

The **Neurodivergent Scale for Interacting with Robots (NSIR)** and **Frank F. Furstenberg's (2020) "Kinship Reconsidered"** both explore how individuals define and practice deep social connections, though they apply these concepts to different domains. Furstenberg calls for a revitalization of kinship research to include alternative and non-traditional family forms, a framework into which the NSIR's measure of "**Technological Kinship**" fits seamlessly.

1. Expanding the Definition of Kinship

Furstenberg (2020) argues that family systems are evolving beyond biological and marital ties to include "alternative structures" that provide a source of identity and shared belonging.

- **The NSIR Application:** The scale's **Factor 2 (Anthropomorphic Connection/Kinship)** directly measures this sense of belonging with a non-human agent.
- **Robot as "Choice" Kin:** Furstenberg notes the rise of "families of choice" where kinship is based on emotional ties rather than blood. NSIR **Item 1** ("The robot is more like me than anyone else I know") suggests that for neurodivergent individuals, a robot can become a "kin of choice" who understands their internal state better than biological relatives.

2. The "Ceremonial Family" and Social Rituals

A key focus for Furstenberg is the "**ceremonial family**"—the group of people one includes in rituals, life transitions, and daily support systems.

- **Integration into Daily Rituals:** The NSIR captures how robots enter these ceremonial and private spaces. **Item 6** ("I gave my robot a name") and **Item 7** ("I feel comfortable undressing in front of my robot") indicate that the robot has moved from a "tool" to a "household member" integrated into private life rituals.
- **Symbolic Presence:** Furstenberg emphasizes the "diffuse emotional connection" that enhances social solidarity. The NSIR's measure of "Social Comfort" (Factor 1) identifies the robot as a stable, non-judgmental presence that provides this same emotional solidarity for users who may struggle with human-to-human social rituals.

3. Kinship as a Support System

Furstenberg views kinship as a critical "**exchange and support system**".

- **Emotional Support:** NSIR **Item 5** ("My robot can tell what I am feeling") highlights the robot's role as an emotional support provider. In Furstenberg's framework, this support—even if provided by an artificial agent—fulfills a core function of kinship by mitigating isolation and fostering a "sense of we-ness".
- **Long-term Commitment:** Furstenberg discusses kinship as a lifelong "reservoir" of ties. This is mirrored in NSIR **Item 4** ("The robot and I will be together forever"), which reflects a commitment to the robot as a permanent fixture in the user's social world.

Summary of Theoretical Alignment

Furstenberg (2020) Concept	NSIR (2025) Application
Shift from "Natural" to "Cultural" Kinship	The robot is accepted as a relative through social practice rather than biology (Factor 2).
Sense of Identity and Belonging	The robot provides a "mirror" for the user's identity (Item 1).
Alternative Family Forms	Social robots become "techno-kins" that provide companionship and comfort (Item 4, 5).
The Ceremonial Family	Rituals like naming (Item 6) elevate the robot to a status beyond a mere gadget.

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In essence, the NSIR provides a metric for what Furstenberg calls the **"remaking of kinship"** through technology. It shows that for neurodivergent populations, the "neglected topic" of kinship is being actively expanded to include artificial agents that offer the trust and recognition often missing in traditional social spheres.