \right) \\ &= n \left(\frac{1 - p^{-1-z_{p,n}}}{1 - 1/p} - 1 \right) - z_{p,n} \geq n \left(\frac{1 - 1/n}{1 - 1/p} - 1 \right) - z_{p,n} \\ &= \frac{n-p}{p-1} - z_{p,n}. \end{aligned}$$

Thus

$$\frac{p-1}{n} v_p(\omega_n, \alpha_p) \geq 1 - \frac{p}{n} - \frac{p-1}{n} z_{p,n}, \tag{6.14}$$

and it follows that

$$\liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{p-1}{n} v_p(\omega_n, \alpha_p) \geq 1. \tag{6.15}$$

The same holds for the contribution from α_p^* . We conclude that

$$\liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{p-1}{2n} v_p(\omega_n) \geq 1. \tag{6.16}$$

To obtain an upper bound, observe again that $v_p(1 + j^2) = 0$ unless $j \equiv \alpha_p$ or α_p^* modulo p . Define

$$\tau_n := \prod_{k=1}^n (1 + (pk + \alpha_p)^2) \times (1 + (pk + \alpha_p^*)^2). \tag{6.17}$$

The bounds on α_p show that $1 + \alpha_p^2 = pb_1$ with $b_1 \not\equiv 0 \pmod p$. Write

$$1 + (pk + \alpha_p)^2 = pf(k), \tag{6.18}$$

with

$$f(k) = b_1 + 2\alpha_p k + pk^2, \tag{6.19}$$

and conclude that

$$v_p(\tau_n) = 2(n+1) + \sum_{k=0}^n v_p(f(k)) + \sum_{k=0}^n v_p(f^*(k)), \tag{6.20}$$

where $f^*(k)$ is formed from α_p^* as f was from α_p .

Define

$$r(n) := \text{Max}\{j: p^j \text{ divides } f(k) \text{ for some } k \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}\}, \tag{6.21}$$

and let N_i be the number of terms in the sum (6.20) such that $f(k)$ is divisible by p^i . Then

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{k=0}^n v_p(f(k)) &= N_1 + N_2 + \dots + N_{r(n)} \\ &\leq r(n) + \sum_{i=1}^{\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{n}{p^i} \right\rfloor \\ &\leq r(n) + \frac{n}{p-1}. \end{aligned}$$

Taking into account the contribution of α_p^* we obtain

$$v_p(\tau(n)) \leq 2(n+1) + 2r(n) + \frac{2n}{p-1}. \tag{6.22}$$

To obtain the estimate for $v_p(\omega_n)$, observe that

$$v_p(\omega_{pn}) = v_p(\tau_{n-1}). \tag{6.23}$$

Now use $n \leq Np$ with $N := \lfloor \frac{n}{p} \rfloor + 1$ and since $|f(k)| \leq Ck^3$ shows that $p^{r(n)} \leq Cn^3$, then

$$\begin{aligned} v_p(\omega_n) &\leq v_p(\omega_{Np}) = v_p(\tau_{N-1}) \\ &\leq 2\left(\left\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \right\rfloor + 1\right) + 2r\left(\left\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \right\rfloor\right) + \frac{2\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \rfloor}{p-1} \\ &\leq \frac{2n}{p-1} + 2 + 2r\left(\left\lfloor \frac{n}{p} \right\rfloor\right). \end{aligned}$$

We conclude that

$$\limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{p-1}{2n} v_p(\omega_n) \leq 1. \quad \square \tag{6.24}$$

Remark 1. The error term

$$\text{error}_p(n) := v_p(\omega_n) - \frac{2n}{p-1},$$

in Theorem 6.5 is shown in Fig. 5 for $p = 29$ and $1 \leq n \leq 34\,000$. Figure 6 shows the difference between $v_p(\omega_n)$ and $v_p(n!^2)$ for the same values of n . These two functions have the same asymptotic behavior and $v_p(n!^2)$ acts as a stabilizing factor by absorbing the fluctuations. The patterns appearing in this error terms have certain structure that deserves to be elucidated.

Remark 2. The polynomial f , appearing in (6.19), satisfies $f(k) \equiv b_1 + 2\alpha_p k \pmod p$. Therefore there is a unique solution to the congruence $f(k) \equiv 0 \pmod p$. Moreover, $f'(k) \equiv 2\alpha_p \not\equiv 0 \pmod p$. Hensel's lemma [11] guarantees the existence of $\bar{\beta} \in \mathbb{Z}_p$ such that $f(\bar{\beta}) = 0$ in \mathbb{Q}_p . The number $\bar{\beta}$ is written as

$$\bar{\beta} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 p + \beta_2 p^2 + \dots \tag{6.25}$$

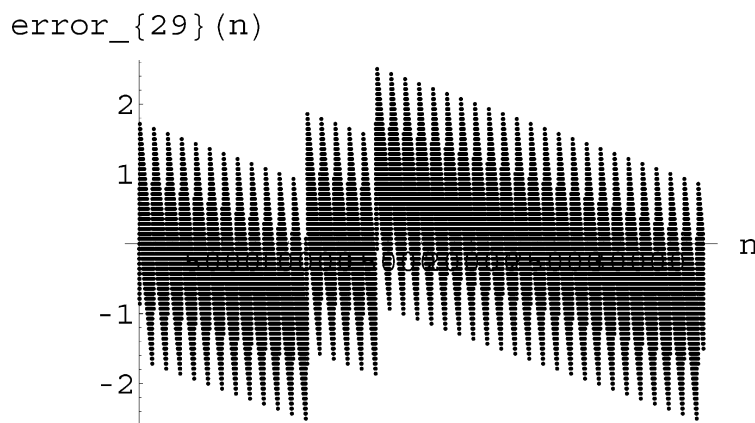


Fig. 5. Graph of $\text{error}_{29}(n)$ for $n \leq 34\,000$.

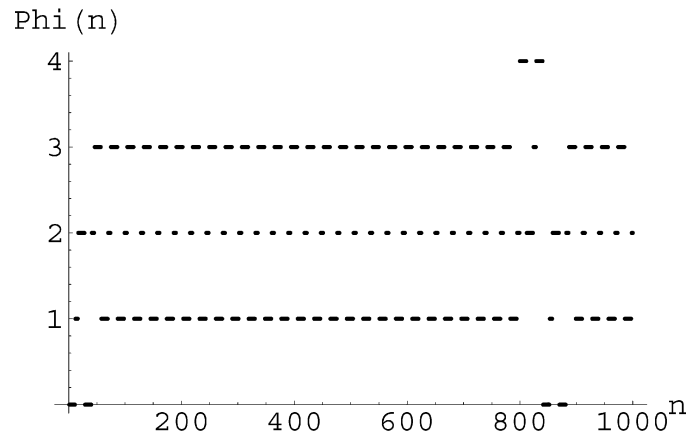


Fig. 6. Graph of $\Phi(n) := v_{29}(\omega_n) - v_{29}(n!^2)$ for $n \leq 1000$.

Moreover,

$$f(k) \equiv 0 \pmod{p^i} \quad \text{if and only if} \quad k \equiv \sum_{m=0}^{i-1} \beta_m p^m \pmod{p^i}. \quad (6.26)$$

Introduce the notation

$$\gamma(i, p) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 p + \cdots + \beta_{i-1} p^{i-1}, \quad (6.27)$$

and conclude that

$$\sum_{k=0}^n v_p(f(k)) = \sum_{i=1}^{r(n)} \sum_{k \equiv \gamma(i, p) \pmod{p}}^n 1.$$

The fact is that

$$N_i = \sum_{k \equiv \gamma(i, p) \pmod{p}}^n 1. \quad (6.28)$$

This point of view yields a more general result. Details will be presented elsewhere.

Theorem 6.6. *Let P be a polynomial with integer coefficients and without integer roots. Define*

$$z_p := \left| \{b \in \{1, 2, \dots, p\} : P(b) \equiv 0 \pmod{p}\} \right|. \quad (6.29)$$

Assume that all the z_p roots satisfy the hypothesis of Hensel's lemma. Then the recurrence $t_n := P(n)t_{n-1}$, with $t_0 = 1$ satisfies

$$v_p(t_n) \sim \frac{z_p n}{p-1} \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \quad (6.30)$$

The next result establishes a connection between ω_n and primes of the form $1 + m^2$. The authors wish to thank C. Pomerance for providing this result.

Theorem 6.7. *Suppose that for $n \in \mathbb{N}$ there exists an integer x_0 such that $\lfloor \sqrt{n} \rfloor + 2 \leq x_0 \leq n$ and $p = 1 + x_0^2$ is a prime. Then ω_n is not a square.*

Proof. We show that the prime p appears with exponent 1 in the product ω_n . The congruence $1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod p$ has two solutions $\alpha_p, p - \alpha_p$. The bounds on x_0 imply that $x_0 = \alpha_p$. It follows that $\lfloor \sqrt{n} \rfloor + 2 \leq \alpha_p \leq n$. Then the other root $p - \alpha_p$ is bigger than n because $\alpha_p^2 - \alpha_p + 1 - n > 0$. To check this inequality observe that the largest root of $x^2 - x + 1 + n = 0$ is $(1 + \sqrt{4n - 3})/2$ and

$$\alpha_p > \sqrt{n} + 1 > \frac{1}{2}(1 + \sqrt{4n - 3}).$$

To conclude the proof, observe that any other factor in ω_n that produces a multiple of p must be of the form $\alpha_p + mp$. But

$$\alpha_p + p = p - \alpha_p + 2\alpha_p = p + \alpha_p > n,$$

so they are outside the range $4 \leq j \leq n$. \square

The previous theorem can be improved by relaxing the condition that $1 + x^2$ is a prime.

Proposition 6.8. *Suppose that for $n \in \mathbb{N}$ there exists a prime p , a real number $c_n \in (0, 1]$ and positive integers x, y , with y odd, such that*

$$(1 + c_n^{-1})x \leq p, \quad nc_n < x \leq n, \quad \text{and} \quad v_p(1 + x^2) = y. \tag{6.31}$$

Then ω_n is not a square.

Proof. The condition $x \leq n$ shows that p^y divides ω_n . The hypothesis imply that x is one of the solutions to $1 + x^2 \equiv 0 \pmod p$. The other solution is $p - x \geq c_n^{-1}x > n$, so this term does not contribute to the product ω_n . It follows that $v_p(\omega_n) = y$. The fact that y is odd, shows that ω_n is not a square. \square

7. Miscellaneous

In this section we present several problems inspired by the results presented in this paper.

7.1. Connections with triangular numbers

Splitting the product

$$\omega_n = \prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j^2) \tag{7.1}$$

according to the parity of the index j produces

$$\prod_{j=1}^n (1 + j^2) = 2^{\lfloor (n-1)/2 \rfloor - 1} \prod_{k=1}^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} (1 + 4k^2) \times \prod_{k=1}^{\lfloor (n-1)/2 \rfloor} (1 + 4\Delta(k)), \tag{7.2}$$

where

$$\Delta(k) = \frac{k(k+1)}{2} \tag{7.3}$$

is the k th triangular number.

Conjecture 7.1. *The even and odd parts of ω_n are defined by*

$$t_n := \prod_{k=1}^n (1 + 2k(k-1)), \quad \text{and} \quad s_n := \prod_{k=1}^n (1 + 4k^2). \tag{7.4}$$

These products involve the triangular and square numbers respectively. Neither of them is a perfect square.

We now present a problem describing a connection between triangular numbers and primes of the form $1 + x^2$.

Conjecture 7.2. *Assume $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $n \neq 27, 35$. Then there exists an index x , such that $\Delta_n \leq x < \Delta_{n+1}$ and $1 + x^2$ is prime.*

Note. The authors wish to thank Dante Manna, who verified this conjecture up to $n = 10^6$.

The next statement is the result of our study of the set of *square-triangular* numbers:

$$U := \{1 + 4\Delta_k : \Delta_k \text{ is a square}\}. \tag{7.5}$$

Proposition 7.3. *Let $x = \Delta_k$ be a square triangular number, i.e., $s := 1 + 4x \in U$. Then*

- (a) $(s - 1)(2s - 1)$ is a perfect square.
- (b) s is not a prime, unless $s = 5$.

Proof. Part (a) is elementary: $(s - 1)(2s - 1) = 4j^2(2k + 1)^2$, where $x = \Delta_k = j^2$. To prove (b), assume s is prime and observe from (a) that $s(2s - 3) = (j - 1)(j + 1)$. If s divides $j - 1$, we have $s(2s - 3) = sb(sb + 2)$, for some $b \in \mathbb{N}$. This is valid only if $s = 5$. On the other hand, if s divides $j + 1$, we have $2s - 3 = c(sc - 2)$. An elementary argument shows that this is impossible. \square

Note. Part (b) of Proposition 7.3 informs us that identical entries in the two products from (7.2) cannot produce the same primes.

7.2. Connections with Stirling numbers

The *Stirling numbers of the first kind* are given by

$$\prod_{k=1}^n (1 + kx) = \sum_{k=1}^{n+1} (-x)^{n+1-k} s(n + 1, k). \tag{7.6}$$

It follows that

$$S_+(n) + iS_-(n) = \sum_{k=1}^{n+1} i^{k-1} s(n+1, k). \tag{7.7}$$

Introduce the notation

$$C_j(n) := \sum_{k \geq 0} |s(n+1, 4k+j)| \tag{7.8}$$

for $0 \leq j \leq 3$. The number $C_j(n)$ counts the total number of permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, n+1\}$, which contain exactly $4k+j$ cycles, $k \geq 0$.

The statements below provide a combinatorial interpretation of Conjecture 1.2 as well as consequences of our established results.

Proposition 7.4. *The symmetric functions $S_{\pm}(n)$ are given by*

$$\begin{aligned} (-1)^n S_+(2n) &= C_1(2n) - C_3(2n), \\ (-1)^n S_-(2n) &= C_0(2n) - C_2(2n), \\ (-1)^{n+1} S_+(2n+1) &= C_0(2n+1) - C_2(2n+1), \\ (-1)^n S_-(2n+1) &= C_1(2n+1) - C_3(2n+1). \end{aligned}$$

Proposition 7.5. *The problem of whether x_n or $1/x_n$ is an integer is equivalent to finding $n \in \mathbb{N}$ such that either $C_0 - C_2$ divides $C_1 - C_3$, or vice versa.*

For example, it is clear that $C_0 + C_2 = C_1 + C_3 = n!/2$. Theorem 2.6 and its Corollary 2.7 show the following result.

Corollary 7.6. *$C_0 \neq C_2$ and $C_1 \neq C_3$ for $n \geq 5$. Also $C_0 - C_2 \neq n(C_1 - C_3)$ and $C_1 - C_3 \neq n(C_2 - C_0)$.*

7.3. The bound $|x_n| \leq n$

In this section we prove that the even and odd subsequence of x_n , namely $\{x_{2n}\}$ and $\{x_{2n+1}\}$ satisfy the bounds $|x_{2n}| \leq 2n$ and similarly $|x_{2n+1}| \leq 2n+1$ for almost all $n \in \mathbb{N}$. The exceptions are described below. We give the details for x_{2n} .

The parity dependent identities (3.8) show that

$$x_{2n} = \tan\left(-\sum_{k=1}^{2n} \tan^{-1} \frac{1}{k}\right). \tag{7.9}$$

The sequence x_{2n} begins in a decreasing fashion:

$$\left\{ 4, \frac{105}{73} \sim 1.4383, \frac{36}{43} \sim 0.837209, \frac{2387}{4511} \sim 0.529151, \frac{104472}{322921} \sim 0.323522, \dots \right\}.$$

This continues until the angle

$$-\sum_{k=1}^{2n} \tan^{-1} \frac{1}{k} > \frac{\pi}{2}, \tag{7.10}$$

so that the sequence jumps to the next branch of the tangent function. For each $j \in \mathbb{N}$ define the *transition points*

$$\kappa_j^+ := \text{Inf} \left\{ N \in \mathbb{N} : -\sum_{k=1}^{2N} \tan^{-1} \frac{1}{k} > (2j - 1) \frac{\pi}{2} \right\}. \tag{7.11}$$

The divergence of the series $\sum \tan^{-1} 1/k$ guarantees the existence of the sequence

$$\kappa := \{\kappa_1^+, \kappa_2^+, \kappa_3^+, \dots\}. \tag{7.12}$$

Conjecture 7.7. *There exists a constant κ_∞ such that the sequence κ_j^+ grows roughly as κ_∞^{j-1} . Numerical calculations show that $\kappa_\infty \sim 23.1$.*

Define the interval

$$I_j := \{m \in \mathbb{N} : \kappa_j^+ \leq m < \kappa_{j+1}^+\}. \tag{7.13}$$

The construction of the transition points immediately gives the next result:

Lemma 7.8. *Fix $j \in \mathbb{N}$. Then the sequence $\{x_{2n} : n \in I_j\}$ is decreasing.*

Corollary 7.9. *Let $n, m \in I_j$ and $n \neq m$. Then $x_n \neq x_m$.*

We now establish the promised bound.

Theorem 7.10. *Fix $j \in \mathbb{N}$. Then, for every n in the range $\kappa_j^+ + 1 \leq n \leq \kappa_{j+1}^+ - 2$, we have $|x_{2n}| \leq n + 1$.*

Proof. The sequence $\{x_{2n} : n \in \mathbb{N}\}$ satisfies the recurrence

$$x_{2n+2} = \frac{a \cdot x_{2n} - b}{b \cdot x_{2n} + a}, \tag{7.14}$$

where $a = 2(2n + 1)(n + 1) - 1$ and $b = 4n + 3$. This follows by iteration of (1.5). The proof of the bound is divided in cases according to the sign of x_{2n} .

Case 1. If $x_{2n+2} > 0$, then $x_{2n} > x_{2n+2} > 0$ by Lemma 7.8. The result now follows from

$$x_{2n+2} = \frac{a - b/x_{2n}}{b + a/x_{2n}} < \frac{a}{b} \leq n + 1, \tag{7.15}$$

and the base case $x_{2\kappa_j^+} > 0$.

Case 2. If $x_{2n-2} < 0$, then $x_{2n} < 0$. We now take $x_{2\kappa_{j+1}^+-2} < 0$ as the base case and work backwards. Define $y_{2n} := -x_{2n}$. Then (7.15) gives

$$y_{2n-2} = |x_{2n-2}| = \frac{c \cdot y_{2n} - d}{d \cdot y_{2n} + c}, \tag{7.16}$$

with $c := 2n(2n - 1) - 1$ and $d := 4n - 1$. The same argument given in Case 1 now yields $|x_{2n-2}| \leq n$.

In both cases we get the bound $|x_{2n}| \leq n + 1$. \square

Corollary 7.11. Assume $n \notin \kappa$. Then $|x_{2n}| \leq n + 1$. A similar conclusion can be drawn for the odd terms.

7.4. The p -adic valuation of x_n

It might be possible to extend the results on $v_2(x_n)$ to odd prime valuations. Some information about the case $p = 3$ is given next. Extensive symbolic calculations suggest that

$$v_3(x_n) = 0, \tag{7.17}$$

precisely when $n \geq 5$ and $n \equiv 1 \pmod 3$. Similar conjectures can be made for the set

$$\tau_{3,1} := \{n \in \mathbb{N} : v_3(x_n) = 1\} = \{6, 11, 15, 20, 24, \dots\}. \tag{7.18}$$

We have observed that the difference set

$$\tau_{3,1}^+ := \{\tau_{3,1}(n + 1) - \tau_{3,1}(n) : n \geq 5\}, \tag{7.19}$$

is the periodic sequence

$$\tau_{3,1}^+ = \{\mathbf{5}, \mathbf{4}\} = \{5, 4, 5, 4, \dots\}. \tag{7.20}$$

Similarly

$$\begin{aligned} \tau_{3,2}^+ &= \{\mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{2}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{11}\}, \\ \tau_{3,3}^+ &= \{\mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{20}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{47}\}, \\ \tau_{3,4}^+ &= \{\mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{74}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{1}, \mathbf{3}, \mathbf{155}\}, \end{aligned}$$

where we have only indicated the period.

There is a marked difference in the behavior according to whether $p \equiv 1 \pmod 4$ or $3 \pmod 4$. Figure 7 shows $v_3(x_n)$ and Fig. 8 shows $v_5(x_n)$.

An argument similar to the proof of Theorem 2.1 yields the next result. The statement was found by examining the data given in the list $\tau_{3,s}^+$ described above.

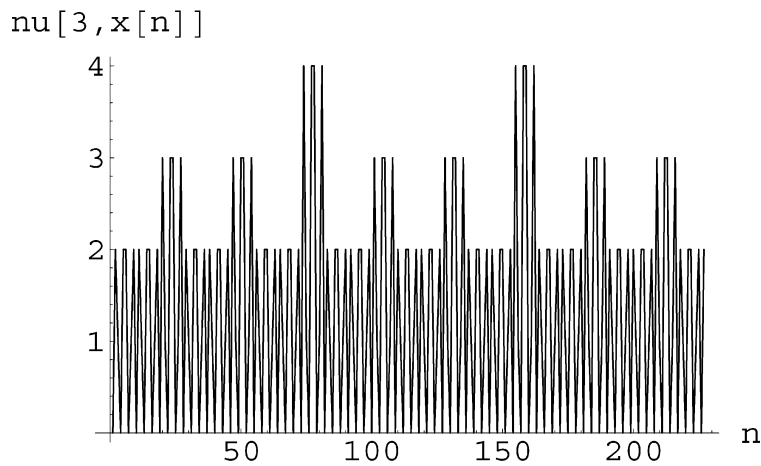


Fig. 7. The 3-adic valuation of x_n .

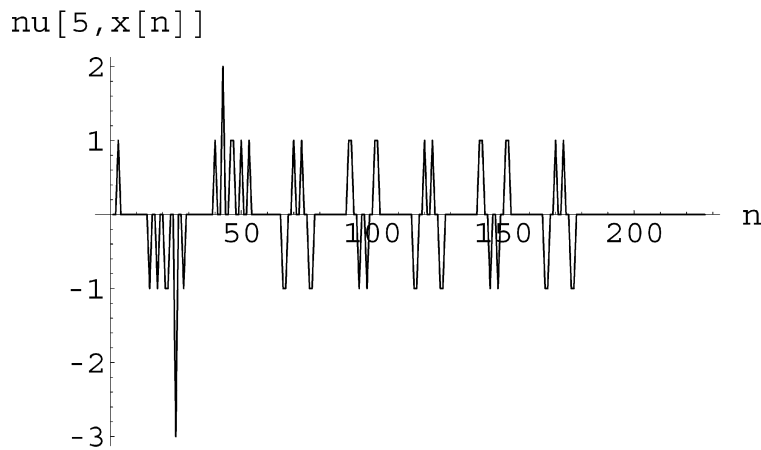


Fig. 8. The 5-adic valuation of x_n .

Theorem 7.12. *The 3-adic valuation of x_n is given by*

$$v_3(x_n) = v_3(n(n+1)) + \delta_{9\mathbb{Z}+5,n} \cdot v_3\left(\left\lfloor \frac{n+4}{3} \right\rfloor\right) + \delta_{9\mathbb{Z}+3,n} \cdot v_3\left(3 \left\lfloor \frac{n+3}{9} \right\rfloor\right).$$

Here $\delta_{A,n}$ is the Kronecker delta: 1 if $n \in A$ and 0 otherwise.

Once again, the next result can be established as in the case $p = 2$.

Proposition 7.13. *The even partial sums satisfy $v_3(S_+(n)) = 0$ and the odd ones $v_3(S_-(n)) = v_3(x_n)$.*

7.5. Geometric properties of the sequence x_n

The representation

$$x_n = \frac{S_-(n)}{S_+(n)}, \tag{7.21}$$

established in Theorem 3.6 has a geometric interpretation. We consider the map

$$\rho(n) := (S_+(n), S_-(n)). \tag{7.22}$$

The point $\rho(n)$ has modulus ω_n and the sequence

$$\frac{\omega_n}{n!^2} = \prod_{j=1}^n \left(1 + \frac{1}{j^2}\right) \tag{7.23}$$

converges from below to its limit $\frac{\sinh \pi}{\pi}$.

Define

$$a_+(n) := \frac{S_+(n)}{n!}, \quad a_-(n) := \frac{S_-(n)}{n!}. \tag{7.24}$$

Naturally, $x_n = a_-(n)/a_+(n)$. We consider the generating functions

$$A_+(x) := \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_+(n)x^n, \quad A_-(x) := \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_-(n)x^n. \tag{7.25}$$

Lemma 7.14. *The sequences $a_{\pm}(n)$ satisfy the discrete dynamical system*

$$\begin{aligned} (n+1)a_-(n+1) - a_-(n) &= (n+1)a_+(n), \\ (n+1)a_+(n+1) - a_+(n) &= -(n+1)a_-(n), \end{aligned} \tag{7.26}$$

with initial conditions $a_+(1) = 1, a_+(2) = -1, a_-(1) = 1, a_-(2) = 3$. Therefore, the generating functions are given by

$$\begin{aligned} A_+(x) &= \frac{e^{\tan^{-1} x}}{1+x^2} (x \cos(\log(\sqrt{1+x^2})) + \sin(\log \sqrt{1+x^2})), \\ A_-(x) &= \frac{e^{\tan^{-1} x}}{1+x^2} (x \cos(\log(\sqrt{1+x^2})) - x \sin(\log \sqrt{1+x^2})). \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the pair $(A_+(x), A_-(x))$ forms a spiral in the complex plane, running inward towards the origin.

Proof. The recurrences (7.26) show that $A_+(x)$ and $A_-(x)$ both solve the second order differential equation

$$(1+x)(1+x^2)D^2y + (3x^2+2x-3)Dy + 2(x+2)y = 0. \tag{7.27}$$

Standard techniques produce the analytic solutions given above. \square

7.6. A connection with Euler’s constant

The claim in this section corresponds to an analogue of Proposition 5.1. More precisely, the proof of the above-mentioned proposition exploits the existence of a prime between an integer and its double (this is Bertrand’s postulate). In the same spirit, our claim highlights a prime p between n and $1 + n^2$, for which $v_p(\omega_n) = 1$, that is, p divides ω_n but p^2 does not. The conclusions described in this section are by-in-large empirical and the arguments are heuristic.

Section 7.5 shows that the expressions

$$\omega_n = (1 + 1^2)(1 + 2^2)(1 + 3^2) \cdots (1 + n^2), \tag{7.28}$$

and $n!^2$ are of comparable size. Moreover, Theorem 6.5 establishes that the p -adic valuations of these two terms have the same asymptotic behavior. Naturally, every prime $p < n$ divides $n!$, but only primes $p \equiv 1 \pmod 4$ divide ω_n . Therefore, ω_n is missing (essentially) half the primes of $n!^2$.

Denote by $\mathbb{P} := \{p_1 < p_2 < p_3 \cdots\}$ be the complete set of primes, and $\mathbb{P}^{(1)} := \{q_1 < q_2 < q_3 < \cdots\}$ be those primes $q_i \equiv 1 \pmod 4$. The classical prime number theorem shows that $p_n \sim n \log n$, and P. Dusart [9] proved that

$$n \log n + n \log \log n - n < p_n < n \log n + n \log \log n, \quad n \geq 2. \tag{7.29}$$

The proof is based on the knowledge of the first 1.5 billion zeros of the Riemann zeta function $\zeta(s)$, that lie on the critical line $\text{Re } s = \frac{1}{2}$. Assuming that the primes in $\mathbb{P}^{(1)}$ are nearly equidistributed over \mathbb{P} , we conclude that

$$2n \log 2n + 2n \log \log 2n - 2n < q_n < 2n \log 2n + 2n \log \log 2n, \tag{7.30}$$

for infinitely many values n .

The objective is now to produce a sequence of indices $y(n)$ so that q_n divides $\omega_{y(n)}$, but q_n^2 does not. In order to accomplish this, observe first that, if q is a prime such that $m < q < 1 + m^2$, then $v_q(\omega_m) \leq 2$. In fact, $v_q(\omega_m) = 2$ if and only if both $\alpha_q, \alpha_q^* \leq m$.

The inequalities (7.30) suggest that we choose m around $2n \log 2n$. In order to fine-tune the constant in $m = C_3 n \log n$, we make use of the inequalities

$$\sqrt{C_1 m!} < \sqrt{\omega_m} < \sqrt{C_2 m!}, \tag{7.31}$$

with $C_1 \geq \frac{5}{2}$ and $C_2 \leq \frac{\sinh \pi}{\pi} \sim 3.676$. The identity

$$\frac{\sinh \pi}{\pi} = \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \prod_{j=1}^k \left(1 + \frac{1}{j^2}\right) \tag{7.32}$$

and the observation

$$\prod_{j=1}^k \left(1 + \frac{1}{j^2}\right) \sim 1 + H_k^{(2)}, \tag{7.33}$$

where $H_k^{(2)}$ is the second harmonic number, lead to

$$\sqrt{H_k^{(2)}} \sim H_k^{(1)} \sim \log k + \gamma, \tag{7.34}$$

where γ is Euler's constant defined by

$$\gamma := \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{k} - \log n. \tag{7.35}$$

The logarithmic part has been absorbed, so we consider $m = y(n) \sim \gamma n \log n$. Numerical experiments suggested the extra factor $\sqrt{5}$ in the next statement.

Heuristic result. Define $y(n) := \lfloor \sqrt{5} \gamma n \log n \rfloor$. Then, for almost all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, we have

$$v_{q_n}(\omega_{y(n)}) = 1. \tag{7.36}$$

Finally, consider the intervals $J_k := [y(k), y(k + 1))$, with $y(k)$ as above. This yields a partition of \mathbb{N} in the form

$$\mathbb{N} = \bigcup_{k \geq 2} J_k. \tag{7.37}$$

Given $n \in \mathbb{N}$, there is a unique k such that $n \in J_k$. Define the map

$$\Phi(n) = \begin{cases} v_{q_k}(\omega_n) & \text{if } v_{q_k}(\omega_{y_k}) = 1, \\ v_{q_{k-1}}(\omega_n) & \text{if } v_{q_k}(\omega_{y_k}) = 0, \\ v_{q_{k+1}}(\omega_n) & \text{if } v_{q_k}(\omega_{y_k}) = 2. \end{cases} \tag{7.38}$$

The previous theorem guarantees that almost all cases correspond to the first choice in (7.38). The other two cases rectify the exceptions. The last two assignments are implicitly guided by the *prime gaps* to the effect that

$$p_{N+1} - p_N = O(\sqrt{p_N} \log p_N). \tag{7.39}$$

H. Cramer [7] proved (7.39) assuming the validity of the Riemann hypothesis.

Conjecture 7.15. For $n \geq 4$, we have $\Phi(n) = 1$. Hence, ω_n is not a square.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank Neil Calkin, Michael Joyce, Dante Manna, James McLaughlin, Carl Pomerance, Sinai Robins and Bob Scher for discussions about the problems presented here. The authors also wish to thank the referee for a very detailed and valuable report. The work of the third author was partially funded by NSF-DMS 0409968. The second author was partially supported as a graduate student by the same grant.

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