



**Respondent Uncertainty about the Timing of
Residential Changes and Employment-Related Events:
Examining the Interviewer-Respondent Interaction in
the Panel Study of Income Dynamics'
Event History Calendar**

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Abstract. The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) uses an interviewer-administered computerized event history calendar (EHC) to collect information about respondents' past-two-year residence(s) and employment. Research has demonstrated that the calendar method generated better quality reports than conventional interviewing and that improved reports were associated with characteristics of the interviewer-respondent interaction unique to the calendar method. Yet, whether and how interviewers use the EHC to help respondents resolve uncertainty about the timing of life changes is unknown. We coded the interviewer-respondent interaction in a random sample of 103 respondents from the 2013 PSID's main study, all of which experienced a residential change or employment-related event since the 2011 interview. One-third of respondents expressed uncertainty about the timing of changes in residence or employer and the majority of respondents expressed uncertainty about the timing of periods away from work. Interviewers generally accepted uncertain responses or requested less precise timing information and rarely used the unique features of the EHC to help respondents resolve uncertainty. Our findings suggest that the collection of less precise timing information would likely reduce respondent burden. Future research should experimentally examine whether and which features of the calendar method help resolve respondent uncertainty.

Key words: Calendar method, verbal behavior coding