

## FINITE GROUPS ADMITTING AN AUTOMORPHISM TRIVIAL ON A SYLOW 2-SUBGROUP

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In this paper we shall consider finite groups satisfying the following hypothesis.

**HYPOTHESIS I.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group which admits an automorphism  $\sigma$  of prime order  $p$ ,  $(p, |G|) = 1$ . Assume the fixed point subgroup  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  contains some Sylow 2-subgroup.*

Let  $G(q)$  be a finite simple group of Lie type defined over the finite field  $GF(q)$ ,  $q$  odd. Let  $p$  be an odd prime with  $(p, |G(q)|) = 1$ . With the exception of the groups  ${}^3D_4(q)$ ,  $|G(q)| = q^m \prod_i (q^{a_i} - 1) \prod_j (q^{b_j} + 1)/d$ ,  $d = (c, q^v - 1)$  or  $(c, q^v + 1)$ . The integers  $a_i, b_j, c, v, d$  are independent of  $q$  and depend only on the rank and family of the group [5]. By matching terms it is seen that  $[G(q^p) : G(q)]$  is the product of an odd integer and integer factors  $((q^p)^a - 1)/(q^a - 1)$  and  $((q^p)^b + 1)/(q^b + 1)$ . As  $((q^p)^a - 1)/(q^a - 1) = (q^a)^{p-1} + (q^a)^{p-2} + \dots + (q^a) + 1$  is a sum of  $p$  odd integers,  $((q^p)^a - 1)/(q^a - 1)$  is odd. Similarly  $((q^p)^b + 1)/(q^b + 1)$  is odd and we conclude  $[G(q^p) : G(q)]$  must be odd. Moreover,  $(q^p)^a \pm 1 \equiv q^a \pm 1 \pmod{p}$  so  $(p, |G(q^p)|) = 1$  if and only if  $(p, |G(q^p)|) = 1$ . Let  $\sigma$  be a field automorphism of  $G(q^p)$  of order  $p$ . Then  $C_G(\sigma) \cong G(q)$  and we conclude that  $G(q^p)$  is a finite simple group satisfying Hypothesis I. A similar argument shows the groups  ${}^3D_4(q^p)$  satisfy Hypothesis I.

The above remarks illustrate that the simple Lie groups  $G(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd, satisfy Hypothesis I. Our first step toward obtaining the converse of this statement is the following result proved in Section 1.

**THEOREM 1.** *Let  $G$  be a finite simple group satisfying Hypothesis I. Then  $G \cong L_2(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd, or  $G$  is of component type.*

The classification of groups of component type has been the object of a considerable amount of research in the last few years. (See Section 1 for definitions and notation.) Recent progress suggests that work has nearly been completed in classifying all simple groups with an involution  $t$  for which  $O(C_G(t)) \neq 1$ . This classification, now called the *Unbalanced Group Conjecture*, is stated in Section 1. Under the assumption of the Unbalanced Group Conjecture, simple groups with a component of type  $G(q)$ ,  $q$  odd, have been determined. We shall show that the following conjecture can be proved from the Unbalanced Group Conjecture and the classification of groups of component type  $G(q)$ ,  $q$  odd.

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CONJECTURE. *Let  $G$  be a finite simple group satisfying Hypothesis I. Then  $G$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd.*

This proof as well as the proof of Theorem 1 uses several results of G. Glauberman. Because  $(|G|, p) = 1$ , every non-empty subset  $Q \subseteq B = C_G(\sigma)$  has  $N_G(Q) = N_B(Q)C_G(Q)$ . This factorization is used in conjunction with the main theorem of [2] which states that if  $G$  contains an involution  $t$  whose centralizer is contained in  $B$ , then  $G$  has a proper normal subgroup of odd order.

In Section 2 of this paper, we shall determine the structure of finite groups which satisfy Hypothesis I with  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  solvable. The following statement is the main result.

THEOREM 2. *Let  $G$  be a finite group satisfying Hypothesis I. Assume  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  is solvable. Then one of the following occurs:*

- i)  $G$  is solvable with  $G = O_{2'}(G)B$ .
- ii)  $G$  contains characteristic subgroups  $G_1, G_2$  such that  $G_1 \trianglelefteq G_2 \trianglelefteq G$  with  $G_1, G/G_2$  solvable and  $G_2/G_1 \cong L_1 \times \dots \times L_n, L_i \cong L_2(3^p), 1 \leq i \leq n$ .

COROLLARY 2. *Let  $G$  be a finite simple group satisfying the hypothesis of Theorem 2. Then  $G \cong L_2(3^p)$ .*

It is seen that Corollary 2 is an immediate consequence of Theorem 2. Moreover, the argument of Section 2 shows  $G_1$  to be the largest normal solvable subgroup of  $G$  while  $G_2$  is the preimage in  $G$  of the largest normal semisimple subgroup of  $G/G_1$ .

**1. Groups of component type.** We recall some notation and terminology from [1] and [3]. A group  $A$  is *quasisimple* if  $A$  is its own commutator group and, modulo its center,  $A$  is simple. A *component* of a group is a subnormal quasisimple subgroup. The *core* of a group is its largest normal subgroup of odd order. A *2-component* of a group is a subnormal subgroup  $A$  such that  $A$  is its own commutator subgroup and  $A$  is quasisimple modulo its core.  $G$  is of *component type* if the centralizer in  $G$  of some involution contains a 2-component. This is equivalent to requiring that the centralizer is not 2-constrained (see 2.11, [7]).

For any group  $H$ , we let  $\tilde{E}(H)$  be the inverse image in  $H$  of the socle of  $C_H(F(H))/Z(F(H))$ , where  $F(H)$  is the Fitting subgroup of  $H$ . We then define  $E(H)$  to be the last term of the derived series of  $\tilde{E}(H)$ , and put  $F^*(H) = E(H)F(H)$ . Lemma (2.1) in [3] shows  $E(H)$  to be the central product of uniquely determined quasisimple groups, which are called the *components* of  $E(H)$  and are permuted under conjugation by  $H$ . Moreover, the components of  $E(H)$  are exactly the set of all subnormal quasisimple subgroups of  $H$ . See Section 2 of [3] for further properties of  $E(H)$  and  $F^*(H)$ .

The first result of this section characterizes  $L_2(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd,  $(p, |L_2(q)|) = 1$ , as the only family of simple groups satisfying Hypothesis I and not of component type.

(1.1) *Let  $G$  be a finite simple group which satisfies Hypothesis I. If the centralizer of each involution of  $G$  is 2-constrained, then  $G \cong L_2(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd.*

*Proof.* Let us first assume  $G$  has 2-rank at least 3. Let  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$  and notice for any involution  $t \in S$ ,  $C_G(t)$  is  $\sigma$ -invariant. The coprime action of  $\sigma$  on  $C_G(t)$  produces  $T \in \text{Syl}_2(C_G(t))$  with  $T$   $\sigma$ -invariant and Lemma 6 of [2] shows  $T$  to be contained in some  $\sigma$ -invariant conjugate of  $S$ . Because  $\sigma$ -invariant Sylow 2-subgroups of  $G$  are conjugate by an element of  $B$  (Lemma 5, [2]), we conclude that  $\sigma$  acts trivially on  $T$ . By assumption  $G$  has 2-rank at least 3 so that [4] implies  $O_{2'}(C_G(t)) = 1$  provided  $\text{SCN}_3(2) \neq \emptyset$ . A simple group with  $\text{SCN}_3(2) \neq \emptyset$ , 2-rank at least 3, and 2-constrained centralizers of involutions is isomorphic to  $G_2(3)$  or the sporadic group  $J_3$  (see [6, Corollary A]). The group  $J_3$  does not satisfy Hypothesis I so we may assume  $O_{2'}(C(t)) = 1$  in any case. Set  $X = C_G(t)$  and  $Q = O_2(X)$ . Lemma 5 in [2] and the fact that  $\sigma$  acts trivially on  $Q$  imply  $X = C_X(Q)N_{B \cap X}(Q)$ . Then, as  $X$  is 2-constrained,  $C_X(Q) \subseteq Q$  and we have  $X = N_{B \cap X}(Q) \subseteq B$ . Theorem 1 in [2] shows  $G$  to have a normal subgroup  $N$  which does not contain  $t$ . This contradicts the simplicity of  $G$ .

We may now assume  $G$  has 2-rank at most 2. A result of Brauer and Suzuki implies  $G$  cannot have rank 1. Hence  $G$  is a simple group of 2-rank 2. Corollary A in [6] shows  $G$  is isomorphic to one of the groups  $L_2(q)$ ,  $L_3(q)$ ,  $U_3(q)$ ,  $q$  odd,  $U_3(4)$ ,  $A_7$  or  $M_{11}$ . The last three groups do not satisfy Hypothesis I and among the groups  $L_3(q)$ ,  $U_3(q)$ , only  $L_3(3)$ ,  $U_3(3)$  have 2-constrained centralizers. As  $L_3(3)$ ,  $U_3(3)$  do not admit an automorphism satisfying Hypothesis I,  $G \cong L_2(r)$ ,  $r$  odd. The structure of  $P\Gamma L(2, r)$  forces the existence of a field automorphism  $\sigma$  of  $G$  of order  $p$ . We conclude that  $G \cong L_2(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd.

**THEOREM 1.** *Let  $G$  be a finite simple group satisfying Hypothesis I. Then either  $G \cong L_2(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd or  $G$  is of component type.*

*Proof.* By (1.1), we may assume  $G$  contains an involution  $t$  such that  $C_G(t)$  is not 2-constrained. Corollary 2.11 in [7] implies  $C_G(t)$  contains a 2-component and we conclude that  $G$  is of component type.

At this point we prove the conjecture as stated in the introduction. We first state the Unbalanced Group Conjecture and the relevant theorem for groups of component type.

**UNBALANCED GROUP CONJECTURE.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group with  $F^*(G) = L$  simple and  $O(C_G(t)) \neq 1$  for some involution  $t$  in  $G$ . Then one of the following holds:*

- (1)  $L$  is a Chevalley group of odd characteristic,
- (2)  $L$  is an alternating group of odd degree, or
- (3)  $L$  is isomorphic to  $L_3(4)$  or Held's group.

**COMPONENT THEOREM (Aschbacher-Walter).** *Let  $G$  be a finite group with  $F^*(G) = L$  simple containing an involution  $t$  such that  $C_G(t)$  has a component  $A$*

with  $A/Z(A)$  a Chevalley group over  $GF(r^p)$  where  $r$  is an odd prime power and  $p \geq 3$ . Then  $L$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(q)$  for some odd  $q$ .

The authors wish to point out that the Unbalanced Group Conjecture has been established modulo successful completion of Harris’s work on groups with an  $L_2(q)$  component. The Component Theorem with certain modifications has been announced by John Walter. Aschbacher has distributed a preprint of his part of the work.

**CONJECTURE.** *Let  $G$  be a simple group which satisfies Hypothesis I. Then  $G$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(q^p)$ ,  $q$  odd.*

*Proof.* Let  $G$  be a minimal counterexample. Choose  $t$  to be an involution of  $G$ . If  $O(C_G(t)) \neq 1$ , the Unbalanced Group Conjecture implies that  $G$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(r)$ ,  $r$  odd,  $A_{2n+1}$ ,  $L_3(4)$  or Held’s group. The groups  $A_{2n+1}$ ,  $L_3(4)$  and Held’s group admit no automorphism of order  $p$  with  $(p, |G|) = 1$ . Hence  $G$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(r)$ ,  $r$  odd. Since  $(p, |G|) = 1$ ,  $\sigma$  must be a field automorphism so  $r = q^p$ ,  $q$  odd. This contradicts our choice of  $G$ .

We therefore have that  $O(C_G(t)) = 1$  for every involution  $t$  of  $G$ . Let  $X = C_G(t)$  and suppose  $X$  is 2-constrained for some involution  $t$ . Then  $X = N_X(O_2(X)) = C_X(O_2(X))N_{B \cap X}(O_2(X)) \leq B$ , against [2]. Therefore  $E(X) \neq 1$ . Let  $L_1, \dots, L_n$  be the components of  $E = E(X)$ . Because  $\sigma$  is trivial on a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $G$ ,  $\sigma$  leaves each  $L_i$  invariant.

Suppose  $E \subseteq B$ . Then  $X = C_G(t) = N_X(E) = C_X(E)N_{B \cap X}(E) \subseteq O_2(X)EN_{B \cap X}(E) \subseteq B$ . By [2], this is impossible. Hence  $\sigma$  is non-trivial on some  $L_i$ . Furthermore,  $L_i$  is perfect so  $\sigma$  is non-trivial on  $L_i/Z(L_i)$ . By induction,  $L_i/Z(L_i)$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(r^p)$ ,  $r$  odd. The Component Theorem implies  $G$  is a Chevalley group over  $GF(q_1)$  for some odd  $q_1$ . However,  $(p, |G|) = 1$  so  $\sigma$  must be a field automorphism and  $q_1 = q^p$ ,  $q$  odd. This contradicts our choice of  $G$  and the conjecture follows.

**2. Groups with  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  solvable.** In this section we shall determine the structure of finite groups satisfying Hypothesis I with  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  solvable. We prove the following main result.

**THEOREM 2.** *Let  $G$  be a finite group satisfying Hypothesis I. Assume  $B = C_G(\sigma)$  is solvable. Then one of the following occurs:*

- i)  $G$  is solvable with  $G = O_2(G)B$ .
- ii)  $G$  contains characteristic subgroups  $G_1, G_2$  such that  $G_1 \trianglelefteq G_2 \trianglelefteq G$  with  $G_1, G/G_2$  solvable and  $G_2/G_1 \cong L_1 \times \dots \times L_n, L_i \cong L_2(3^p), 1 \leq i \leq n$ .

Let  $G$  be a finite group satisfying the hypothesis of Theorem 2. If  $G$  is solvable, set  $Q = O_{2,2}(G)$  and choose  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$ . Then  $T = S \cap Q$  is a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $Q$  and  $G = QN_G(T)$  by a Frattini argument. Lemma 5 in [2] and the fact that  $\sigma$  acts trivially on  $T$  imply  $N_G(T) = C_G(T)N_B(T)$ . As  $G$  is

solvable,  $C_G(T) \subseteq Q$  so  $G = QN_B(T) \subseteq O_2, (G)B$ . Hence  $G = O_2, (G)B$  and (i) of Theorem 2 is established.

We may now assume  $G$  is nonsolvable and set  $G_1 = S(G)$ , the largest normal solvable subgroup of  $G$ . Let  $\bar{G} = G/G_1$ . Then  $\sigma$  induces an automorphism of  $\bar{G}$  with  $C_{\bar{G}}(\sigma) = \bar{B}$  where  $\bar{B}$  denotes the image of  $B$  in  $\bar{G}$ . (See Lemma 3, [2].) If  $\bar{G} = \bar{B}$ ,  $G$  is solvable. We conclude that  $\bar{B}$  is a proper subgroup of  $\bar{G}$  and  $\bar{G}$  is a nonsolvable group satisfying the hypothesis of Theorem 2 with  $S(\bar{G}) = 1$ . Now proving Theorem 2 for  $\bar{G}$  is equivalent to proving the theorem for  $G$ , so we may assume for the remainder of this section that  $G$  satisfies

**HYPOTHESIS II.** *Let  $G$  be a finite nonsolvable group satisfying the hypothesis of Theorem 2 with  $S(G) = 1$ .*

First we recall some definitions from [3]. Suppose  $A \leq T \leq X$  are groups such that whenever  $a \in A$ ,  $x \in X$ , and  $a^x \in T$ , then  $a^x \in A$ . In this situation we say  $A$  is *strongly closed* in  $T$  with respect to  $X$ .

The next series of propositions establish the existence of a strongly closed Abelian 2-subgroup  $A$  of  $G$ .

(2.1) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis I and choose  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$ . If  $S_1 \leq S$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $B$ , then  $S_1$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $G$ .*

*Proof.* Suppose  $S_1$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $B$  and  $s^g \in S$  for some  $s \in S_1$ ,  $g \in G$ . Lemma 5 of [2] implies the existence of  $b \in B$  such that  $s^g = s^b$ . By assumption  $s^b \in S_1$  so  $s^g \in S_1$  as desired.

(2.2) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis I and suppose  $H \trianglelefteq B$ ,  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$ . Then  $S \cap H$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $G$ .*

*Proof.* Set  $S_1 = S \cap H$  and suppose  $s^b \in S$  for some  $s \in S_1$ ,  $b \in B$ . Because  $H \trianglelefteq B$ ,  $s^b \in S_1$  and we conclude  $S_1$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $B$ . By (2.1),  $S_1$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $G$ .

(2.3) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis I. Then there exists  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$  and an Abelian 2-subgroup  $A \subseteq S$ ,  $A \neq 1$ , such that  $A$  is strongly closed in  $S$  with respect to  $G$ .*

*Proof.* By hypothesis,  $B$  is solvable so that  $B/O(B)$ , has a minimal normal elementary Abelian 2-subgroup. Let  $T$  be an elementary Abelian 2-group of  $B$  so that  $TO(B)$  is the preimage of this subgroup in  $B$ . Then  $TO(B) \triangleleft B$  and, by (2.2),  $S \cap (TO(B)) = A \neq 1$  is a strongly closed Abelian 2-subgroup of  $S$  with respect to  $G$ .

Let  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$  and  $A \subseteq S$  be a strongly closed Abelian 2-group of  $S$ . By (2.3),  $A \neq 1$ . Set  $K = \langle A^G \rangle$ . Theorem A in [6] implies  $K/O(K)$  is the central product of an Abelian 2-group and certain quasisimple groups. Because  $S(G) = 1$ ,  $O_{2',2}(K) = 1$  and  $K = L_1 \times \dots \times L_m$  where  $L_i$  is simple,  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . According to [6],  $L_i$  may be of Type I or II. A group of Type I is isomorphic to one of the groups  $L_2(2^n)$ ,  $n \geq 3$ ,  $S_z(2^{2n+1})$ ,  $n \geq 1$  or  $U_3(2^n)$ ,  $n \geq 2$ . Groups of

Type II are  $L_2(q)$ ,  $q \equiv 3, 5 \pmod{8}$  or simple groups of Janko-Ree type. The automorphism  $\sigma$  centralizes  $S \cap K \in \text{Syl}_2(K)$  and thus must centralize a Sylow 2-subgroup of each  $L_i$ . Each group of Type I is a  $C$ -group so that centralizers of involutions are solvable and consequently 2-constrained. The argument (1.1) of Section 1 may then be used to show that these simple groups cannot admit an automorphism  $\sigma$  satisfying Hypothesis I. The solvability of  $B$  implies  $\sigma$  must act faithfully on  $L_i$  and consequently  $L_i$  must be a group of Type II. We are now able to prove the following:

(2.4) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis II. Then  $G$  contains a normal subgroup  $K$  such that  $K = L_1 \times \dots \times L_m$ ,  $L_i \cong L_2(3^p)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq m$ .*

*Proof.* The remarks preceding (2.4) show the existence of  $K \trianglelefteq G$  such that  $K = L_1 \times \dots \times L_m$ ,  $L_i$  simple of type  $L_2(q)$ ,  $q \equiv 3, 5 \pmod{8}$  or isomorphic to a simple group of Janko-Ree type.

We first show no factor  $L_i$  of  $K$  is of Janko-Ree type. Suppose  $L$  is a simple group of Janko-Ree type admitting an automorphism  $\sigma$  satisfying Hypothesis I. Let  $T = C_L(\sigma)$  and choose  $t \in T$ , with  $t$  an involution. From [3; 9],  $C_L(t) = \langle t \rangle \times F$ ,  $F \cong L_2(3^{2n+1})$ ,  $n \geq 1$ . It follows that  $\sigma$  leaves  $F$  invariant with  $C_F(\sigma)$  a solvable subgroup containing a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $F$  of order 4. The structure of  $P\Gamma L(2, 3^{2n+1})$  forces  $\sigma$  to be a field automorphism with  $GF(3)$  the fixed field of  $\sigma$  (see [8, p. 632]). Hence  $F \cong L_2(3^p)$  and  $C_F(\sigma) \cong A_4$ , the alternating group on four letters. We conclude that  $C_T(t) = \langle t \rangle \times D$ ,  $D \cong A_4$ . A Sylow 2-subgroup of  $L$  is elementary Abelian of order 8 so by a transfer argument all involutions of  $L$  are conjugate. Let  $R \in \text{Syl}_2(T)$ . Lemma 5 in [2] shows  $T$  controls fusion in  $R$  and hence  $T$  has no normal subgroup of index 2. Let  $\langle a, b \rangle$  be a four-group of  $R$  and set  $O = O_{2'}(T)$ . Then  $O = C_O(a)C_O(b)C_O(ab)$ . However, for  $t \in \langle a, b \rangle^\#$ ,  $C_T(t)$  has no normal subgroup of odd order so  $O_{2'}(T) = 1$ . The solvability of  $T$  implies  $R \trianglelefteq T$  so that  $[T : C_T(t)] = 7$ ,  $|T| = 2^3 \cdot 3 \cdot 7$ . Let  $x \in T$  be an element of order 3 fixed by  $\sigma$ . Lemma 6 in [2] implies the existence of a  $\sigma$ -invariant Sylow 3-subgroup  $Q$  of  $L$  containing  $x$ . Moreover, [9] shows  $|Q| = 3^{3p}$ . Now  $\sigma$  must act fixed-point freely on the remaining  $3^{3p} - 3$  elements of  $Q$  so  $3^{3p} - 3 \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$ . But,  $3^{3p} - 3 \equiv 3^3 - 3 = 24 \pmod{p}$ , a contradiction to our choice of  $p$ . We conclude that a group  $L$  of Janko-Ree type admits no automorphism  $\sigma$  satisfying Hypothesis I.

We may now conclude that  $K = L_1 \times \dots \times L_m$ ,  $L_i \cong L_2(q)$ ,  $q \equiv 3, 5 \pmod{8}$ . Because  $\sigma$  fixes a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $L_i$ ,  $\sigma$  must be a field automorphism with  $C_{L_i}(\sigma)$  solvable. Thus  $q = 3^p$  and  $L_i \cong L_2(3^p)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq m$ .

(2.5) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis II. Then  $E(G) = L_1 \times \dots \times L_n$ ,  $L_i \cong L_2(3^p)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq n$ . Moreover,  $C_G(E(G)) = 1$ .*

*Proof.* We use induction on  $|G|$ . Set  $E = E(G)$ . By (2.5),  $G$  contains a normal subgroup  $K = L_1 \times \dots \times L_m$ ,  $L_i \cong L_2(3^p)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . Then  $K \leq E$  and  $E = KC_E(K)$ . If  $C_E(K) = 1$ ,  $E = K$  and (2.5) holds. Because  $G$  satisfies Hypothesis II, we may assume  $C_E(K)$  is a proper nonsolvable  $\sigma$ -invariant sub-

group of  $E$ . In fact,  $C_E(K)$  is the direct product of certain simple components of  $G$  so  $E(C_E(K)) = C_E(K)$ . By induction,  $C_E(K)$  is the direct product of copies of  $L_2(3^p)$ . The first conclusion of (2.5) now follows.

By hypothesis, the Fitting subgroup  $F(G) = 1$  so that  $F^*(G) = F(G)E(G) = E(G)$ . From (2.2) of [3],  $C_G(E(G)) \subseteq E(G)$ . We conclude that  $C_G(E(G)) = 1$ .

(2.6) *Let  $G$  satisfy Hypothesis II. Then  $G/E(G)$  is solvable.*

*Proof.* Set  $E = E(G)$ . The structure of  $E$  is given in (2.5). Let  $S \in \text{Syl}_2(B)$ . A Sylow argument shows  $G = EN_G(S \cap E)$  and Lemma 5 in [2] implies  $N_G(S \cap E) = C_G(S \cap E)N_B(S \cap E)$ . Because  $N_B(S \cap E)$  is solvable, it remains to show  $C_G(S \cap E)$  is solvable.

Set  $X_1 = C_G(S \cap E)$  and assume  $X_1 \neq 1$ . By (2.5),  $C_G(E) = 1$  so  $X_1$  does not centralize each factor of  $E$ . Notice  $X_1$  must leave each factor of  $E$  invariant so, after a suitable rearrangement of the subscripts on the  $L_i$ , we may assume  $X_2 = C_{X_1}(L_1)$  is a proper normal subgroup of  $X_1$ . Then  $X_1/X_2$  is isomorphic to a group of automorphisms of  $L_1$  which centralizes a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $L_1$ . The structure of  $P\Gamma L(2, 3^p)$  forces  $X_1/X_2$  to be solvable. A similar argument shows  $X_2 = 1$  or  $X_2$  contains a proper normal subgroup  $X_3$  such that  $X_2/X_3$  is solvable. Consequently,  $X_1$  contains a subnormal series  $X_1 \supseteq X_2 \supseteq \dots \supseteq 1$  for which  $X_i/X_{i+1}$  is solvable. We conclude  $X_1 = C_G(S \cap E)$  is solvable. The result (2.6) now follows.

The proof of Theorem 2 now follows from (2.5), (2.6) and the remarks preceding (2.1). Specifically, let  $G_1 = S(G)$  and choose  $G_2$  to be the preimage in  $G/G_1$  of  $E(G/G_1)$ .

Notice that the groups which satisfy the hypothesis of Theorem 2 may have  $E(G) = 1$ . For example, let  $G$  be isomorphic to the centralizer of a "central" element of order 3 in  $PSp_4(3^p)$  where  $(p, |PSp_4(3^p)|) = 1$ . From [8],  $G = UL$ ,  $U \cap L = 1$ ,  $|U| = 3^{3p}$ ,  $L \cong SL_2(3^p)$  with  $U = O_3(G)$ . Then, if we take  $t$  to be the central involution of  $L$ ,  $G_1 = U\langle t \rangle$ ,  $G_2 = G$  and because  $L$  is not subnormal in  $G$ ,  $E(G) = 1$ .

On the other hand, consider  $X = Sp_8(3^p)$  where  $(p, |Sp_8(3)|) = 1$ . It is shown in [10] that  $X$  contains an elementary 2-subgroup  $D$  of order 16 generated by symplectic involutions of type 2. Furthermore,  $C_X(D) = L_1 \times L_2 \times L_3 \times L_4$ ,  $L_i \cong SL_2(3^p)$  with  $N_X(D)/C_X(D) \cong S_4$ . Clearly the field automorphism of  $X$  of order  $p$  induces an automorphism of  $N_X(D)$  which satisfies Hypothesis I. Now take  $H$  to be any finite solvable group with  $(p, |H|) = 1$  and let  $L$  be a group isomorphic to  $N_X(D)$ . Set  $G = H \times L$ . The automorphism  $\sigma$  of order  $p$  which acts trivially on  $H$  and acts as a field automorphism of  $L$  satisfies the hypothesis of Theorem 2. In fact, if  $Q = O_2(L)$ ,  $G_1 = H \times Q$ ,  $G_2 = HC_L(Q)$ , and  $G/G_2 \cong S_4$ . Here  $E(G) = C_L(Q) \cong L_1 \times L_2 \times L_3 \times L_4$ ,  $L_i \cong L_2(3^p)$ .

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