

# Money is Sweet When It Says I Love You

Cong Peng, Rob Nelissen, & Marcel Zeelenberg

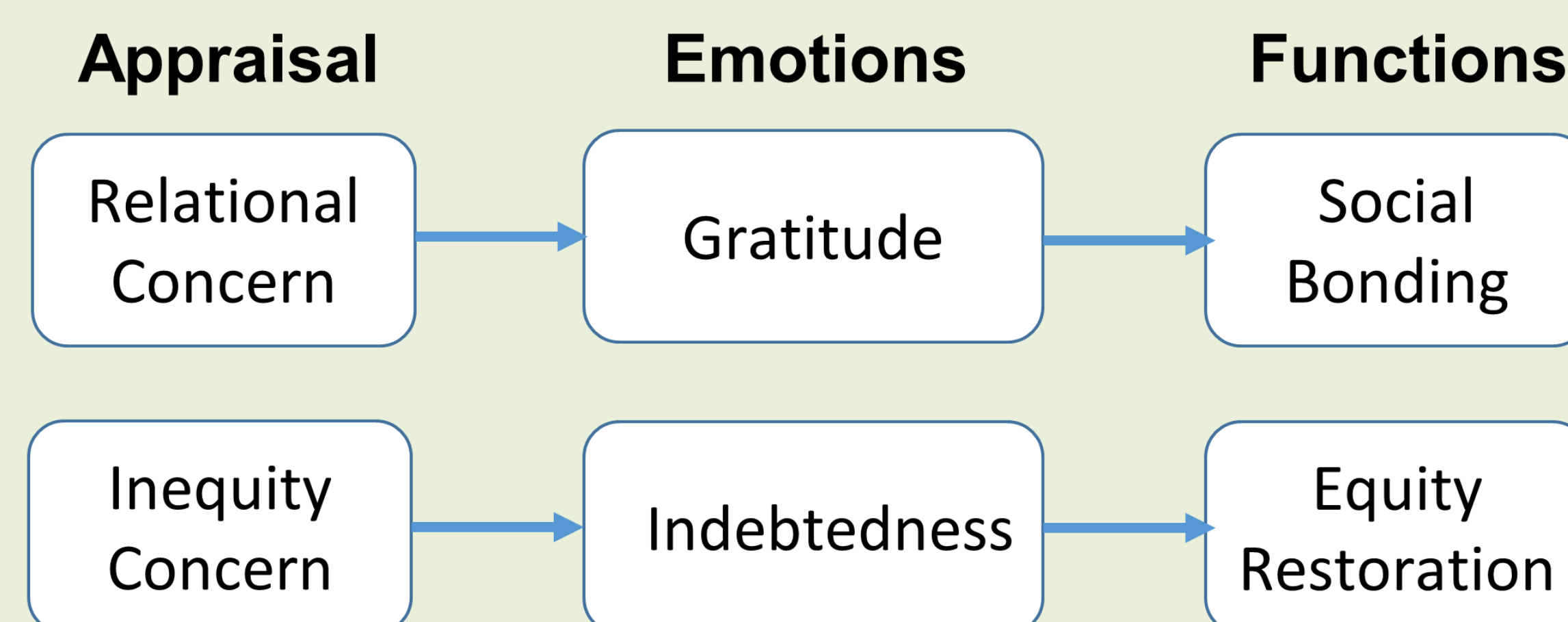
Department of Social Psychology, Tilburg University, The Netherlands



## Introduction

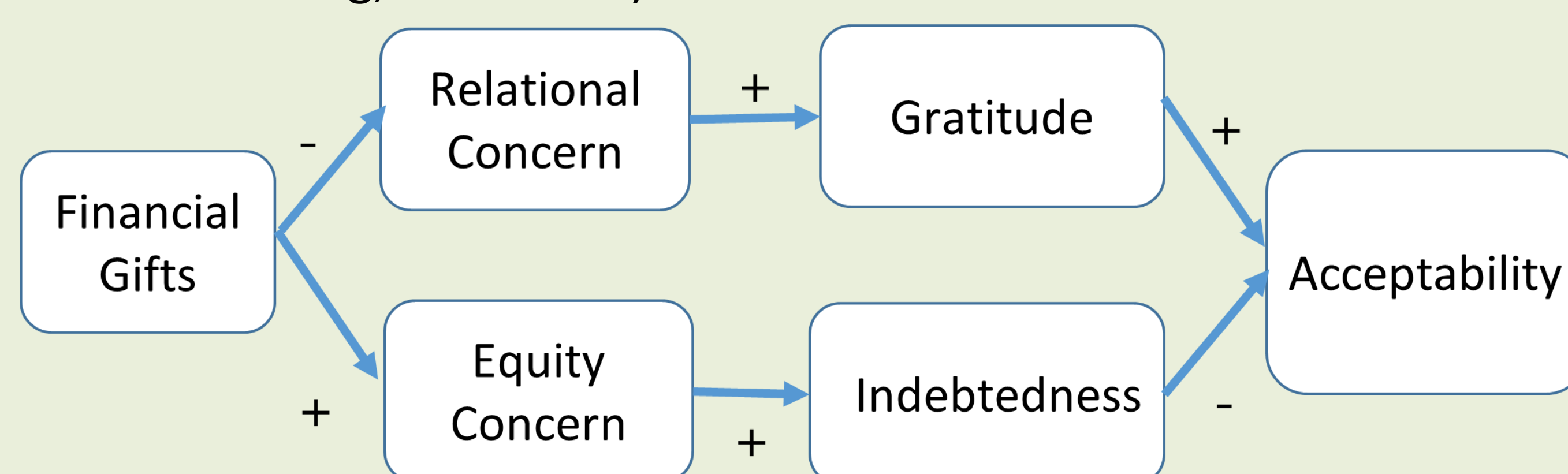
### Gratitude & Indebtedness in gift exchange

- Receiving gifts elicits gratitude and indebtedness at the same time, each with different functions in social exchange (Peng, Nelissen, & Zeelenberg, 2018).



### Receiving money as a gift

- Even though money is the most efficient gift, it is not favorable. This because money triggers less gratitude and more indebtedness. (Peng, Nelissen, & Zeelenberg, submitted).



### Money is not always unacceptable

- In Chinese context, certain number can express relational concerns.

520 = 我爱你 = I Love You

**RQ: Can money become a favorable gift when its amount signals relational concerns?**

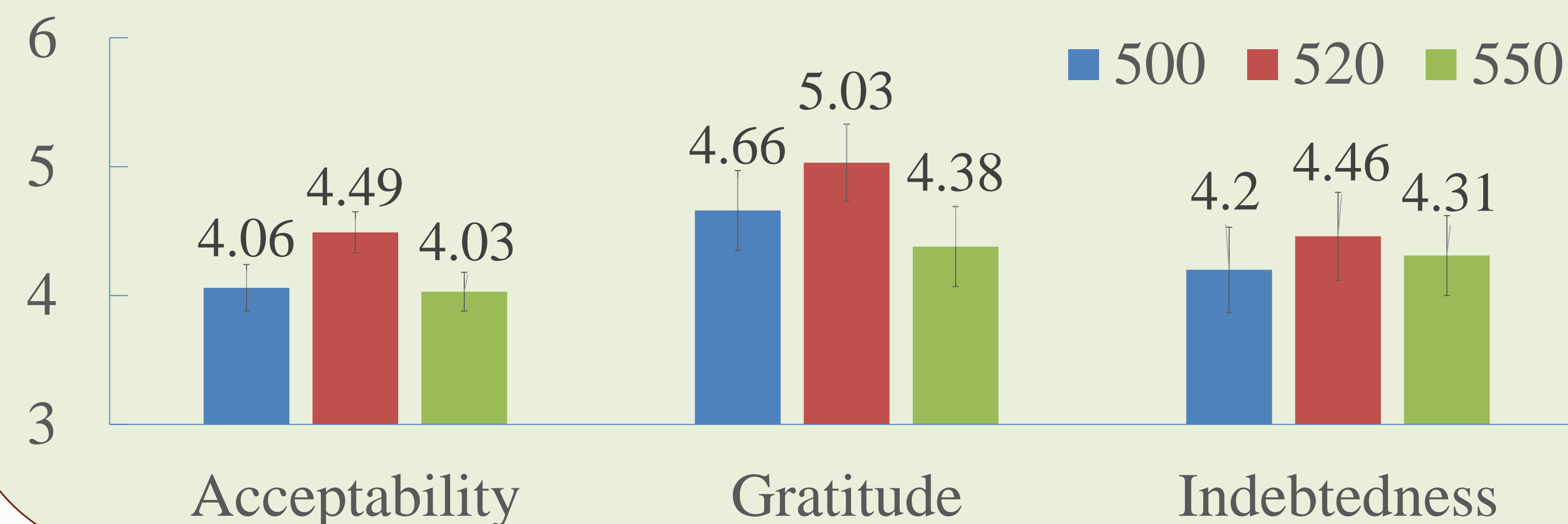
## Study 1: 500/520/550RMB cash as a gift

Participants: (N = 240 Chinese students, between-group)

Conditions: Receive 500/520/550RMB cash as a Valentine's Day gift from lover.

DVs: – **Acceptability** (3 items, 1-7, e.g., how acceptable or unacceptable do you think the gift is.)

– **Gratitude & Indebtedness** (0-10)



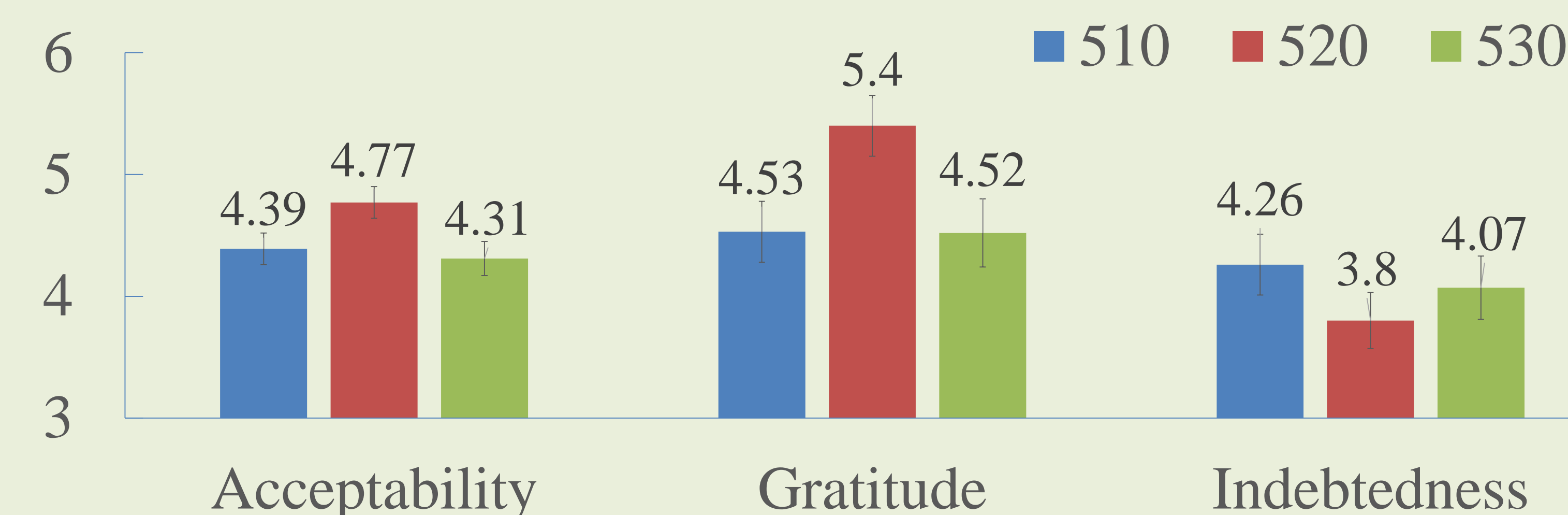
## Study 2: Replicating with 510/520/530

Participants: (N = 471 Chinese students, between-group).

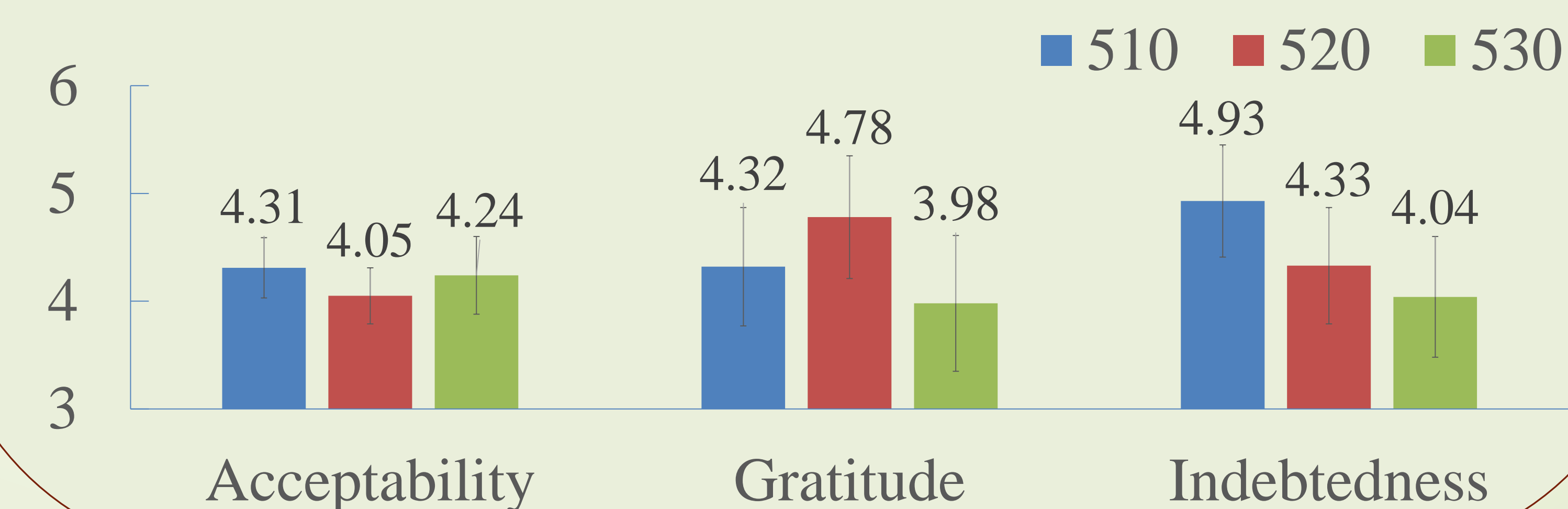
Conditions: Receive 510/520/530 RMB cash as a Valentine's Day gift from lover.

Manipulation Check: Which number means I love you (510/520/530/none of them is meaningful)

520=I Love You (N = 365)



None is meaningful (N = 83)



## Study 3: Choose 520 vs. 530

Participants: (N = 204 Chinese, between-group)

Conditions: Romantic Partner vs. Stranger

DV: Choose between 520RMB and 530RMB cash as a birthday gift

### Preference for 520 (over 530)

Romantic partner

Stranger

76%

>

62%

p = .038

## Conclusions

- Even though money is not an acceptable gift, it can become acceptable when it expresses certain relational values, so that it triggers more gratitude (but not more or less indebtedness).
- People seek such social meanings in money even though they sacrifice some financial benefits. This social meaning seeking in money is sensitive to the relational context.