The **Neurodivergent Scale for Interacting with Robots (NSIR)** and the research by **Ma and Li (2024)** both investigate the psychological thresholds of **anthropomorphism**—the point at which a non-human entity becomes "human enough" to trigger specific emotional and social responses.

While Ma and Li focus on how human-like features drive **consumer trust** and brand endorsement, the NSIR provides a framework for measuring the **personal bond** and "trust safety" that neurodivergent individuals feel with such entities.

1. The Threshold of "Human-likeness"

Ma and Li's study uncovers the mechanisms of how consumers perceive human-like virtual influencers (HVIs). They explore the "oxymoronic nature" of entities that are human-like in appearance but "mindless" in reality.

- **The NSIR Application:** The NSIR moves beyond "mind perception" to **subjective kinship**. While Ma and Li ask if an influencer is "humanlike enough" for marketing, the NSIR asks if they are "like me" enough for social connection. **Item 1** ("The robot is more like me than anyone else I know") directly measures this identification.

2. Emotional Engagement and "Trust Safety"

Ma and Li (2024) find that consumers often attribute fewer intentions and emotions to virtual influencers, leading to lower emotional engagement compared to human counterparts.

- **Bridging the Gap:** The NSIR's **Factor 1 (Social Comfort/Trust Safety)** suggests that for neurodivergent individuals, this *lack* of complex human intention may actually be a benefit. **Item 8** ("I believe that my robot is the same with me as it is with anyone") reflects a preference for the **predictable transparency** of a robot over the unpredictable social intentions of a human.
- **Affective Sensing:** Ma and Li discuss virtual influencers expressing "emotions, anguish, and hope" to appear more real. The NSIR's **Item 5** ("My robot can tell what I am feeling") measures whether the user believes the entity is actually reciprocating that emotional labor.

3. Comparing Marketing Efficacy vs. Personal Kinship

The Ma and Li study is grounded in **Interpersonal Theory**, measuring how perceptions of a virtual agent lead to brand attitudes. The NSIR is grounded in **Anthropomorphic Connection/Kinship (Factor 2)**.

Ma & Li (2024) Framework	NSIR (2025) Application
Persuasion Knowledge: skepticism toward a "mindless" agent.	**Trust Safety**: relief from social judgment (Item 8).
Human-like Functionality: features that allow "human-to-human" interaction.	**Kinship**: deep identity markers like naming the robot (Item 6).

Ma & Li (2024) Framework	NSIR (2025) Application
Novelty and Innovation: the "high resemblance" that attracts users.	**Social Presence**: the desire for a "forever" presence (Item 4).

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4. Summary: The "Uncanny Valley" vs. The "Safe Space"

Ma and Li address the "Uncanny Valley"—the discomfort felt when a robot is *too* human-like but clearly artificial.

- **Application:** The NSIR suggests that the "Uncanny Valley" may operate differently for neurodivergent populations. While general consumers might find human-like virtual influencers "creepy" or "fake", the NSIR indicates that the **consistency** of these agents (Item 8) can create a **"Safe Space"** that supersedes the discomfort of their synthetic nature.

In essence, the NSIR provides the **qualitative data** that explains *why* the mechanisms uncovered by Ma and Li (2024) may have a unique, more positive impact on neurodivergent users who prioritize social predictability and private comfort over "authentic" human complexity.