Caseworkers and successful active labour market policies

Michael Lechner

Paris, February, 2013
Introduction (1)

Lots of research about determinants of unemployment durations

- labour supply
- labour demand: firms vacancies etc
- market clearing: matching functions etc.
Personal interaction between case worker and 'his/her' unemployed considered in less detail

- increase or decrease search activities
- better active labour market programmes
- better counselling
- better job offers
Goal of our papers on this topic

- Open up the black box of the counselling process and understand the effects of some of its components

Possible because of unique database about case workers and 'their' unemployed for Switzerland

- Unemployed: Administrative data from social insurance
- Case worker: Own survey and some administrative data
- Both data sources matched
Introduction (2)

➢ Results
   – Features of caseworker affect reemployment probabilities of unemployed

➢ Today's talk
   – Role of similarity between caseworker and unemployed
   – Briefly at the end: Role of broad strategies of caseworker ('policemen vs. social worker')
Topic I: Similarity of caseworker & unemployed

A CASEWORKER LIKE ME – DOES THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE UNEMPLOYED AND THEIR CASEWORKERS INCREASE JOB PLACEMENTS?*

Stefanie Behncke, Markus Frölich and Michael Lechner↑

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Related papers on why this could be (1)

➢ Educational literature on teacher-pupil similarity
  
  – ethnicity (positive)
    
    • Dee (2004), Lindahl (2007)
  
  – gender (mixed)
    
    • Neumarck and Gardecki (1998), Bettinger and Long (2005),
      Dee (2007), Lindahl (2007), Holmlund and Sund (2005),
      Hilmer and Hilmer (2007), Hoffmann and Oreopoulos (2007)
Related papers on why this could be (2)

- Literature on trust, fairness, gift exchange
  - higher cooperation for like minded people
    • Gächter and Thöni (2005)
  - Demographic similarity between managers and subordinates reduce quit, dismissal rates etc.
    • Giuliano, Levine and Leonard (2006)

- Similar background increases efficiency of communication
  • Hyde (2005)
The Swiss labour market
Overview (1)

- Low unemployment rates (usually around 2% to 5%)
- After 1990 unemployment rate rose rapidly up to 5%
  ➔ implementation of active labour market policy
    • active labour market programmes
    • introduction of regional employment offices (REO)
    • caseworkers trained to provide counselling, placement and activation services
The Swiss labour market
Overview (2)

➢ Traditionally high regional autonomy
  – Cantons implement federal UI policy in a semi-autonomous way

➢ Counselling done at 150+ regional employment offices
  – run by the 26 cantons

➢ UE benefit replacement rate of 70-80% up to 24 months
  – generosity recently reduced
The Swiss labour market
Case workers (incentives and autonomy)

➢ Performance targets set by centre for regional offices
  – no effects on regional budgets, only reputation

➢ Case workers have considerable leeway against their superiors
  – typically the case workers are encouraged to develop and use their 'own style'
  – no direct monetary incentives for case workers
Case workers have considerable power against unemployed
- withdrawal of benefits if UE does not comply
The Swiss labour market
Case workers (incentives and autonomy)

- Case workers have considerable leeway against their superiors
  - typically the case workers are encouraged to develop and use their 'own style'
  - no direct monetary incentives for case workers
- Case workers have considerable power against unemployed
  - withdrawal of benefits if UE does not comply
The Swiss labour market

The counselling process

- UE spell starts with short meeting with administrative person
- Short workshop about the rules of the UE benefit regime
- 1st meeting with caseworker within first 2 months
The Swiss labour market

The counselling process

- Allocation of UE to case worker by (multiple answers)
  - occupation group (55%)
  - industry sector (50%)
  - caseload (43%)
  - random (24%)
  - region (10%)
  - employability (7%)
  - name via alphabet (4%)
  - age (3%)

- Change of caseworker only in exceptional cases
Questionnaire to all case workers in Switzerland

- mail survey of 1560 case workers and REO managers
- information on
  - case workers' age, gender, work experience, vocational training ...
  - allocation of jobseekers to case workers
  - case workers' contacts with employers
  - ....

- response rate about 84%

- case workers can be linked to their clients
Administrative data on unemployed

- admin data from **unemployment insurance database**
- **social security records**
- information on socio-economic characteristics of the UE
- information about regional labour markets (from federal statistical office)
Data

LCWUSAD (linked case worker unemployed survey admin data) (1)

- Survey of all case workers in Switzerland
- Administrative data on unemployed
  - administrative data from unemployment insurance database
  - social security records
- **Case workers can be linked to their clients**
Data
The population of case worker and UE we looked at

- Inflow of unemployed registering in 2003
- First case worker in first unemployment spell
- Restrictions
  - only UE aged 25 to 55
  - common language
  - ...
Data Outcomes (1)

- Person is considered **employed** when deregistered at the REO because of having found a (paid) job
- Outcomes are observed for at least three years
  - Jan 2003 - Dec 2006
- Combined with employment duration to create measure for 'stable' employment
Definition of similarity of UE and CW

- Age: ± 4 years

- Educational background: Same category
  - primary education only
  - lower secondary
  - apprenticeship
  - upper secondary
  - graduate from university / college / polytechnic

- Gender

- Further homogeneity imposed by subsample of Swiss UE and CW (& UE speak cantonal language)
Descriptive statistics

Employment

Figure 2: Average employment rate in month t after registering as unemployed

Note: Average employment rates are for the main sample. The black line shows the employment rate for the 1,455 unemployed who are counselled by a caseworker with the same gender, age, and education. The grey line shows the employment rate for the 37,165 individuals whose caseworker is different in at least one of the three characteristics. Abscissa: Month after registration of unemployment. Ordinate: Employment rate in month t after registering as unemployed.
### Descriptive statistics

#### Other variables (and probit) (1)

**Table 1: Estimation of the propensity score: Determinants of similarity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probit estimates</th>
<th>Sample average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>t-statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics of the unemployed clients</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (divided by 100)</td>
<td>.242</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-1.021</td>
<td>6.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: primary education</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>4.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower secondary education and apprenticeship</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher secondary education</td>
<td>8.79</td>
<td>6.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduate from university/college/polytechnical</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification: unskilled</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semi-skilled</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skilled without degree</td>
<td>-3.46</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skilled</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months employed in last ten years (divided by 10)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly earnings in previous job (divided by 10000)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of dependent persons</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for part-time job</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry of previous job: agriculture and forestry</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>processing industry</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourism</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More difficult-to-place unemployed in 'same' group

Table 1 to be continued.
Descriptive statistics
Other variables (and probit) (2)

Table 1: Continued ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local labour market characteristics</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>t-statistic</th>
<th>Same age, gender and education (D=1)</th>
<th>Different in at least one characteristic (D=0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language of employment office: French</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registering in second half 2003 (dummy)</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of municipality ≥200000 inhabitants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥150000</td>
<td>0.171</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥75000</td>
<td>0.294</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥40000</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥25000</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥15000</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥8000</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥3000</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥2000</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate of canton</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate in industry (divided by 10)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.227</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More unemployed from more difficult local labour markets in 'same' group

Characteristics of their caseworkers

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University of St.Gallen
### Descriptive statistics

#### Other variables (and probit) (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of their caseworkers</th>
<th>Probit estimates</th>
<th>Same age, gender and education (D=1)</th>
<th>Different in at least one characteristic (D=0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>t-statistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in employment office (in years)</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience in municipality office (dummy)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience in private practice office (dummy)</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own experience of unemployment service</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education: primary education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower secondary education and apprenticeship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher secondary education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduate from university college/tech.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special vocational training school/Fachaus.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average caseload per month (divided by 100)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Note:
- Maximum Likelihood probit regression. Dependent variable is the binary indicator for similarity $D$. 1455 observations with $D=1$, 3716 observations with $D=0$. Standard errors clustered at the caseworker level. Significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively, is indicated by *** ** *.
Challenges for the econometric analysis

Identification

- Observational study based on informative background characteristics of case workers and unemployed
  - Remove selection effects by conditioning on exogenous confounders and then compare employment rates
Results (1)

Effects of similarity in age, gender and education on employment

SIMILARITY BETWEEN UNEMPLOYED AND...

Fig. 3. Effects of Similarity in Age, Gender and Education on Employment
Results (2)

Figure 4: Effects of similarity in age, gender and education on employment on

twelve month stable employment

seeking for a job

receiving unemployment benefits

out-of-labour force
### Results

**Possible Channels:** Sanctions

---

**Table 3: Effects of similarity in age, gender and education on sanction days**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Month 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.977</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                | ATT         |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | p-value     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | 0.008       | 0.70  | 0.027 | 0.13  |     |     |     |

|                | ATT         |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | p-value     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | 0.028       | 0.381 | 0.016 | 0.473 | -0.077 | 0.817 |

See note below Figure 3.
# Results

**Possible Channels: Active labour market policies**

Table 4: Effects of similarity in age, gender and education on active labour market programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Criterion</th>
<th>psm ATT</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>logit ATT</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participated in (at least one) ALMP after registration in 2003 (until end of 2006)</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>0.468</td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>0.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First programme after registration in 2003 is:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job search training</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality courses</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.622</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills training</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills training</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment programme or internship</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the first three programmes, participated at least once in:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Criterion</th>
<th>psm ATT</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>logit ATT</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job search training</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>0.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality courses</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.963</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language skills training</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills training</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.538</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.949</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment programme or internship</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See note below Table 2.

Job search training is often short-term and provides participants with training in effective job search techniques. Personality courses help participants to position themselves in the labour market. Language skills training covers courses in foreign languages as well as alphabetization courses. Computer skills training includes mainly internet courses and office applications. Vocational training provides applicants with updated skills.
## Results

### Degrees of similarity (2)

Table 5: Employment effects of different definitions of similarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of control group (D=0)</th>
<th>Month 6</th>
<th></th>
<th>Month 12</th>
<th></th>
<th>Month 18</th>
<th></th>
<th>Month 24</th>
<th></th>
<th>Month 36</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>same same same</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>p-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of similarity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 versus 0</td>
<td>psm</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>logit</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.550</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 versus 1</td>
<td>psm</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>-0.013</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>0.564</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>logit</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.821</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.903</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 versus 2</td>
<td>psm</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>logit</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.031</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dose Response to different degrees of similarity

See note below Table 2. The control group with different sex, different age and different education contains 8438 observations.
Results
Subgroup heterogeneity

- Particularly relevant for
  - younger age group
  - 'higher' educated individuals
How could this come about? (1)

Speculations

- Social identity theories (sociology)
- Perception of belonging to same group leads to favoring others in that group
  - UE may take advice more seriously
  - UE may feel bad to cheat on CW
  - UE may want to be nice to CW (gift exchange)
  - CW may give better advice to group member
  - Trust, effort extraction within group as substitute for sanctions
How *could* this come about? (2)

- Communication more efficient within group
- All this may lead to
  - better counselling by case worker
  - more 'playing by the rules' of the unemployed (and a reward by the case worker?)
  - with perhaps higher search effort by unemployed
Conclusions (1)

- Positive employment effect of 3 – 4 %-points of similarity in age, gender, education (homogenous with respect to nationality & mother tongue)
- Effect does **not** work through more extensive use of active labour market programmes or sanctions (no additional costs)
Conclusions (2)

➢ Needs several dimensions of similarity
  – education or gender is not enough

➢ Policy implication: Considerable potential to obtain cheap employment gains by allocating more unemployed to similar caseworkers
A CASEWORKER LIKE ME – DOES THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE UNEMPLOYED AND THEIR CASEWORKERS INCREASE JOB PLACEMENTS?*

Stefanie Behncke, Markus Frölich and Michael Lechner†
Unemployed and their caseworkers:
Should they be friends or foes?
Unemployed and their caseworkers: should they be friends or foes?

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Topic II
The second paper in a nutshell (1)

- What type of case worker is more successful in placing the UE in employment (counselling vs. monitoring)?
  - A nice, 'soft', listening c.w. who is accommodating etc.?
  - A tougher, more demanding type? **YES**

- Quantitative relevance?
  - Increase of average employment probability by 2 %-points

- Policy implication?
  - Hiring strategies for case worker types
  - Training for existing case workers
The interaction between case workers and UE

**Table 1: Survey question on cooperativeness of the caseworker**

How important do you consider the cooperation with the jobseeker, regarding placements in jobs, and assignment of active labour market programmes?

- **1** Cooperation is very important; the wishes of the unemployed person should be satisfied. (52%)
- **2** Cooperation is important, but placements in jobs and active labour market programmes should sometimes be assigned or declined in spite of the unemployed person's wishes. (39%)
- **☐** Cooperation is less important; I should assign placements in jobs and active labour market programmes independent of the wishes of the unemployed person (9%)

*Note:* English translation. Questionnaires were in German, French, and Italian.
The interaction between case workers and UE
Use of instruments (based on stats from our data)

- Less cooperative case workers consider as important
  - control and sanctions
  - job assignments (instead of programmes)
  - employment programmes (instead of training programmes)
  - assigning ALMP to apply pressure on UE
  - ALMP as 'work test'

- Here, we measure average style across different clients
Descriptive statistics
Different types of case workers have different clients

- Less cooperative case workers (LCCW) are more likely to have clients that are more difficult to place.
- LCCW differ from other case workers:
  - younger
  - with a lower level of general education level
  - a larger share of LLCW has a CW specific training
Results

Difference in employment rates

Fig. 4. Effect of having a less co-operative caseworker on employment (●, significance at the 5% level; ▲, significance at the 10% level; — — — — — —, pointwise 95% confidence interval): ATET on employment; prime age unemployed people (24–55 years)
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Thank you for your attention!

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