The Utility of Data From Relatives for Psychological Studies

Michael C. Neale
Professor, Departments of Psychiatry & Human Genetics, Virginia Commonwealth University; Professor, Department of Biological Psychology, Free University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Data from twins and other relatives are frequently used for estimating heritability and other sources of individual differences. They are also useful in the location of genetic factors on the genome. However, the utility of data from relatives extends far beyond these biologically focused goals. First, a series of models for comorbidity between disorders are identified with data from relatives when they are indistinguishable with data from unrelated individuals. Second, assumptions about the underlying distribution of an ordinal variable can be tested by using data from relatives. Third, multivariate data from relatives can provide empirical support for factor rotations which are invariant with data from individuals. Fourth, certain factor and latent class analyses of structured interview data - which include a substantial proportion of missing data - become feasible with data from relatives. These advantages of data from relatives and statistical methods for their analysis will be discussed.

Dr. Neale is the tenth annual Robert Wherry Lecturer. This speaker series focuses on methodological issues in psychological research and honors Robert Wherry, former Psychology Department Chair and prominent researcher in quantitative and industrial/organizational psychology. The current lecture is sponsored by the Robert Wherry Development Fund and the Department of Psychology.

Thursday, April 6, 2006, 3:30 p.m., EA 170
Meet the speaker in CH 212 at 4:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served.