

6.2 DB-Derived potentials

Semi-empirical based on approximations of quantum-chemistry, such as force-fields, have a low accuracy predicting the folding of proteins. This was proved in “An analysis of incorrectly Folded protein Models” by Karplus, where it was possible to minimize the incoherences between two unrelated proteins, resulting in a false positive for homology.

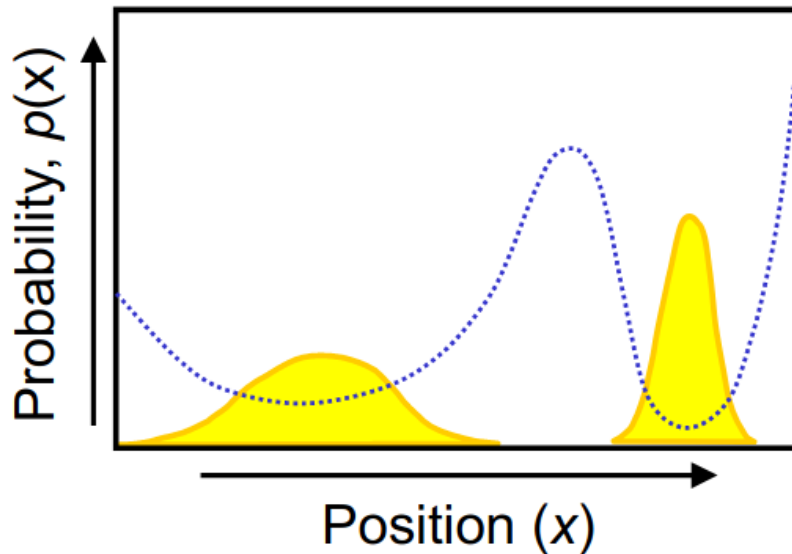
This is because force-fields calculations sometimes fail to capture some interactions between side-chains or more distant atoms that result in unfeasible folding predictions.

Boltzmann distribution

The Boltzmann distribution relates potential energy and temperature to probability

$$p(x) \propto e^{\frac{-U(x)}{k_B \cdot T}}$$

where T is temperature and k_b is the Boltzmann constant



Key properties: - Higher energies gives lower probability - Exponential relationship: Constant energy increase to halve probability - Temperature dependence: At higher temperature the energy increase has to be bigger

Sometimes it's difficult to predict the overall energy of a macro/microstate, but the probability ratio between two states can be efficiently calculated:

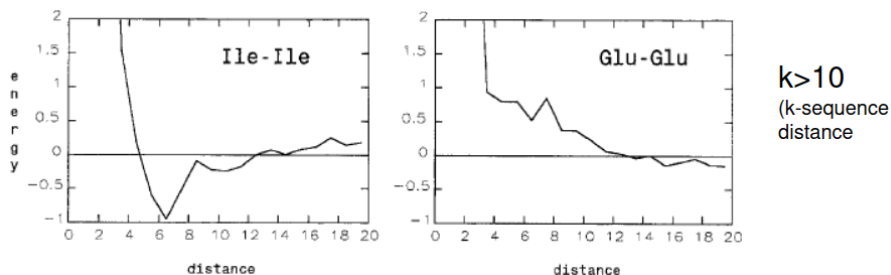
$$\frac{N_1}{N_2} = e^{\frac{-\Delta E}{k_b T}}$$

Mean force potentials

We can estimate the difference in energy between two states from their counts using the inverse Boltzmann law:

$$\Delta E = -k_b \cdot \ln\left(\frac{N_1}{N_2}\right)$$

Using this and taking into account different relationships (i.e. distances between $C\alpha$ that are 4 positions away in the chain), the relative frequencies of the different distances can be used to create Boltzmann distributions of the different distances for particular cases. This are the so-called DB-derived Mean Force potentials.

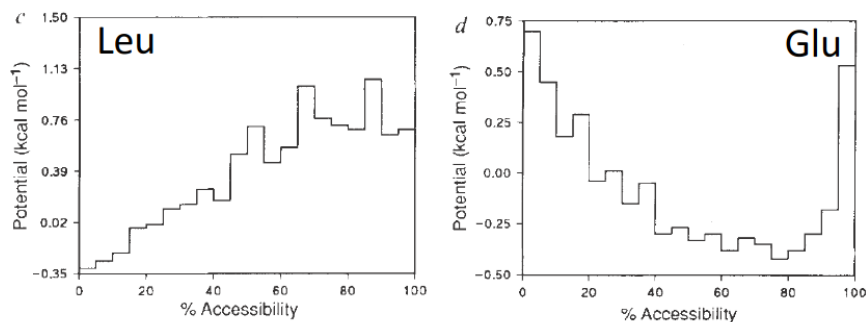


Db-derived solvation energies

DB-info can be used to derive estimations of solvation energies. For that, we define a δ -neighborhood in the euclidean space of the different types of aminoacids and count the number of neighboring aminoacids, relative to the overall aa-types:

$$E_{aa,r} = -k_b \cdot \ln\left(\frac{f_{aa,N_r}}{f_{x,N_r}}\right)$$

leading to estimations of the position of the different aminoacids to the water accesible area:



Applications

Mean force potentials failed to be a good folding-prediction tool, but are a powerful tool for: - evaluating the correctness of NMR structures. - Solving the reverse folding problem (finding a sequence compatible with an observed fold).

Weaknesses

- Lack of detail leads to implausible structures (i.e impossible in nature bond angles).
- Fails to capture interactions at a global level, and only considers interactions at the primary sequence level (multibody effect).

Summary

- **Advantages**
 - easy to compute
 - effective interaction potential; i.e. abstraction of detailed interaction types, but still correct!
 - applicable to essentially all types of interactions (angles etc.), including non-physical interactions (“Pseudo” energies = additive(!) scoring function)
- **Disadvantages/ Problems**
 - higher order correlations (multi-body effects)
 - dependent on available protein structures,
 - finite size effect of protein structures
 - simplification (not sufficient detail in energy profile)
 - reference state not directly accessible