

## 2010 Felix Büchel Award Laudation

*Presented by Richard V. Burkhauser at the International Conference of SOEP Users,  
July 1, 2010, Berlin, Germany*

Two years ago at about this time my long time friend, colleague, and sometimes co-author Richard Hauser and I were honored by the DIW-SOEP as the 2008 winners of the biennial Felix Büchel Award. The final honors related to our winning this award were that Richard and I were asked to serve on the selection committee for the 2010 award and one of us was asked to provide this laudation. Of course, since Richard and I shared the award last time there was some discussion as to who should deliver the laudation. Now, just as one must do in the first round of the World Cup, this required a long set of tie breaker rules, since in addition to being tied for the award, Richard and I are equally well qualified on academic grounds and with respect to our manly looks.

Luckily the next test was who had amassed these two qualities in the shortest time and happily since I am younger, I am speaking before you, while Richard is enjoying his seat in the audience. Now it was indeed fortuitous that the next criterion was not one's facility in written English, since in that case, I would be sitting in the audience. As a case in point, two of the words I have already used in this biennial laudation—biennial and laudation—are ones whose usage I had to look up in the dictionary but which Richard knows well.

The initial Felix Büchel Award for Excellence in SOEP data use was presented in 2006, at the first International Research Conference of SOEP users following his untimely death in 2004. It was presented to the scholar that best exemplified Felix's commitment to: interdisciplinary comparative research in a national and international context; publishing this research in highly visible academic journals as well as in boarder policy outlets; using the SOEP data for research and in the training of others; and actively promoting SOEP's future development.

It was my pleasure to know Felix both as a scholar and as a friend. He was among the first group of German scholars to take an active interest in cross national comparative analysis using both the SOEP and the PSID data. And, like the former German scholars who have been awarded this prize Regina Riphahn in 2006 and Richard Hauser in 2008 he had a keen interest in using these data to answer public policy questions that were common to both Germany and the United States.

There is a trivia game in the United States called Six Degrees of Separation from Kevin Bacon. Bacon is a relatively obscure American movie actor and the game is to name any actor and see if you can link that actor through his or her film roles to Kevin Bacon in six steps. This of course is a variation of the "six degrees of separation" or "human web theory" that everyone is at most six steps away from any other person on Earth, so that a chain of "a friend of a friend" statements can be made to connect any two people in six steps or fewer.

The academic version of this human web relationship is a bit more intimate and shows the closeness of the links between Felix and the rest of us through his collaborations that still bind us all together. Felix's interest in cross national collaborations means that while I never published a paper with him, I am only one degree of collaboration separation away from Felix in that both Greg Duncan and Mary Daly long time co-authors of mine published a paper in the *Economics of*

*Education Review*—Premiums and Penalties for Surplus and Deficit Education: Evidence from the United States and Germany—that used data from the United States PSID and the German SOEP to investigate the degree of mismatch between education level and jobs in our two labor markets. And like many such studies of German and American market outcomes, they found more commonalities than differences between our two countries.

Today it is my pleasure to announce the winner of the 2010 Felix Büchel Award—Richard E. Lucas.

Like Felix, Richard has, over the ten years since receiving his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Illinois, produced an outstanding record of scholarship in highly visible peer reviewed journals as well as in broader policy outlets. Much of Richard's research has focused on the degree that exogenous factors affect individual life satisfaction over the life course. He is one of the leading scholars in this multidisciplinary field focusing on the transitory and permanent consequences of such events. In his research, he has used the SOEP and other international longitudinal data sets to test his hypotheses. And, he has worked with the SOEP data team to make the SOEP the leading longitudinal data set for such studies. In 2003, in recognition of his work with the SOEP, Richard was made a DIW Research Professor, a position he still holds. In addition at the 2004 International Research Conference of SOEP users his paper: Richard E. Lucas, Andrew E. Clark, Yannis Georgellis, and Ed Diener, Reexamining Adaptation and the Set Point Model of Happiness: Reactions to Changes in Marital Status *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 84(3), 2003, pp. 527-539

won the award for the best publication using SOEP data in 2003. In more recent work using the SOEP and other longitudinal data sets, Richard and his colleagues have challenged the conventional wisdom that individuals fully adapt to a major satisfaction changing event and over time return to their previous permanent level of satisfaction. Instead they find that such events result in permanent changes in their underlying satisfaction whose effect is never fully reversed by time alone.

It gives me great pleasure to present the 2010 Felix Büchel Award to Richard E. Lucas, who according to my calculations, is three degrees of collaboration separation away from Felix.

1. C. Katharina Spiess, Felix Büchel, and Gert G. Wagner. 2003. Children's School Placement in Germany: Does Kindergarten Attendance Matter? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 255-275.
2. Schimmack, Ulrich, Jürgen Schupp and Gert G. Wagner. 2008. The Influence of Environment and Personality on the Affective and Cognitive Component of Subjective Well-being. *Social Indicators Research*, 89, 1, 41-60.
3. Diener, Lucas, Schimmack and Helliwell. 2009. *Well-Being for Public Policy*, Oxford University Press.