Money is Sweet When It Says I Love You
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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.

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)

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

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.