Adolescents from intact families who worship frequently are the least likely to steal.

This chart depicts the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have ever stolen more than $50 worth of goods, correlated with religious attendance and family structure. Only 12 percent of adolescents who live with both biological parents and worship at least monthly have ever stolen as much. By contrast, 24 percent of adolescents who worship less than monthly and come from single-parent or reconstituted families have stolen more than $50 worth of goods. In between are those in non-intact families who worship at least monthly (15.8 percent) and those who live with both biological parents and worship less than monthly (15.3 percent). The data are taken from a confidential survey conducted as part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II.

Other Studies

Though little additional research has been done that correlates these three measures, what studies exist corroborate the direction of these...
findings. Wendy Manning of Bowling Green State University and Kathleen Lamb of the University of Wisconsin reported that adolescents who were more religious were less likely to be delinquent, as were adolescents who lived with their married parents.\(^2\)

Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin and Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that adolescents who attended religious services at least weekly and adolescents who are satisfied with their family were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.\(^3\)

In another study, Regnerus reported that family satisfaction and religiosity were strong protective factors against adolescent delinquency, although religiosity affected adolescent boys only indirectly through higher levels of family satisfaction.\(^4\)

The available evidence indicates that the dual influence of religious attendance and an intact married family prove to be most effective in reducing theft by adolescents.

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1 This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

