Sexual minorities (lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender, and queer people) face a precarious position. On the one hand civil rights are being extended at breakneck pace, especially same-sex marriage rights, and attitudes are shifting toward greater tolerance, at least among segments of the population (Baunach 2011; Loftus 2001; Whitehead and Baker 2012). On the other hand, sexual minorities manifest a host of health concerns rooted in homophobia and homonegativity (Denton, Rostosky, and Danner 2014; Feinstein, Goldfried, and Davila 2012). In light of this growing body of knowledge, in 2010 the Institute of Medicine (IOM) convened a panel to review what we know about sexual minorities’ health concerns and propose a research/policy agenda. The resulting report noted over the life-course sexual minorities experience disproportionate rates of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, mental health issues such as depression and suicidal ideation, recreational drug use as well as abuse, and victimization from violence and discrimination (IOM 2011). The report also noted knowledge gaps such as the lack of nationally representative data as well as theory-driven research. The report asserts sexually minorities’ health disparities mirror unique stressors imposed on and evolving within our social ecology. From an ecological perspective and desire to boost theory-driven research the following study asks: what role does social connectivity play in determining health behaviors. This study contributes to an understanding of social connectivity’s role in shaping variations in health behaviors when comparing LGB people to exclusive heterosexuals and non-exclusive heterosexuals.

To better understand discrepancies in health behaviors by sexualities, this study proposes to analyze primary and secondary data from converging theoretical perspectives. The theories include micro, i.e. health behavior, meso, i.e. social networks, and macro, i.e. minority stress, conceptualizations as threaded by social connectivity. Society is bound by its members’
connections and member connections situate us in society; as such, our behaviors reflect the interplay of macro, meso, and micro level factors shaped by connectivity’s fluid nature.