This research will either support or reject each of the following statements. 1) Being delinquent in the past increases the chance of being delinquent in the future. 2) Being delinquent in the past increases the chance of hanging around with delinquents in the future. 3) Hanging around with delinquents in the past increases the chances of hanging out with delinquents in the future. 4) Hanging around with delinquents in the past increases the chances of being delinquent in the future. 5) Hanging around heavily with delinquents in the past heavily increases the chances of being delinquent in the future.

Each of the above statements can be thought of in terms of a diagram. In this diagram, arrows are drawn departing from the cause and arriving at the effect. For example, an arrow will be drawn from the amount of delinquency in the past to the amount of delinquency in the future. Because this arrow connects the cause to the effect, it is known as a causal pathway. The statistical part, or the quantitative method that will be used, is called a structural equation model. A special case of this technique and a more descriptive name for it is path analysis. In path analysis, the paths, or the causal arrows, are analyzed. More specifically the arrows or paths are quantified. In other words, a number value will be given to each arrow. A larger cause and effect relationship will correspond to a larger number value assigned to the arrow.