The Higgs branch of $6d \mathcal{N} = (1,0)$ theories at infinite coupling

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Based on the following work:

- [arXiv:1801.01129] with A. Hanany
- [arXiv:1707.05785] with K. Ohmori, H. Shimizu and A. Tomasiello

- [arXiv:1707.04370] with K. Ohmori, Y. Tachikawa and G. Zafrir
- [arXiv:1612.06399] with T. Rudelius and A. Tomasiello

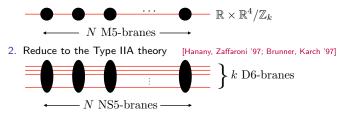
Plan

- ▶ $6d \ \mathcal{N} = (1,0)$ theories on M5-branes on an ADE singularity
- Their T^2 compactification to $4d \mathcal{N} = 2$ theories
- Use lower dimensional theories to learn about the Higgs branch moduli space of $6d \mathcal{N} = (1,0)$ theories at infinite coupling
- ▶ Quantify the massless degrees of freedom at the SCFT fixed point of a large class of 6d N = (1, 0) theories

PART I: M5-branes on an ADE singularity

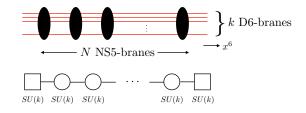
M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G singularity

- The worldvolume theory of N M5-branes on flat space is $6d \mathcal{N} = (2,0)$ theory of Type A_{N-1}
- ► The presence of \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G breaks half of the amount of supersymmetry $\longrightarrow \quad 6d \ \mathcal{N} = (1,0)$ theory on the worldvolume
- For $\Gamma_G = \mathbb{Z}_k$, one can conveniently find a description of the worldvolume theory in 2 steps.
 - 1. Separate the N M5-branes



A description of the theory on M5-branes on $\mathbb{C}^2/\mathbb{Z}_k$

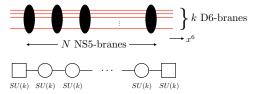
 From the Type IIA set-up, we can write down the quiver description [Hanany, Zaffaroni '97; Brunner, Karch '97; Ferrara, Kehagias, Partouche, Zaffaroni '98]



A circular node \rightarrow an SU(k) vector multiplet A square node \rightarrow an SU(k) flavour symmetry A line \rightarrow a bi-fundamental hypermultiplet + a tensor multiplet

Note: Each hypermultiplet and each tensor multiplet contain a scalar component. The scalar VEVs in the h-plet parametrise the **Higgs branch** and those in the t-plet parametrise the **tensor branch** of the moduli space.

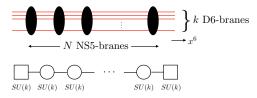
Important points



- Each NS5-brane carries a $6d \mathcal{N} = (1,0)$ tensor multiplet (t-plet)
- The position of each NS5-brane in the x^6 -direction
 - \equiv the VEV of the scalar ϕ in each t-plet
- There are N-1 independent t-plets (after fixing the CoM of NS5s)
 - ▶ The VEVs of their scalars parametrise the tensor branch of the moduli space

- ▶ The gauge coupling $1/g_i^2$ of the *i*-th gauge group (i = 1, ..., N 1)
 - \equiv the relative VEV $\phi_{i+1} \phi_i$ of the scalars in the adjacent t-plets.

The infinite coupling point: SCFT



When all NS5-branes are coincident, all gauge couplings become infinity

▶ This happens at the origin of the tensor branch, where all $\phi_{i+1} - \phi_i = 0$

Tensionless strings:

The D2-branes inside the D6-branes become tensionless

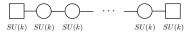
(the D2-brane \equiv the instanton to the gauge field on the D6-brane)

- \rightarrow a critical point at the origin of the tensor branch
- Non-trivial physics: This is believed to be an SCFT at infinite coupling

[Hanany, Ganor '96; Seiberg, Witten '96]

The infinite coupling point: SCFT

It should be emphasised that the quiver

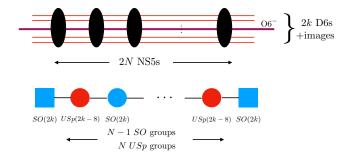


provides a good description at finite coupling

- (*i.e.* generic VEVs of the scalars in the t-plets)
- \equiv generic point of the tensor branch moduli space
- But the physics at infinite coupling may be different from that is described by the quiver!
- ► The aim of this talk: Show that for a number of N = (1,0) theories, the Higgs branch at infinite coupling is *different* from that at finite coupling. We will also *quantify* this difference.

A description of the theory on M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G (continued)

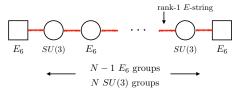
For G = SO(2k), the Type IIA description is [Ferrara, Kehagias, Partouche, Zaffaroni '98]



 For G = E_{6,7,8}, there's no known Type IIA brane construction. We need a description from F-theory [Aspinwall, Morrison '97; del Zotto, Heckman, Tomasiello, Vafa '14; etc.]

A description of the theory on M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G (continued)

• For $G = E_6$, the quiver looks something like this



► The thick red line is not a fundamental hyper. It's a 6d N = (1,0) theory by itself, known as the rank-1 E-string

[Hanany, Ganor '96; Seiberg, Witten '96; Morrison, Vafa '96; Witten '96]

A rank-1 *E*-string contains 1 tensor multiplet and at the origin of the tensor branch, it's an SCFT with *E*₈ global symmetry whose Higgs branch ≡ the moduli space of one *E*₈ instanton

• Here E_8 decomposes into $E_6 \times SU(3)$

A brief digression on F-theory quivers

- ▶ 6d theories can be constructed by F-theory on $\mathbb{R}^{1,5}$ × elliptically fibred CY_3
- ► The base of the CY₃ is a non-compact complex 2-dimensional space with a collection of 2-cycles Cⁱ
- \blacktriangleright The size of the curves \equiv the VEVs of the scalars in 6d $\mathcal{N}=(1,0)$ t-plets
- The configuration of curves is determined by a matrix

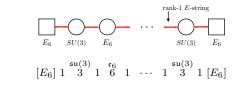
 $\eta^{ij} = -($ the intersection number of \mathcal{C}^i and $\mathcal{C}^j)$

This gives the kinetic term of tensor multiplets ϕ_i : $\eta^{ij}\partial_\mu\phi_i\partial^\mu\phi_j$

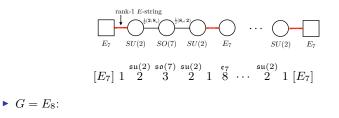
- Shrinking all curves C^i simultaneously to zero size
 - $\Leftrightarrow \quad \mathsf{taking the VEVS of the t-plets to zero} \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \mathsf{6d SCFT}$

A description of the theory on M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G (continued)

 \blacktriangleright $G = E_6$:



 \blacktriangleright $G = E_7$:



 $\begin{bmatrix} E_8 \end{bmatrix} 1 \ 2 \ 2 \ 3 \ 3 \ 1 \ 5 \ 1 \ 3 \ 2 \ 2 \ 1 \ 1 \ 2 \ \cdots \ 2 \ 2 \ 1 \ \begin{bmatrix} \mathfrak{su}(2) \\ \mathfrak{su$

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M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G (continued)

- In the literature, the theory on N M5-branes on C²/Γ_G is often referred to as the conformal matter of type (G,G). For N = 1, it's a.k.a. the minimal conformal matter. [del Zotto, Heckman, Tomasiello, Vafa '14]
- We have the quiver descriptions at a generic point on the tensor branch of these theories

- But we want to know the physics at infinite coupling (e.g. extra massless degrees of freedom)
- How do we extract such information from the quivers?

PART II: T^2 compactification

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T^2 compactification

Aim: Study the Higgs branch of the 6d theory at infinite coupling using 4d theories from T^2 compactification



▶ Working assumption: The Higgs branch of the $6d \ \mathcal{N} = (1,0) \ \text{SCFT}$ is the same as the Higgs branch of the $4d \ \mathcal{N} = 2$ theory from the T^2 compactification

T^2 compactification of the min. conformal matter theory

The min. conformal matter of type (G, G)(*i.e.* the SCFT for 1 M5-brane on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G) A theory of class S of type G assoc. w/ a sphere with two max. punctures and one min. puncture

[Ohmori, Shimizu, Tachikawa, Yonekura (Part I) '15; del Zotto, Vafa, Xie '15]

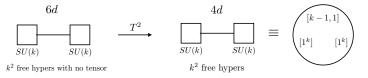
An argument using the chain of dualities

 $\xrightarrow{T^2}$

- Take the low energy limit & ignore the CoM mode of the D3
- ► Type IIB on $\mathbb{R} \times S^1 \times \mathbb{C}^2 / \Gamma_G \longrightarrow 6d (2,0)$ theory of type G on $\mathbb{R} \times S^1$
- The tension of the D3-brane becomes infinite
- ▶ The D3-brane \equiv a co-dim.-2 defect of the $\mathcal{N} = (2,0)$ theory of type G

T^2 compactification of the min. conformal matter theory

- ▶ The two infinities of $\mathbb{R} \times S^1$ = two maximal punctures
- ► The 4d theory from the T² compactification of the 6d theory ≡ a theory of class S assoc. w/ a sphere with 2 max. punctures and another puncture of type X
- To fix X, we look at G = SU(k).



- ▶ Hence, X is a minimal puncture
- ▶ We'll use this class S theory to study the Higgs branch at infinite coupling of the 6d theory

Example I: 1 M5-brane on $\mathbb{C}^2/\Gamma_{D_k}$ (revisited)



- ► The Higgs branch dimension as computed from the quiver description: $d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d quiver}) = (2k - 8)(2k) - \frac{1}{2}(2k - 8)(2k - 7) = 2k^2 - k - 28$
- ► The Higgs branch dimension as computed from the 4d class S theory: d_{Higgs}(4d class S) = 2k² - k + 1 = d_{Higgs}(6d SCFT)
- ▶ But there is a mismatch of 29 (for all k ≥ 4): d_{Higgs}(6d SCFT) - d_{Higgs}(6d quiver) = 29
- There are 29 extra DoFs on the Higgs branch when we go from a generic point (finite coupling) to the origin of the tensor branch (infinite coupling)
- One tensor multiplet becomes 29 hypermultiplets at infinite coupling

Example II: 1 M5-brane on $\mathbb{C}^2/\Gamma_{E_6}$



The Higgs branch dimension as computed from the 4d class S theory.

$$d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{4d class S}) = 79 = d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d SCFT})$$

- In the quiver, there's no hyper whose VEV higgses the gauge group SU(3).
- ▶ But if we assume that ALL 3 tensors become 29 × 3 hypers at the origin of the tensor branch, we obtain the Higgs branch dimension to be

$$(29 \times 3) - 8 = 79$$
,

in agreement with the above $d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d SCFT})$.

General statements

- ▶ In the previous examples, we've seen that ALL n_T tensor multiplets become $29n_T$ hypermultiplets at the orgin of the tensor branch.
- This phenomenon is known as the small instanton transition
 [Hanany, Ganor '96; Seiberg, Witten '96; Intriligator '97; Blum, Intriligator '97; Hanany, Zaffaroni ' 97]
 - It was first discussed in the context of M5/M9 brane system
 - When an M5-brane is away from the M9-brane, there's one tensor multiplet (and no hypermultiplet)
 - When the M5 is on top of the M9, this system realises the reduced moduli space of one small E₈ instanton, whose dimension is 29.
 - Indeed, at this point, the *E*-string, which is an M2-brane, stretching between M5 and M9 becomes tensionless.
 - The tensor multiplet becomes 29 hypermultiplets in this set-up
- However, we'll see below that it's NOT true in general that all tensors turn into hypers at infinite coupling. There're cases in which only some of the tensors, or even none, turn into hypers.

PART III: The Higgs branch at infinite coupling

The SCFT Higgs branch dimension

The main claim of this talk is that the Higgs branch dimension of the SCFT is given by [NM, Ohmori, Shimizu, Tomasiello '17]

$$d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d SCFT}) = 29N_{T \to H} + n_H - n_V$$

where $N_{T \rightarrow H}$ is the number of the tensors that turn into hypers at the origin of the tensor branch:

$$N_{T \to H} = \sum_{i,j=1}^{n_T} \eta_{ij}^{-1} (2 - \eta^{ii}) (2 - \eta^{jj}) ,$$

with n_T, n_H, n_V the numbers of tensors, hypers and vectors and η the matrix of the intersection numbers of the curves in the F-theory quiver.

- This formula computes a quantity at the origin of the tensor branch using the information from a generic point of the tensor branch (*i.e.* the F-theory quiver).
- ▶ Indeed, we'll later support this formula by an anomaly argument: $N_{T \rightarrow H}$ actually comes from the Green-Schwarz-West-Sagnotti term.

Example III: N M5-brane on $\mathbb{C}^2/\Gamma_{D_k}$

The F-theory quiver for this theory is

$$[SO(2k)] \begin{array}{cccc} \mbox{usp}(2k-8) & \mbox{so}(2k) & \mbox{so}(2k) & \mbox{usp}(2k-8) \\ 1 & 4 & \cdots & 4 & 1 & [SO(2k)] ; \end{array}$$

there are $n_T = 2N - 1$ tensor multiplets.

The matrix of the intersection numbers is

$$\eta = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ -1 & 4 & -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & \ddots & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 & 4 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Hence, $N_{T \to H} = \sum_{i,j=1}^{n_T} \eta_{ij}^{-1} (2 - \eta^{ii}) (2 - \eta^{jj}) = N$

• Out of 2N - 1 tensors, only N tensors turn into hypers at infinite coupling

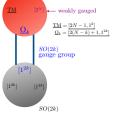
Example III: N M5-branes on $\mathbb{C}^2/\Gamma_{D_k}$

The Higgs branch dimension at infinite coupling is

$$d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d SCFT}) = 29N_{T \to H} + n_H - n_V$$

= 29N + 2N(2k)(2k - 4) - [(N - 1)k(2k - 1)
+ N(k - 1)(2k - 7)]
= N + $\frac{1}{2}(2k)(2k - 1)$

• This can be checked against the Higgs branch dimension of the 4d theory from T^2 compactification [Ohmori, Shimizu, Tachikawa, Yonekura (Part II) '15; Ohmori '16]



▶ The resulting 4d theory is

 $\frac{\mathsf{S}_{SU(2N)}\{\underline{\mathrm{TM}},[2^N],\underline{\mathbf{O}}_k\}\times\mathsf{S}_{SO(2k)}\{[1^{2k}],[1^{2k}],[1^{2k}]\}}{SU(N)\times\mathrm{diag}(SO(2k)\times SO(2k))}$

The Higgs branch dimension is

$$d_{\mathsf{Higgs}}(\mathsf{4d theory}) = N + \frac{1}{2}(2k)(2k-1)$$

Matching of certain anomaly coefficients

Why are we able to use the effective description at finite coupling to compute a quantity at infinite coupling?

$$d_{\text{Higgs}}(\text{6d SCFT}) = 29N_{T \to H} + n_H - n_V$$

 \blacktriangleright This is because we can match the anomaly coefficients γ and δ in

$$I_8 = \alpha c_2(R)^2 + \beta c_2(R)p_1(T) + \gamma p_1(T)^2 + \delta p_2(T)$$

between the starting point and the end point of this diagram:

• Matching δ gives

$$d_{\mathsf{Higgs}}(\mathsf{6d SCFT}) + 29\mathfrak{n} = 29n_T + n_H - n_V$$

Matching γ gives [Green, Schwarz, West '85; Sagnotti '92]

$$n_T = n_{\text{GSWS}} + \mathfrak{n} = \sum_{i,j=1}^{n_T} \eta_{ij}^{-1} (2 - \eta^{ii}) (2 - \eta^{jj}) + \mathfrak{n}$$

where $n_{\text{GSWS}} = \sum_{i,j=1}^{n_T} \eta_{ij}^{-1} (2 - \eta^{ii}) (2 - \eta^{jj}) = N_{T \to H}$

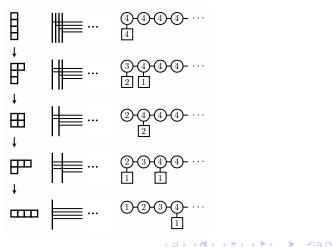
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PART III: Applications

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Example IV: T-brane theories

- Start with a theory on M5-branes on \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G : Flavour symmetry $G \times G$
- \blacktriangleright Can turn on the nilpotent VEV to Higgs each flavour symmetry G
- **Example:** The case of G = SU(4) [Kraft, Procesi '82; Gaiotto, Witten '08; del Zotto, Heckman, Tomasiello, Vafa '14; Heckman, Rudelius, Tomasiello '14; Cabrera, Hanany '16, '17]



Example IV: T-brane theories (continued)

 \blacktriangleright The Higgsing is labelled by a nilpotent orbit Y of G

- For G = SU(k), Y is specified by a partition of k
- For G = SO(2k), Y is specified by a D-partition of 2k
- For G an exceptional group, Y is specified by a Bala-Carter label
- Suppose that we Higgs $G \times G$ with the orbit Y_L for the first G and with the orbit Y_R for the second G.
 - The resulting theory is known as a **T-brane theory**, $T_G(Y_L, Y_R)$
 - Example: G = SU(4), $Y_L = [2, 1^2]$ and $Y_R = [2^2]$

$$\begin{smallmatrix} \mathfrak{su}_3 & \mathfrak{su}_4 & \mathfrak{su}_4 & \mathfrak{su}_4 & \mathfrak{su}_4 \\ 2 & 2 & 2 & \cdots & 2 & 2 \\ [SU(2)] & [N_f=1] & & [SU(2)] \end{smallmatrix}$$

• Example: $G = E_6$, $Y_L = E_6$ (principal orbit) and $Y_R = 0$ (trivial orbit)

Example IV: T-brane theories (continued)

• The Higgs branch dimension at infinite coupling of $T_G(Y_L, Y_R)$ is

 $d_{\mathsf{Higgs}}^{\mathsf{CFT}} \ T_G(Y_L,Y_R) = \mathfrak{n} + \dim(G) + 1 - d_{Y_L} - d_{Y_R}$

▶ n = # of the (-2)-curves after blowing down all (-1)-curves

- **•** Blowing down a (-1)-curve: $x \ 1 \ y \rightarrow (x-1) \ (y-1)$
- Field theoretically: No matter how we try to higgs the theory at a generic point of tensor branch, there still remain n tensor multiplets which remain un-higgsed.

▶ d_{Y_L} , d_{Y_R} are the dimension of the orbits Y_L and Y_R

► Here,
$$N_{T \to H} = n_T - \mathfrak{n}$$
, and
 $29n_T + n_H - n_V = 30\mathfrak{n} + \dim(G) + 1 - d_{Y_L} - d_{Y_E}$

• Example. $G = E_6$, $Y_L = E_6$ and $Y_R = 0$: $2 \begin{array}{c} {}^{\mathfrak{su}_2 \ \mathfrak{g}_2} & \mathfrak{g}_2 \\ 2 \end{array} \begin{array}{c} {}^{\mathfrak{su}_2 \ \mathfrak{g}_2} & \mathfrak{g}_3 \\ 1 \end{array} \begin{array}{c} {}^{\mathfrak{f}_4} & \mathfrak{su}_3 \\ 3 \end{array} \begin{array}{c} 1 \end{array} \begin{array}{c} E_6 \end{array}$

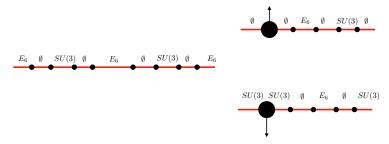
▶ Blow down the
$$(-1)$$
-curves:
22315131 \rightarrow 2224131 \rightarrow 222321 \rightarrow 22231 \rightarrow 2222

- We have n = 4, $\dim(G) = 78$, $d_{Y_L} = 36$, $d_{Y_R} = 0$
- ► $d_{\text{Higgs}}^{\text{CFT}} T_{E_6}(E_6, 0) = 4 + 78 + 1 36 0 = 47$

Example V: Frozen singularities

[de Boer, Dijkgraaf, Hori, Keurentjes, Morgan, Morrison, Sethi '01; Atiyah, Witten '01; Tachikawa '15]

- > One can combine fractional M5-branes on a singularity in different ways
- ► Example: 2 M5-branes on ℝ × ℝ⁴/Γ_{E6}.
 Each of the individual fractions is 1/4 an ordinary M5



From the E_6 conformal matter theory, we can obtain

 $[1] \stackrel{\mathfrak{{su}}(3)}{3} \stackrel{\mathfrak{e}_6}{1} \stackrel{\mathfrak{f}_6}{6} [1], \qquad [SU(3)] \stackrel{\mathfrak{e}_6}{1} \stackrel{\mathfrak{f}_6}{6} \stackrel{\mathfrak{l}_6}{1} [SU(3)].$

• In the first case, E_6 is said to be completely frozen to $G_{fr} = \{1\}$

▶ In the second case, E_6 is said to be partially frozen to $G_{\rm fr} = SU(3)$

Example V: Frozen singularities (continued)

The Higgs branch dimension at infinite coupling is

 $\dim_{\mathsf{Higgs}}^{\mathsf{CFT}} \mathcal{T}_{G \to G_{\mathsf{fr}}} = \mathfrak{n} + \dim(G_{\mathsf{fr}}) + 1$

- Let's focus on the minimal case: n = 0 (*i.e.* the case of a single M5-brane)
- When G_{fr} is trivial (G is completely frozen), the Higgs branch dim. is 1
 - The Higgs branch is \mathbb{C}^2/Γ_G
 - ▶ When $\mathcal{T}_{G \to \emptyset}$ compactified on T^3 to 3d, the Coulomb branch dim. is $h_G^{\vee} 1$. This is equal to (# tensors + total rank of the gauge groups) in $\mathcal{T}_{G \to G_{f_r}}$
 - ► $\mathcal{T}_{G \to \emptyset} \xrightarrow{T^3}$ 3d $\mathcal{N} = 4$ quiver theory given by an affine Dynkin diagram of G with unitary gauge groups of ranks equal to the Coxeter labels
 - Example: $G = E_6$

$$\circ U(1) \\ 0 U(2) \\ \circ U(2) \\ \circ U(1) \\ U(2) \\ U(2) \\ U(3) \\ U(2) \\ U(2) \\ U(1) \\ U(1) \\ U(2) \\$$

with an overall U(1) modded out

Example V: Frozen singularities (continued)

Another application: "New" conformal matter theories of type (G, G) with G non-simply-laced. For example, starting from one M5 on C²/Γ_{E8}

$$[E_8] \ 1 \ 2 \ \overset{\mathfrak{su}(2)}{2} \ 3 \ 1 \ \overset{\mathfrak{f}_4}{5} \ 1 \ \overset{\mathfrak{g}_2}{3} \ \overset{\mathfrak{su}(2)}{2} \ 2 \ 1 \ [E_8]$$

one can obtain the following (G_2, G_2) and (F_4, F_4) conformal matter theories by partially freezing E_8 :

$$\begin{bmatrix} G_2 \end{bmatrix} \overset{\mathfrak{su}_2}{2} 2 1 \overset{\mathfrak{s}_8}{12} 1 2 \overset{\mathfrak{su}_2}{2} \overset{\mathfrak{g}_2}{3} 1 \overset{\mathfrak{f}_4}{5} 1 \begin{bmatrix} G_2 \end{bmatrix}, \\ \begin{bmatrix} F_4 \end{bmatrix} 1 \overset{\mathfrak{g}_2}{3} \overset{\mathfrak{su}_2}{2} 2 1 \overset{\mathfrak{su}_2}{12} 1 2 \overset{\mathfrak{su}_2}{2} \overset{\mathfrak{g}_2}{3} 1 \begin{bmatrix} F_4 \end{bmatrix}$$

Conclusions

- In general, the Higgs branch at infinite coupling can be different from that at finite coupling.
- A certain number of tensor multiplets become hypermultiplets at the origin of the tensor branch. We have quantified how many.
- The Higgs branch dimension of the SCFT at the infinite coupling point can be computed using the quiver data at a generic point of tensor branch.
- Applications: T-brane theories, and theories associated with (partially or completely) frozen singularities.

Deeper understanding of fractional M5-branes.