Discrimination is the “differential treatment of people in one group by members of another, most often involving the actions of the powerful targeting those less powerful” (Feagin, 2010, p. 356). It is also nuanced to the extent that the “actions of the powerful” are not only perpetuated at the micro-level, but are the active embodiment of a macro-level system of oppression that targets “those less powerful.” The manifestation of this oppressive system, via interactions fostered by dominance and power differentials, often occurs along racial lines, such that discrimination can be understood as a mechanism of a much larger system of domination intent on stifling, whether deliberate or not, the development and advancement of communities of color. As per Frey and Eitzen (1991), much of what exists in society in terms of racial discrimination likewise exists in sport, to the extent that “Blacks do not have equal opportunity; they do not receive similar rewards for equal performance when compared to Whites; and their prospects for a lucrative career beyond sport participation are dismal” (p. 513). One manner in which this is purported to occur in the sport industry is through racial tasking.

Racial tasking was first conceived to help explain the significant discrepancies in running and passing plays executed by racially different quarterbacks in NCAA DI football. More importantly, it demonstrated how such racialized incongruities can adversely affect the development of expert decision-making skills among NCAA African-American quarterbacks due to a lack “of structured play and deliberate practice; subsequently limiting their potential preparation, development, and aspirations for a coaching position” (Bopp & Sagas, 2014, p. 141). It was not an accusation of overt discrimination by coaches and play callers; rather, it was developed as a lens through which researchers can better see the potentially disparate impact of discrimination shrouded in the successful attainment of converging goals (i.e., winning) of all constituents. Thus, the significance of racial tasking to sport management lies in its utility to expose new manifestations of discrimination that are disguised as forms of progress through short-term gains, yet potentially hinder the long-term skill development and career advancement of racially marginalized individuals and groups.

The purpose of this presentation is to advance the concept by clearly outlining the four essential tenets of racial tasking: 1) Positional Similarity, 2) Racial Dissimilarity, 3) Interest Convergence/Task Divergence, and 4) Capital (Dis)Accumulation. To that end, this presentation will provide a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of racial tasking (e.g., access and treatment discrimination, interest convergence, and color-blind racism), demonstrate the application of said theories to explain current manifestations of discrimination (i.e., the lack of people of color in the power positions of college sport), provide further context to the tenets of racial tasking, and elucidate the contribution of racial tasking to the discrimination literature. Lastly, we will explain how the phenomena can be utilized in sport management and socio-cultural research to better understand the experiences of and opportunities for people of color, whether that be as athletes, coaches, or administrators.