**Criminology Comprehensive Exam THEORY**

**Doctoral Program in Criminology**

**School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences**

**University of Texas at Dallas**

**November 4, 2023**

**Instructions**

You have six (6) hours to complete the Theory portion of the comprehensive exam. Your answer will be evaluated on its organization, coherence, clarity, intellectual rigor, substantive validity, conceptual development, and application of relevant literature to the question at hand. Answers must be emailed to [richard.scotch@utdallas.edu](mailto:richard.scotch@utdallas.edu) before 4:00pm today (11/4/2023). Please do not incorporate any identifying information on what you submit.

We wish you success!

**THEORY QUESTIONS**

Answer **ONE** of the following:

Question 1

 Much research indicates that having delinquent friends is one of the strongest correlates of offending. However, questions about measurement, temporal order, and spuriousness have introduced doubts about whether this relationship reflects causality. Describe the theoretical arguments for and against delinquent friends as a cause of offending, and then assess the empirical evidence. In your scholarly opinion, what does this literature indicate for the causal effect of delinquent peers on offending? How have the data, measures, and methods used contributed to confusion over this relationship?

Question 2

 It is well documented that violent crime rates tend to be higher in neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty. After more than a century of research, some have argued that the meaning of this association remains ambiguous. Describe the major theoretical arguments for the link between neighborhood poverty rates and levels of violence, and then assess the empirical evidence. In your scholarly opinion, which of these arguments has received the strongest empirical support? How have the data, measures, and methods used contributed to the association's ambiguity?