Cohabitation is rapidly increasing as a family form in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention); however, separation of a mother and the male cohabitating partner is more likely than in traditionally married couples. As family income is associated with youth problem behaviors, the purpose of the current study was to examine change in maternal income over a 12 month period and if change was associated with youth internalizing and externalizing behaviors.

Ninety-eight low-income, cohabitating, African American mothers and an adolescent in the 10 to 17 year age range ($M_{age} = 13$ years) living in New York City participated. Maternal income was reported by mothers at Time 1 and Time 2 and youth reported their internalizing (e.g., anxiety) and externalizing (e.g., aggression) problems at both time points.

19% and 65% of mothers reported income decrease and increases (i.e., over $200 change in monthly income), respectively. Using analysis of covariance, controlling for Time 1 youth problem behaviors, no change in youth problem behaviors occurred when income was grouped according to five income change categories ranging from minus $600 to a plus $600 change in income. The findings suggest that income of cohabitating mother is not stable but change in income is not associated with change in youth problem behaviors.