

# ACYCLIC 2-DIMENSIONAL COMPLEXES AND QUILLEN'S CONJECTURE

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ABSTRACT. Let  $G$  be a finite group and  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)$  be the poset of nontrivial elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroups of  $G$ . Quillen conjectured that  $O_p(G)$  is nontrivial if  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)$  is contractible. We prove that  $O_p(G) \neq 1$  for any group  $G$  admitting a  $G$ -invariant acyclic  $p$ -subgroup complex of dimension 2. In particular, it follows that Quillen's conjecture holds for groups of  $p$ -rank 3. We also apply this result to establish Quillen's conjecture for some particular groups not considered in the seminal work of Aschbacher–Smith.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of the poset  $\mathcal{S}_p(G)$  of nontrivial  $p$ -subgroups of a finite group  $G$  started when K.S. Brown proved that the Euler characteristic  $\chi(\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G)))$  of its order complex is 1 modulo the greatest power of  $p$  dividing the order of  $G$  [Bro75]. Recall that the order complex  $\mathcal{K}(X)$  of a poset  $X$  is the simplicial complex whose simplices are the finite nonempty totally ordered subsets of  $X$ . Some years later, D. Quillen studied the homotopy properties of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  [Qui78]. In that article, Quillen considered the subposet  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)$  of nontrivial elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroups and proved that its order complex is homotopy equivalent

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to  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  [Qui78, Proposition 2.1]. Quillen also proved that, if the largest normal  $p$ -subgroup  $O_p(G)$  of  $G$  is nontrivial, then  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  is contractible [Qui78, Proposition 2.4] and conjectured that the converse should hold.

In this paper we study the following version of Quillen's conjecture. Recall that the homology of a poset is the homology of its order complex.

**Quillen's conjecture.** *If  $O_p(G) = 1$  then  $\tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{A}_p(G)) \neq 0$ .*

Aschbacher and Smith's formulation relates rational acyclicity of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  with nontriviality of  $O_p(G)$  [AS93b]. Thus our integral homology version is stronger than Quillen's original statement but weaker than the Aschbacher–Smith version.

Quillen proved the conjecture for solvable groups [Qui78, Theorem 12.1]. In [AS93b], M. Aschbacher and S.D. Smith made a huge progress on the study of this conjecture. By using the classification of finite simple groups, they proved that Quillen's conjecture holds if  $p > 5$  and  $G$  does not contain certain unitary components. Previously, Aschbacher and Kleidman [AK90] had proved Quillen's conjecture for almost simple groups (i.e. finite groups  $G$  such that  $L \leq G \leq \text{Aut}(L)$  for some non-abelian simple group  $L$ ).

The main result of our paper, which depends on the classification of the finite simple groups, is the following.

**Theorem 3.2.** *If  $X$  is an acyclic and 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant subcomplex of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$ , then  $O_p(G) \neq 1$ .*

Recall that the action of  $G$  on  $\mathcal{S}_p(G)$  is by conjugation. The previous result provides then a convenient tool to prove that a group verifies Quillen's conjecture.

**Corollary 3.3.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group. Suppose that  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  admits a 2-dimensional and  $G$ -invariant subcomplex homotopy equivalent to itself. Then Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$ .*

In particular, it follows that Quillen's conjecture holds for groups of  $p$ -rank 3. Recall that the  $p$ -rank of  $G$ , usually denoted by  $m_p(G)$ , is the maximum possible rank of an elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroup of  $G$ . The  $p$ -rank 2 case was considered by Quillen [Qui78, Proposition 2.10] and is a consequence of Serre's result: an action of a finite group on a tree has a fixed point.

In Section 4 we make an extensive use of Corollary 3.3 to establish Quillen's conjecture for some particular groups (of  $p$ -ranks 3 and 4) for which the hypotheses of the results of Aschbacher–Smith [AS93b] do not hold.

A related conjecture, due to C. Casacuberta and W. Dicks, is that a finite group acting on a contractible 2-complex has a fixed point [CD92]. This conjecture was studied by Aschbacher and Segev in [AS93a]. Posteriorly Oliver and Segev classified the groups which admit a fixed point free action on an acyclic (finite) 2-complex [OS02]. Our proof of Theorem 3.2 is built upon the results of [OS02], which depend on the classification of finite simple groups. Theorem 3.2 can also be seen as a special case of the Casacuberta–Dicks conjecture.

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## 2. THE RESULTS OF OLIVER AND SEGEV

In this section we review the results of [OS02] needed in the proof of Theorem 3.2. By a  $G$ -complex we mean a  $G$ -CW complex. Note that the order complex of a  $G$ -poset is always a  $G$ -complex.

**Definition 2.1** ([OS02]). A  $G$ -complex  $X$  is *essential* if there is no normal subgroup  $1 \neq N \triangleleft G$  such that for each  $H \subseteq G$ , the inclusion  $X^{HN} \rightarrow X^H$  induces an isomorphism on integral homology.

The main results of [OS02] are the following two theorems.

**Theorem 2.2** ([OS02, Theorem A]). *For any finite group  $G$ , there is an essential fixed point free 2-dimensional (finite) acyclic  $G$ -complex if and only if  $G$  is isomorphic to one of the simple groups  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(2^k)$  for  $k \geq 2$ ,  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(q)$  for  $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$  and  $q \geq 5$ , or  $\mathrm{Sz}(2^k)$  for odd  $k \geq 3$ . Furthermore, the isotropy subgroups of any such  $G$ -complex are all solvable.*

**Theorem 2.3** ([OS02, Theorem B]). *Let  $G$  be any finite group, and let  $X$  be any 2-dimensional acyclic  $G$ -complex. Let  $N$  be the subgroup generated by all normal subgroups  $N' \triangleleft G$  such that  $X^{N'} \neq \emptyset$ . Then  $X^N$  is acyclic;  $X$  is essential if and only if  $N = 1$ ; and the action of  $G/N$  on  $X^N$  is essential.*

The set of subgroups of  $G$  will be denoted by  $\mathcal{S}(G)$ .

**Definition 2.4** ([OS02]). By a *family* of subgroups of  $G$  we mean any subset  $\mathcal{F} \subseteq \mathcal{S}(G)$  which is closed under conjugation. A nonempty family is said to be *separating* if it has the following three properties: (a)  $G \notin \mathcal{F}$ ; (b) if  $H' \subseteq H$  and  $H \in \mathcal{F}$  then  $H' \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (c) for any  $H \triangleleft K \subseteq G$  with  $K/H$  solvable,  $K \in \mathcal{F}$  if  $H \in \mathcal{F}$ .

For any family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subgroups of  $G$ , a  $(G, \mathcal{F})$ -*complex* will mean a  $G$ -complex all of whose isotropy subgroups lie in  $\mathcal{F}$ . A  $(G, \mathcal{F})$ -complex is  $H$ -*universal* if the fixed point set of each  $H \in \mathcal{F}$  is acyclic.

**Lemma 2.5** ([OS02, Lemma 1.2]). *Let  $X$  be any 2-dimensional acyclic  $G$ -complex without fixed points. Let  $\mathcal{F}$  be the set of subgroups  $H \subseteq G$  such that  $X^H \neq \emptyset$ . Then  $\mathcal{F}$  is a separating family of subgroups of  $G$ , and  $X$  is an  $H$ -universal  $(G, \mathcal{F})$ -complex.*

If  $G$  is not solvable, the separating family of solvable subgroups of  $G$  is denoted by  $\mathcal{SLV}$ .

**Proposition 2.6** ([OS02, Proposition 6.4]). *Assume that  $L$  is one of the simple groups  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(q)$  or  $\mathrm{Sz}(q)$ , where  $q = p^k$  and  $p$  is prime ( $p = 2$  in the second case). Let  $G \subseteq \mathrm{Aut}(L)$  be any subgroup containing  $L$ , and let  $\mathcal{F}$  be a separating family for  $G$ . Then there is a 2-dimensional acyclic  $(G, \mathcal{F})$ -complex if and only if  $G = L$ ,  $\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{SLV}$ , and  $q$  is a power of 2 or  $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$ .*

**Definition 2.7** ([OS02, Definition 2.1]). For any family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subgroups of  $G$  define

$$i_{\mathcal{F}}(H) = \frac{1}{[N_G(H) : H]} (1 - \chi(\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{F}_{>H}))).$$

**Lemma 2.8** ([OS02, Lemma 2.3]). *Fix a separating family  $\mathcal{F}$ , a finite  $H$ -universal  $(G, \mathcal{F})$ -complex  $X$ , and a subgroup  $H \subseteq G$ . For each  $n$ , let  $c_n(H)$  denote the number of orbits of  $n$ -cells of type  $G/H$  in  $X$ . Then  $i_{\mathcal{F}}(H) = \sum_{n \geq 0} (-1)^n c_n(H)$ .*

**Proposition 2.9** ([OS02, Tables 2,3,4]). *Let  $G$  be one of the simple groups  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(2^k)$  for  $k \geq 2$ ,  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(q)$  for  $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$  and  $q \geq 5$ , or  $\mathrm{Sz}(2^k)$  for odd  $k \geq 3$ . Then  $i_{\mathcal{SLV}}(1) = 1$ .*

### 3. THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL CASE

Using the results of Oliver and Segev stated in the previous section we prove the following.

**Theorem 3.1.** *Every acyclic 2-dimensional  $G$ -complex has an orbit with normal stabilizer.*

*Proof.* If  $X^G \neq \emptyset$  we are done. Otherwise,  $G$  acts fixed point freely on  $X$ . Consider the subgroup  $N$  generated by the subgroups  $N' \triangleleft G$  such that  $X^{N'} \neq \emptyset$ . Clearly  $N$  is normal in  $G$ . By Theorem 2.3  $Y = X^N$  is acyclic (in particular it is nonempty) and the action of  $G/N$  on  $Y$  is essential and fixed point free. By Lemma 2.5  $\mathcal{F} = \{H \leq G/N : Y^H \neq \emptyset\}$  is a separating family and  $Y$  is an  $H$ -universal  $(G/N, \mathcal{F})$ -complex. Thus, Theorem 2.2 asserts that  $G/N$  must be one of the groups  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(2^k)$  for  $k \geq 2$ ,  $\mathrm{PSL}_2(q)$  for  $q \equiv \pm 3 \pmod{8}$  and  $q \geq 5$ , or  $\mathrm{Sz}(2^k)$  for odd  $k \geq 3$ . In any case, by Proposition 2.6 we must have  $\mathcal{F} = \mathcal{SLV}$ . By Proposition 2.9,  $i_{\mathcal{SLV}}(1) = 1$ . Finally by Lemma 2.8,  $Y$  must have at least one free  $G/N$ -orbit. Therefore  $X$  has a  $G$ -orbit of type  $G/N$  and we are done.  $\square$

**Theorem 3.2.** *If  $X$  is an acyclic and 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant subcomplex of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$ , then  $O_p(G) \neq 1$ .*

*Proof.* By Theorem 3.1 there is a simplex  $\sigma = (A_0 < \dots < A_j)$  of  $X$  with stabilizer  $N \triangleleft G$ . Since  $A_0 \triangleleft N$ , we deduce that  $O_p(N)$  is nontrivial. On the other hand,  $N \triangleleft G$  and  $O_p(N) \text{ char } N$  implies that  $O_p(N) \triangleleft G$ . Therefore  $O_p(N) \leq O_p(G)$  and  $O_p(G)$  is thus nontrivial.  $\square$

From Theorem 3.2 we deduce:

**Corollary 3.3.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group. Suppose that  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  admits a 2-dimensional and  $G$ -invariant subcomplex homotopy equivalent to itself. Then Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$ .*

Since the  $p$ -rank of  $G$  is equal to  $\dim \mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_p(G)) + 1$  we obtain:

**Corollary 3.4.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group of  $p$ -rank 3. If  $\tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{A}_p(G)) = 0$  then  $O_p(G) \neq 1$ .*

We now apply Corollary 3.3 to obtain results for some related  $p$ -subgroup complexes. Recall that a  $p$ -subgroup  $Q \leq G$  is *radical* if  $Q = O_p(N_G(Q))$ . The *Bouc poset*  $\mathcal{B}_p(G)$  is the poset of nontrivial radical  $p$ -subgroups of  $G$ . It is well-known that  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{B}_p(G))$  is homotopy equivalent to  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  [Bou84]. Then by Corollary 3.3 we have

**Corollary 3.5.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group such that  $\mathcal{B}_p(G)$  has height 2. If  $\tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{B}_p(G)) = 0$  then  $O_p(G) \neq 1$ .*

We say that a poset  $X$  is a *reduced lattice* if it is obtained from a finite lattice by removing its minimum and maximum. If  $X$  is a reduced lattice,  $\mathfrak{i}(X)$  denotes the subposet of  $X$  given by the elements which can be written as the infimum of a set of maximal elements of  $X$ . It is a

general fact that the order complex of  $i(X)$  is homotopy equivalent to the order complex of  $X$  for any reduced lattice  $X$  [Bar11, Section 9.1]. Hence by Corollary 3.3, we have

**Corollary 3.6.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group. If either  $i(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  or  $i(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  has height 2, then  $G$  satisfies Quillen's conjecture.*

For a detailed account of the relations between the different  $p$ -subgroup complexes, see [Smi11].

#### 4. SOME EXAMPLES

In this section we apply the corollaries of Theorem 3.2 to establish Quillen's conjecture for some groups constructed so that the hypotheses of the results of [AS93b] are not satisfied. The main result of [AS93b] is the following.

**Theorem 4.1** (Aschbacher–Smith [AS93b, Main Theorem]). *Let  $G$  be a finite group and  $p > 5$  a prime number. Assume that whenever  $G$  has a unitary component  $U_n(q)$  with  $q \equiv -1 \pmod{p}$  and  $q$  odd, then the Quillen dimension property at  $p$  holds for all  $p$ -extensions of  $U_m(q^{p^e})$  with  $m \leq n$  and  $e \in \mathbb{Z}$ . Then  $G$  satisfies Quillen's conjecture.*

Recall that a group  $H$  satisfies the *Quillen dimension property at  $p$*  if  $\tilde{H}_{m_p(H)-1}(\mathcal{A}_p(H)) \neq 0$ . The presence of simple components of  $G$  isomorphic to  $L_2(2^3)$  or  $U_3(2^3)$  (in the  $p = 3$  case) and  $Sz(2^5)$  (in the  $p = 5$  case) is an obstruction to extending Theorem 4.1 to  $p = 3$  and  $p = 5$ . The case  $p = 2$  is not considered in [AS93b] and would require a much more detailed analysis. One of the first steps in the proof of Theorem 4.1 is the reduction to the case  $O_{p'}(G) = 1$  (see [AS93b, Proposition 1.6]). To do this, [AS93b, Theorems 2.3 and 2.4] are needed and these theorems make a strong use of the hypothesis  $p > 5$ . Concretely, it is not possible to apply [AS93b, Theorem 2.3] if a component of  $C_G(O_{p'}(G))$  is isomorphic to  $L_2(2^3)$ ,  $U_3(2^3)$  (if  $p = 3$ ) or  $Sz(2^5)$  (if  $p = 5$ ).

Before presenting the examples for  $p = 3$  and  $p = 5$ , we give some motivation. Most of the groups  $G$  in these examples satisfy the following conditions. First,  $O_{p'}(G) \neq 1$  and  $C_G(O_{p'}(G))$  contains a component isomorphic to  $U_3(2^3)$  if  $p = 3$  and to  $Sz(2^5)$  if  $p = 5$ . Thus, we cannot find nontrivial homology for  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)$  in the same way it is done in the proof of [AS93b, Proposition 1.6] since we are not able to invoke [AS93b, Theorems 2.3 and 2.4]. Secondly, since there is an inclusion  $\tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{A}_p(G/O_{p'}(G)); \mathbb{Q}) \hookrightarrow \tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{A}_p(G); \mathbb{Q})$  (see [AS93b, Lemma 0.12]), we

require  $O_p(G/O_{p'}(G)) \neq 1$  so that  $\tilde{H}_*(\mathcal{A}_p(G/O_{p'}(G))) = 0$ . Finally, we require  $O_p(G) = 1$ .

The groups presented in Examples 4.5 and 4.7 have  $p$ -rank 3. The groups presented in Examples 4.6 and 4.8 have  $p$ -rank 4 and are constructed in the following way. We take a direct product of a group  $N$ , consisting of one or more copies of a particular simple  $p'$ -group, by a group  $K$  consisting of one or more copies of  $L = U_3(2^3)$  if  $p = 3$  or  $L = \text{Sz}(2^5)$  if  $p = 5$ . Then we take two cyclic  $p$ -groups  $A$  and  $B$  and we let them act on the direct product  $N \times K$  as follows. We take a faithful action of  $A \times B$  on  $N$ , and we choose a representation  $A \times B \rightarrow \text{Aut}(K)$  such that  $O_p(K \rtimes (A \times B)) \cong O_p(C_A(K)) \neq 1$ . The group  $G = (N \times K) \rtimes (A \times B)$  satisfies the conditions  $O_p(G) = 1$ ,  $O_{p'}(G) = N \neq 1$ ,  $C_G(N) = K$  and  $O_p(G/N) = O_p(K \rtimes (A \times B)) \neq 1$ . Moreover, since the  $p$ -rank of  $L$  is at most 2, we can construct  $G$  to have  $p$ -rank 4 by adjusting the number of copies of  $L$  in  $K$ .

For these groups we show that  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  has a 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant subcomplex homotopy equivalent to itself, and thus Corollary 3.3 applies.

In Examples 4.10 and 4.11 we describe two groups of 2-rank 4 such that  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_2(G))$  admits a 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant homotopy equivalent subcomplex.

For the claims on the structure of the automorphism group of the finite groups of Lie type we refer to [GLS98] and [GLS99].

**Lemma 4.2.** *Let  $1 \rightarrow N \rightarrow G \rightarrow K \rightarrow 1$  be an extension of finite groups. Then*

$$m_p(G) = \max_{A \in \mathcal{S}} m_p(C_N(A)) + m_p(A),$$

where  $\mathcal{S}$  is the set of elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroups  $1 \leq A \leq G$  such that  $A \cap N = 1$ . In particular we have  $m_p(G) \leq m_p(N) + m_p(K)$ .

*Proof.* If  $A \in \mathcal{S}$  we have  $C_N(A) \times A \cong C_N(A)A$  and hence  $m_p(C_N(A)) + m_p(A) \leq m_p(C_N(A)A) \leq m_p(G)$ . Taking maximum over  $A \in \mathcal{S}$  gives the lower bound for  $m_p(G)$ . We now prove the other inequality. Let  $E$  be an elementary abelian  $p$ -subgroup of  $G$  and write  $E = (E \cap N)A$  for some complement  $A$  of  $E \cap N$  in  $E$ . Then  $m_p(E \cap N) \leq m_p(C_N(A))$  and  $A \in \mathcal{S}$ . Now  $m_p(E) = m_p(E \cap N) + m_p(A) \leq m_p(C_N(A)) + m_p(A)$ , giving the upper bound for  $m_p(G)$ . For the last claim note that  $C_N(A) \leq N$  and  $m_p(A) \leq m_p(K)$  by the isomorphism theorems.  $\square$

The following lemma will be used to obtain proper subcomplexes of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  without changing the homotopy type. We write  $X \simeq Y$  if the order complexes  $\mathcal{K}(X)$  and  $\mathcal{K}(Y)$  are homotopy equivalent.

**Lemma 4.3.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group and let  $H \leq G$ . In addition, suppose that  $O_p(C_H(E)) \neq 1$  for each  $E \in \mathcal{A}_p(G)$  with  $E \cap H = 1$ . Then  $\mathcal{A}_p(G) \simeq \mathcal{A}_p(H)$ .*

*Proof.* Consider the subposet  $\mathcal{N} = \{E \in \mathcal{A}_p(G) : E \cap H \neq 1\}$ . We have order preserving maps  $r: \mathcal{N} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}_p(H)$  and  $i: \mathcal{A}_p(H) \hookrightarrow \mathcal{N}$  given by  $r(E) = E \cap H$  and  $i(E) = E$  such that  $ir(E) \leq E$  and  $ri(E) = E$ . Therefore  $\mathcal{N} \simeq \mathcal{A}_p(H)$ .

Let  $\mathcal{S} = \{E \in \mathcal{A}_p(G) : E \cap H = 1\}$  be the complement of  $\mathcal{N}$  in  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)$ . For any  $E \in \mathcal{S}$  consider  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)_{>E} \cap \mathcal{N} = \{A \in \mathcal{N} : A > E\}$ . It is easy to see that  $r: \mathcal{A}_p(G)_{>E} \cap \mathcal{N} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}_p(C_H(E))$  defined by  $r(B) = B \cap H$  is a homotopy equivalence with inverse  $i(B) = BE$ . Then  $\mathcal{A}_p(G)_{>E} \cap \mathcal{N} \simeq \mathcal{A}_p(C_H(E))$  is contractible since  $O_p(C_H(E)) \neq 1$ .

Now take a linear extension  $E_1, \dots, E_r$  of  $\mathcal{S}$  (i.e. enumerate the elements of  $\mathcal{S}$  so that  $E_i \leq E_j$  implies  $i \leq j$ ) and let  $X^i = \mathcal{N} \cup \{E_1, \dots, E_i\}$ . Note that  $X^i = X^{i-1} \cup \{E_i\}$  and by the linear extension  $X_{>E_i}^i = \mathcal{A}_p(G)_{>E_i} \cap \mathcal{N}$ , which is contractible. Now  $X_{\geq E_i}^i$  is a cone over  $X_{>E_i}^i$  with vertex  $E_i$ . Therefore  $X^{i-1} \hookrightarrow X^i$  is a homotopy equivalence for each  $1 \leq i \leq r$ . In consequence,

$$\mathcal{A}_p(G) = X^r \simeq X^0 = \mathcal{N} \simeq \mathcal{A}_p(H). \quad \square$$

*Remark 4.4.* In the above result it can be shown that if  $H \triangleleft G$  then the homotopy equivalence is  $G$ -equivariant.

**Example 4.5.** Let  $p = 3$  and let  $L = L_2(2^3) \times L_2(2^3) \times L_2(2^3)$ . Let  $A$  be a cyclic group of order 3 acting on  $L$  by permuting the copies of  $L_2(2^3)$ . Take  $G = L \rtimes A$ . Since  $m_3(L_2(2^3)) = 1$  and  $C_L(A) \cong L_2(2^3)$ , we see that  $m_3(G) = 3$ . By Corollary 3.4,  $G$  satisfies Quillen's conjecture.

**Example 4.6.** Let  $p = 3$ ,  $N = \text{Sz}(2^3) \times \text{Sz}(2^3) \times \text{Sz}(2^3)$  and  $U = U_3(2^3)$ . Let  $A = \langle a \rangle$  and  $B = \langle b \rangle$  be cyclic groups of order 3. We construct a semidirect product  $G = (N \times U) \rtimes (A \times B)$ . To do this we need to define a map  $A \times B \rightarrow \text{Aut}(N \times U) = \text{Aut}(N) \times \text{Aut}(U)$ .

Choose a field automorphism  $\phi \in \text{Aut}(U_3(2^3))$  of order 3. By the properties of the  $p$ -group actions, there exists an inner automorphism  $x \in \text{Inn}(U_3(2^3))$  of order 3 commuting with  $\phi$ . Then  $A \times B \rightarrow \text{Aut}(U_3(2^3))$  is given by  $a \mapsto x$  and  $b \mapsto \phi$ . Choose a field automorphism  $\psi \in \text{Aut}(\text{Sz}(2^3))$  of order 3. Let  $A$  act on each coordinate of  $N$  as  $\psi$  and



let  $B$  act on  $N$  by permuting its coordinates. This gives rise to a well defined map  $A \times B \rightarrow \text{Aut}(N)$ .

The 3-rank of  $G$  is  $m_3(G) = m_3(U_3(2^3)AB)$ . We can take an elementary abelian subgroup  $E \leq C_U(\phi)$  of order 9 containing  $x$  since  $C_U(\phi) \cong \text{PGU}_3(2) \cong ((C_3 \times C_3) \rtimes Q_8) \rtimes C_3$  by [GLS99, Chapter 4, Lemma 3.10] and  $\mathcal{A}_3(\text{PGU}_3(2))$  is connected of height 1. Then  $EAB$  is an elementary abelian subgroup of order  $3^4$ . Hence,  $m_3(UAB) \geq 4$ . Since  $m_3(U_3(2^3)) = 2$  and  $m_3(AB) = 2$ , by Lemma 4.2 we have  $m_3(G) = 4$ .

By Corollary 3.3, to show that Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$  and  $p = 3$  it is enough to find a 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant subcomplex  $X$  of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_3(G))$  homotopy equivalent to  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_3(G))$  (or, equivalently, to  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_3(G))$ ).

Let  $H = (N \times U) \rtimes A$ . Note that  $H \triangleleft G$  and  $m_3(H) = 3$ . Therefore,  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_3(H))$  is a 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant subcomplex of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_3(G))$ . Now the plan is to use Lemma 4.3 to show that  $\mathcal{A}_3(H) \simeq \mathcal{A}_3(G)$ . Let  $E \in \mathcal{A}_3(G)$  be such that  $E \cap H = 1$ . Then  $E \cong EH/H \leq B \cong C_3$  and hence,  $E$  is cyclic generated by some element  $e \in E$ . Write  $e = nua^i b^j$  with  $n \in N$ ,  $u \in U$  and  $i, j \in \{0, 1, 2\}$ . Note that  $j \neq 0$  since  $E \cap H = 1$ . If  $v \in U$ , then

$$v^e = v^{nua^i b^j} = (v^{ua^i})^{b^j}.$$

Since  $j \neq 0$  and  $e$  induces an automorphism of  $U$  of order 3 in  $\text{Inn}(U)\phi^j$ , by [GLS98, Proposition 4.9.1] and the definition of field automorphisms [GLS98, Definition 2.5.13],  $e$  is  $\text{Inndiag}(U)$ -conjugate to  $\phi^j$  and acts as a field automorphism on  $U$ . In particular,  $C_U(E) = C_U(e) \cong C_U(\phi^j) = C_U(\phi)$ . Note that  $O_3(C_U(E)) \cong O_3(C_U(\phi)) \cong C_3 \times C_3 \neq 1$ . Since  $C_U(E) \triangleleft C_H(E)$  and  $O_3(C_U(E)) \neq 1$ , we conclude that  $O_3(C_H(E)) \neq 1$ . By Lemma 4.3,  $\mathcal{A}_3(G) \simeq \mathcal{A}_3(H)$ , which is 2-dimensional and  $G$ -invariant. In conclusion, the subcomplex  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_3(H))$  satisfies the hypothesis of Corollary 3.3 and therefore, Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$ .

Note that  $O_3(G) = 1$ ,  $O_{3'}(G) = N$ ,  $C_G(O_{3'}(G)) = U_3(2^3)$  and  $O_3(G/O_{3'}(G)) = O_3(U_3(2^3)AB) = \langle ax^{-1} \rangle \cong C_3$ .

**Example 4.7.** Let  $p = 5$ . Let  $r$  be a prime number such that  $r \equiv 2$  or  $3 \pmod{5}$  and let  $q = r^{5^n}$  with  $n \geq 2$ . Let  $N$  be one of the simple groups  $L_2(q)$ ,  $G_2(q)$ ,  ${}^3D_4(q^3)$  or  ${}^2G_2(3^{5^n})$  and let  $A = \langle a \rangle$  be a cyclic group of order  $5^n$ . Note that  $5 \nmid |N|$ . Let  $a$  act on  $N$  as a field automorphism of order  $5^n$ . Choose a field automorphism  $\phi \in \text{Aut}(\text{Sz}(2^5))$  of order 5 and let  $A$  act on  $\text{Sz}(2^5) \times \text{Sz}(2^5)$  as  $\phi \times \phi$ . Now consider the semidirect product  $G = (N \times \text{Sz}(2^5) \times \text{Sz}(2^5)) \rtimes A$  defined by this action.

Since the Sylow 5-subgroups of  $\text{Sz}(2^5)$  are cyclic of order 25, by Lemma 4.2 we have that  $m_5(G) = 3$ . By Corollary 3.4, Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$ .

Moreover,  $O_5(G) = 1$ ,  $O_{5'}(G) = N$ ,  $C_G(O_{5'}(G)) = \text{Sz}(2^5)^2$  and  $O_5(G/O_{5'}(G)) = C_A(\text{Sz}(2^5)^2) = \langle a^5 \rangle \neq 1$ .

**Example 4.8.** Let  $p = 5$  and let  $N = L^5$ , where  $L$  is one of the simple  $5'$ -groups of the previous example. Let  $A = \langle a \rangle \cong C_{5^n}$  and  $B = \langle b \rangle \cong C_5$ . Let  $G = (N \times \text{Sz}(2^5)^2) \rtimes (A \times B)$ , where  $a$  acts on each copy of  $L$  as a field automorphism of order  $5^n$  and trivially on  $\text{Sz}(2^5)^2$ , and  $b$  permutes the copies of  $L$  and acts as a field automorphism of order 5 on each copy of  $\text{Sz}(2^5)$ .

To compute the 5-rank of  $G$  we use Lemma 4.2:

$$\begin{aligned} m_5(G) &= m_5(\text{Sz}(2^5)^2 \rtimes (A \times B)) \\ &= m_5(A \times (\text{Sz}(2^5)^2 \rtimes B)) \\ &= m_5(A) + m_5(\text{Sz}(2^5)^2 \rtimes B) \\ &= 1 + 3 \\ &= 4. \end{aligned}$$

Now the aim is to apply Corollary 3.3 on  $G$  by finding a 2-dimensional  $G$ -invariant homotopy equivalent subcomplex  $X$  of  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{S}_5(G))$ .

Let  $H = (N \times \text{Sz}(2^5)^2) \rtimes A = NA \times \text{Sz}(2^5)^2$ . Note that  $H \triangleleft G$  and  $m_5(H) = 3$ . Hence  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_5(H))$  is 2-dimensional and  $G$ -invariant. We will show that  $\mathcal{A}_5(H) \simeq \mathcal{A}_5(G)$  by applying Lemma 4.3.

Let  $E \in \mathcal{A}_5(G)$  be such that  $E \cap H = 1$ . Then  $E$  is cyclic generated by an element  $e$  of order 5 and  $e = lsa^i b^j$  with  $l \in N$ ,  $s \in \text{Sz}(2^5)^2$ ,  $0 \leq i \leq 5^n - 1$  and  $j \in \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$ . Thus  $E$  acts by field automorphisms on each copy of the Suzuki group and  $e$  is  $\text{Inndiag}(\text{Sz}(2^5))$ -conjugate to the field automorphism induced by  $b^j$  on  $\text{Sz}(2^5)$  (see [GLS98, Proposition 4.9.1] and Example 4.6). Hence,  $C_H(E) = C_{NA}(E) \times C_{\text{Sz}(2^5)^2}(E)$ . Note that  $C_{\text{Sz}(2^5)^2}(E) \triangleleft C_H(E)$  and  $C_{\text{Sz}(2^5)^2}(E) \cong C_{\text{Sz}(2^5)}(E)^2 \cong (C_5 \rtimes C_4)^2$  has a nontrivial normal 5-subgroup. Therefore  $\mathcal{A}_5(G) \simeq \mathcal{A}_5(H)$  by Lemma 4.3 and Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$  by Corollary 3.3 applied to the subcomplex  $\mathcal{K}(\mathcal{A}_5(H))$ .

Note that  $O_{5'}(G) = N$  and  $C_G(O_{5'}(G)) = \text{Sz}(2^5)^2$ . On the other hand,  $O_5(G) = 1$  and  $O_5(G/O_{5'}(G)) = A \neq 1$ .

We conclude with two examples of groups satisfying Quillen's conjecture for  $p = 2$ . We say that a finite group  $G$  has the *trivial intersection*

property at  $p$  if any two different Sylow  $p$ -subgroups of  $G$  have trivial intersection.

**Proposition 4.9.** *Let  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  be two finite groups with the trivial intersection property at  $p$ . Let  $L = L_1 \times L_2$  and take an extension  $G$  of  $L$  such that  $|G : L| = p$ . Then  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  and  $\mathcal{B}_p(G)$  are at most 2-dimensional. If in addition the Sylow  $p$ -subgroups of  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  have abelian  $\Omega_1$ , then  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  is at most 2-dimensional.*

*Proof.* The elements of  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(L))$  are of the form  $P_1 \times P_2$ ,  $1 \times P_2$  or  $P_1 \times 1$ , where  $P_i \leq L_i$  are Sylow  $p$ -subgroups. Hence,  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(L))$  is 1-dimensional.

Now suppose that  $Q_0 < Q_1 < \dots < Q_n$  is a chain in  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$ . Then

$$Q_0 \cap L \leq Q_1 \cap L \leq \dots \leq Q_n \cap L$$

is a chain in  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(L))$ . We claim that there is at most one index  $i$  such that  $Q_i \cap L = Q_{i+1} \cap L$ . To see this note that

$$|Q_j : Q_j \cap L| = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } Q_j \subseteq L \\ p & \text{if } Q_j \not\subseteq L \end{cases}.$$

We have  $|Q_{i+1} : Q_i| \cdot |Q_i : Q_i \cap L| = |Q_{i+1} : Q_{i+1} \cap L| \cdot |Q_{i+1} \cap L : Q_i \cap L|$ . Then if  $Q_i \cap L = Q_{i+1} \cap L$ , since  $|Q_{i+1} : Q_i| \geq p$  we must have  $|Q_i : Q_i \cap L| = 1$  and  $|Q_{i+1} : Q_{i+1} \cap L| = p$ . Then  $i = \max\{j : Q_j \subseteq L\}$ .

From this we conclude that  $\dim \mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(G)) \leq 1 + \dim \mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(L)) = 2$ . It is well-known that  $\mathcal{B}_p(G)$  is a subposet of  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_p(G))$  (i.e. every radical  $p$ -subgroup is an intersection of Sylow  $p$ -subgroups). Then  $\mathcal{B}_p(G)$  is at most 2-dimensional also. The same proof can be easily adapted to prove that, if the Sylow  $p$ -subgroups of  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  have abelian  $\Omega_1$ ,  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{A}_p(G))$  is at most 2-dimensional.  $\square$

In the following examples we use the fact that the groups  $A_5$  and  $U_3(2^2)$  have the trivial intersection property at 2 and that  $\Omega_1(P)$  is abelian for  $P$  a Sylow 2-subgroup of either  $A_5$  or  $U_3(2^2)$ .

**Example 4.10.** Let  $G$  be the group extension  $(A_5 \times A_5) \rtimes C_2$  where the generator of  $C_2$  acts on each coordinate as conjugation by the transposition (1 2). Since  $m_2(A_5) = 2 = m_2(\text{Aut}(A_5))$ , by Lemma 4.2,  $G$  has 2-rank 4. By Proposition 4.9,  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{A}_2(G))$ ,  $\mathfrak{i}(\mathcal{S}_2(G))$  and  $\mathcal{B}_2(G)$  are 2-dimensional and then Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$  since Corollaries 3.5 and 3.6 apply.

**Example 4.11.** Let  $G = (U_3(2^2) \times A_5) \rtimes C_2$  be the semidirect product constructed in the following way. Let  $H = U_3(2^2) \times A_5$ . Then

$\text{Out}(H) \cong \text{Aut}(U_3(2^2))/\text{Inn}(U_3(2^2)) \times \text{Aut}(A_5)/\text{Inn}(A_5) \cong C_4 \times C_2$ . Take  $t \in \text{Out}(H)$  to be the involution which acts nontrivially on both factors. Therefore  $G = H \rtimes \langle t \rangle$ . Since  $m_2(U_3(2^2)) = 2 = m_2(A_5) = m_2(\text{Aut}(A_5))$  and  $m_2(\text{Aut}(U_3(2^2))) = 3$ , by Lemma 4.2  $G$  has 2-rank 4. Just as before, Quillen's conjecture holds for  $G$ .

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