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Attitudes about electronic monitoring: Minority and majority racial group differences

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ABSTRACT

Past public opinion research routinely uncovered significant variation in attitudes toward justice system policies among different racial groups. The bulk of punishment attitudinal research, for the most part, focused on more severe sanctions, namely, incarceration and the death penalty. More recent research investigated the perspectives and experiences associated with intermediate sanctions. There are few intermediate sanctions receiving more attention than the use of electronic monitoring, especially with sex offenders. In this article, it is demonstrated that non-White college students have significantly different attitudes about the punitiveness and inequality of electronic monitoring. These findings were uncovered through 599 completed surveys from two universities, and using factor analysis and least-squares regression analysis. Theoretical and practical implications for continued use of this sanction are discussed.

Introduction

Electronic monitoring technologies are an intermediate sanction currently receiving much legislative attention. Electronic monitoring alternatives were first introduced to offender populations in the early 1980s, in New Mexico, to enforce house arrest orders. Electronic monitoring was initially described as an "intelligent alternative to incarceration" (Silvia, 1989, p. 130). With changes brought about by near-real time location tracking, legislators and correctional personnel recently expressed interest in furthering its use as a reintegrative and punitive sanction, but little is known about the public's perceptions about electronic monitoring (Gainey & Payne, 2000).

Few policy domains elicit more public scrutiny, divergence, and discontent than those related to crime and justice. Garland (1996) suggested that the public has come to realize the limits of the sovereign state in its inability to control crime. He argued that the 1960s crime rate increase, occurring at the same time as other macro level changes, positioned crime as a general social fact—another common concern for social actors. There is little doubt that the public is concerned with justice system policies, and politicians have recognized the potential electoral gains from appearing harsh on crime (Beckett, 1997).

Social groups perceive and experience formal sanctions differently. This is especially true in a highly stratified society such as the United States where there is intense intergroup conflict over resources and rule construction (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Typically, research on punishment attitudes has focused on the more severe punishments, such as the death penalty and incarceration. This study examined how Whites and Blacks perceive electronic monitoring.

This research is important for several reasons. First, punishment scholars have long recognized that society's attitudes about *punishment* are indicative of social norms and rules (for review, see Garland, 1990). Second, understanding the variability in group members' attitudinal differences of electronic monitoring will inform policy-makers, administrators, and researchers of specific cultural perceptions about this intermediate sanction. Third, because misconceptions of community-based sanctions have resulted in demands for more incarceration (Mauer, 1997; Petersilia, 2003), determining racial group member attitudinal differences is one of the first steps to assessing whether increased public awareness about this community-based sanction is needed (Bryant & Morris, 1998; Fairchild, 1998; Huskey & Wiley, 1993). Fourth, several criminologists have identified a strong relationship between the perception of a sanction and how well that sanction is believed to accomplish various justice system goals (Foglia, 1997; Paternoster & Simpson, 1996; Piquero & Paternoster, 1998). Sanctions that are perceived as too lenient and not at all retributive or punitive may be seen as unable to deter crime, while sanctions that are perceived as too punitive or unfair may actually breed criminality (Bowers & Pierce, 1980; Potter, 1997). Fifth, understanding how sanctions are perceived provides information needed to determine whether use of particular sanctions will meet opposition from the public (Brown & Elrod, 1995).

Review of literature

For the past three decades, crime control policies have focused on longer sentences, tougher prison conditions, and other austere

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measures to punish offenders. These policies have resulted in higher incarceration rates than in previous times, exceeding those of other advanced industrialized countries (Christie, 2000; Tonry & Frase, 2001; Whitman, 2003). More stringent crime control policies have a disproportionate impact upon minority populations as these social groups have a higher likelihood of incarceration than their majority counterparts (Gabbidon & Greene, 2005). Many criminologists have revealed that jurisdictions with larger Black populations have more arrests (Liska, Lawrence, & Benson, 1981), more police (Jacobs & Helms, 1997), and more inmates (Yates & Fording, 2005). This research tested group threat theories, and supported the contention that as minority populations increase, majority members will institute policies and practices to prevent minorities from threatening social, political, and economic structures (Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996).

Taking this line of reasoning a step further, it is plausible to suggest that minority and majority racial group members develop different collective memories of the justice system, shaping their perspectives and attitudes toward various justice system policies. These collective memories are rooted in perceptions of past and current experiences and events and contribute to developing distinct racial culture elements (see Bourdieu, 1990; DiMaggio, 1997; Sewell, 1992).

While past research found race differences with regard to attitudes about severe punishments (Payne, Gainey, Triplett, & Danner, 2003), it is not clear if the same differences exist with regard to attitudes about community-based sanctions such as electronic monitoring. Critics cite several concerns about electronic monitoring. Some have noted that electronic monitoring may serve to widen the justice system's net by punishing offenders who otherwise would have avoided formal sanctions (Jackson, de Keijser, & Michon, 1995; Maineprize, 1992; Sigler & Lamb, 1995). Others pointed to the possibility that the sanction unfairly punishes economically disadvantaged individuals who serve their sentences in more Spartan conditions than their wealthier counterparts (Cheever, 1990; Payne & Gainey, 2000). Research supported the contention that electronically monitored house arrest is experienced by many offenders as extremely punitive and intrusive (Brown & Elrod, 1995; Lilly, Ball, Curry, & Smith, 1992; Schmidt, 1991). Still others suggested that electronic monitoring inconsistently punished offenders because different kinds of offenders experienced the sanction differently (Crouch, 1993; Payne & Gainey, 2000).

A number of studies considered whether offenders experience various forms of sanctions in different ways. Crouch (1993) conducted interviews with more than 1,000 Texas inmates and found that two-thirds of these inmates would have preferred a prison sentence instead of being on probation supervision for ten years. Petersilia and Deschenes (1994) supported this body of research and stated that "at some level of intensity and length, intensive probation is equally severe as prison and may actually be the most dreaded penalty" (p. 8). Research by Spelman (1995) also found that many inmates preferred prison to community-based sanctions. Research by Wood and Grasmick (1999) on 415 Oklahoma inmates found that many inmates would rather be in prison than on certain alternative sanctions. There are numerous potential explanations for this prison preference by inmates, and some suggested that the differences in earned credit system might make prison a more appealing choice (Wood & Grasmick, 1999).

The typical explanation provided in studies finding that offenders perceive intensive probation as more severe than other sanctions has been that intensive probation is overly controlling and time-intensive (Payne et al., 2003); however, given the race and gender differences consistently uncovered, there is reason to believe that underlying cultural factors are linked to individuals' experiences with sanctions. Consider that Blacks are more likely to prefer incarceration to intensive probation than are Whites (Crouch, 1993; Spelman, 1995). The findings of several other studies suggested that minorities and males view alternative sanctions as more punitive than their counterparts (May & Wood, 1999; May, Wood, Mooney, & Minor, 2005; Wood & May, 2003; Wood, May, & Grasmick, 2005). Wood and May (2003) surveyed 113 offenders and found that Black offenders rated each alternative sanction more severely than White offenders and identified "more strongly with reasons to avoid alternatives" (p. 627). This same study found that Black offenders are two to four times more likely than White offenders to prefer prison over alternative sanctions.

A survey of 588 offenders found that Black offenders rated electronic monitoring as more severe than White offenders (May et al., 2005). In a similar vein, research on a small sample of electronically monitored offenders ($n = 49$) found that Black offenders perceived electronic monitoring as more restrictive than White offenders (Payne & Gainey, 2002), though Payne and Gainey did not ask their respondents to compare electronic monitoring to prison. While it is plausible that perceptions about restrictiveness contribute to the preferences to prison over intensive forms of probation, cultural frames or schemata (Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986) may help to explain why certain groups perceive intensive forms of probation as more punitive. These cultural frames are shaped by perceptions about restrictiveness that are embedded within collective memories of different racial groups (Savelsberg & King, 2005).

Indeed, minorities may experience formal sanctions differently because of different perceptions about specific types of punishment. In particular, groups may vary in their perceptions of the utility and appropriateness of electronic monitoring due to collective memories of past justice system treatment. Such a suggestion is supported, at least in theory, by research showing that underlying belief systems of different groups help explain differences in attitudes about punishment (Cohn, Barkan, & Halteman, 1991). According to Cohn et al. (1991), Blacks, who have higher victimization rates, are punitive for utilitarian reasons, while Whites are punitive because of a fear of minorities and prejudicial attitudes. Similarly, gender differences (which are controlled for in the analysis below) in punishment attitudes could be attributed to differences in utilitarian versus prejudicial attitudes. Females, who have a higher fear of crime, could be punitive for utilitarian reasons, while males may be more punitive for prejudicial reasons (Payne et al., 2003).

As noted above, most research on racial differences in punishment attitudes focused on how minorities and non-minorities perceive sanctions such as incarceration and the death penalty; yet, studies found that minorities experience community-based sanctions differently than non-minorities. Given these differences in experiences, it is natural to question whether attitudes about community-based sanctions vary across racial categories. This study considered whether attitudes about electronic monitoring differed between minorities and non-minorities.

Methods

To assess the impact of minority member status to explain different attitudes toward electronic monitoring, a survey was completed by 599 students at two universities located in southeastern Virginia. One of the universities was a historically Black university (HBU) and the other university had a more representative student population. Students at both universities were selected from introductory and upper level criminal justice, sociology, counseling, and human services courses. Students were told the survey was voluntary and no one refused to complete the survey.

Some may question using a student sample to assess punishment attitudes. In social psychological research—as some readers may recall—it is common to use "college sophomores" to conduct laboratory experiments and this approach has led to many findings regarding human behavior, such as Zimbardo's (2007) mock prison experiment. While researchers should not suggest that college students are

representative of the entire population, it is reasonable to suggest that college students do represent a large segment of the population, they are of voting age, they have rights and duties similar to other adults, and their opinions matter. It seems that an added benefit to this exploratory study was that college students are more attentive to social events and policy developments, and may have some familiarity with electronic monitoring. Besides these reasons, a number of different studies had demonstrated that students are appropriate for attitudinal research and theory testing (Austin & Hummer, 1994; Gibbs, Giever, & Higgins, 2003; Miller, Rossi, & Simpson, 1991; Robinson, 1993). Student samples have been particularly useful in discerning factors that contribute to attitudes about punishment (Bohm, Clark, & Aveni, 1990; Piquero, Gomez-Smith, & Langton, 2004).

Tying the methods to theorizing about collective memories

Contemporary social theories suggest that micro-level political choices are constituted (in part) for group members through collective memories of past experiences affecting the group (Savelsberg & King, 2005). Minority and majority racial groups represent different collective memories of past experiences, occurring either directly or vicariously, that contribute to shaping group action patterns, ideas, and norms. The aim of this study was to compare responses based on minority or majority racial group membership; thus, using respondents from a HBU provided the researchers a large enough sample of racial minorities to make comparisons of groups more robust without applying weighting procedures. It was possible that measuring attitudes of racial minorities from a HBU might introduce some bias. Therefore, a binary measure was used to control for university status to help control for any biasing features. It was also possible that including respondents from a HBU offers researchers the opportunity to discern such college students' ideas. That is, because young minorities are overrepresented as arrestees and criminal defendants, the opinions of young minorities about all forms of crime control are particularly important to understand (Gabbidon & Greene, 2005).

Measures

To measure attitudes about electronic monitoring, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) with the following statements:

- Electronic monitoring deters crime in general.
- Electronic monitoring as a threat keeps those who have been on it from committing future crimes.
- Electronic monitoring as a form of punishment is too lenient.
- Electronic monitoring is an effective method of punishment.
- Electronic monitoring is a severe punishment because it restricts the offender's mobility.
- Electronic monitoring ensures that the offender is punished.
- Electronic monitoring is an effective method of controlling offenders.
- Electronic monitoring is dangerous because it's too easy to escape.
- Electronic monitoring discriminates against the poor because they may not have phones.
- Electronic monitoring turns the home into a prison.
- Electronic monitoring is more likely to be given to middle-class or wealthy offenders.
- Electronic monitoring perpetuates a racist judicial system.
- Electronic monitoring is unfair because the wealthy stay in nicer arrangements than the poor.

These measures were adapted from prior research on this topic (Gainey & Payne, 2003).

To develop measures that allowed the researchers to test ideas related to collective memory and race, factor analysis, principal components extractions, and varimax rotation were used to discern the existence of any thematic patterns in the data and generate scores for regression analyses. These procedures were selected because they allowed the researchers to develop scales testing different aspects of the electronic monitoring sanction. In addition, these procedures were useful in identifying whether different themes, related to the broader collective memory framework, varied between minorities and non-minorities.

The items were recoded so that ascending numbers indicated more support for electronic monitoring such as the item asking whether electronic monitoring negatively effects racial minorities, in which case strongly agree = 0, agree = 1, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 4. Factor rotations indicated the existence of four sub-scales and factor scores were saved for inclusion as dependent variables in the multiple regression analyses. The sub-scales were as follows: (1) deterrence, (2) punitiveness, and (3) inequality. Table 1 describes how these sub-scales were measured, their theoretical underpinnings, and their alpha levels. The Cronbach's alphas for each scale were a little lower than hoped for, but researchers have suggested that alphas of .6 to .7 are acceptable (Davis, 1964, p. 24; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1988, p. 89; Nunnally, 1967, p. 226).

Within a collective memory framework, it is important to understand the underlying factors contributing to perceptions about electronic monitoring. The survey included several items to measure the unfairness or class inequality believed to be inherently tied to electronic monitoring. Respondents were asked about the possible discrimination against the poor, the ease with which wealthier offenders may receive and experience the punishment, and the distribution of electronic monitoring based on racial consideration, which initial categorical analyses found significant associations between race and responses. The rotated component matrix for the *inequality* scale revealed strong factor loadings ranging from .694 to .756 and $\alpha = .741$.

There is much criminological discussion regarding the punitive and/or rehabilitative nature of certain punishments. In this case, punishment tends to refer to painfulness of how the punishment is

Table 1
Deterrence, punishment, inequality, and technology sub-scales.

Scale	Items	Theoretical underpinnings	Alpha
Deterrence	Electronic monitoring deters crime in general. Electronic monitoring as a threat keeps those who have been on it from committing future crime.	This scale measures the degree to which respondents think the sanction fulfills a purpose. Higher scores mean the respondent thinks the sanction is useful.	.687
Punishment	Electronic monitoring is an effective method of controlling others. Electronic monitoring is an effective method of punishment. Electronic monitoring is a severe punishment because it restricts the offender's mobility. Electronic monitoring ensures that the offender is punished.	This scale measures the degree to which the respondents think the sanction adequately punishes offenders. Higher scores mean the respondent thinks the sanction is punitive.	.725
Inequality	Electronic monitoring discriminates against the poor because they may not have phones. Electronic monitoring is more likely to be given to middle class or wealthy offenders. Electronic monitoring perpetuates a racist judicial system. Electronic monitoring is unfair because the wealthy stay in nicer arrangements than the poor.	This scale measures the degree to which respondents think the sanction is unfair. Higher scores mean the respondent thinks the sanction is unfair.	.741

received, not just how it was designed (see Spelman, 1995). Strong factor loadings (ranging between .666 to 779, $\alpha = 725$) were found for survey items asking respondents about electronic monitoring as an effective punishment, as a form of severe punishment, and how well electronic monitoring can control offenders. This is the *punitiveness* scale.

The final sub-scale included in further analyses was the *deterrence* scale. This scale measures how effective electronic monitoring is at preventing offenders from recidivating and its utility as a general deterrent. Factors loadings were .866 and .747, respectively, for general and specific deterrence, and $\alpha = .687$.

Sample

Table 2 describes the characteristics of the sample. At the HBU, 155 students completed the survey, and 444 students completed the survey from the other university. The entire sample consisted of 55 percent minority respondents. The minority group consisted of overwhelmingly Black students, with a small number of Asians and other category for the total sample. There were significant differences between each university and the racial composition ($\chi^2 = 147$, df = 3, p<.000), with 94 percent of the HBU students and 41 percent of students from the other university being minorities. This was not surprising, given that the mission of one of the universities is to serve as an institution of higher education specifically directed toward educating African Americans, while the other university does not have such an approach. Gender distributions were skewed toward large female populations, with more than 70 percent of students being females and similar numbers at each university. One of the criticisms of using college student samples in research is the lack of age variation. The sample had an average age of twenty-five years and an age range between seventeen years and fifty-seven years. The bulk of respondents had majors "other" (e.g., social services) (n = 303, 51 percent) than sociology (n = 65, 11 percent) or criminal justice (n = 223, 37 percent) for the entire sample. With regard to plans for future careers, 34 percent of the respondents planned to enter graduate or law school following graduation, 15 percent planned on a career in criminal justice, and 26 percent of the respondents planned on a career in social services.

Table 2
Sample characteristics.

	Total	HBU	University
Race			
Minority	327 (55)	145 (94)	182 (41)
Majority	271 (45)	9 (6)	262 (59)
Gender			
Male	176 (29)	40 (26)	136 (31)
Female	422 (71)	115 (74)	307 (69)
Age			
Mean	25 years	25 years	25 years
Range	17-57 years	19-54 years	17-57 years
Major			
Criminal justice	223 (37)	44 (28)	179 (40)
Sociology	65 (11)	45 (29)	20 (5)
Other	303 (51)	64 (41)	240 (54)
Year			
Senior	216 (36)	74 (48)	142 (32)
Junior	244 (41)	62 (40)	182 (41)
Sophomore	47 (8)	12 (8)	35 (8)
Freshman	81 (14)		81 (18)
Employment			
Policing	49 (8)	10 (7)	39 (9)
Corrections	42 (7)	18 (12)	24 (5)
Law/graduate school	202 (34)	69 (45)	133 (30)
Social service	153 (26)	29 (19)	124 (28)
Other	146 (24)	26 (17)	120 (27)
Marital status			
Married	108 (18)	31 (20)	77 (17)

Table 3
Attitudes about electronic monitoring*.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Electronic monitoring deters crime in general.	20 (3.4)	221 (37.5)	285 (48.3)	64 (10.7)
Electronic monitoring as a threat keeps those who have been on it from committing future crimes.	16 (2.7)	235 (39.8)	271 (45.9)	67 (11.4)
Electronic monitoring as a form of punishment is too lenient.	46 (7.7)	300 (50.1)	221 (36.9)	20 (3.3)
Electronic monitoring is an effective method of punishment.	16 (2.7)	238 (40.7)	282 (48.2)	49 (8.4)
Electronic monitoring is a severe punishment because it restricts the offender's mobility.	16 (2.7)	103 (17.5)	351 (59.6)	119 (20.2)
Electronic monitoring ensures that the offender is punished.	20 (3.4)	184 (31.2)	320 (53.4)	66 (11.0)
Electronic monitoring is an effective method of controlling offenders.	23 (3.9)	250 (42.5)	264 (44.9)	50 (8.5)
Electronic monitoring is dangerous because it's too easy to escape.	26 (4.5)	249 (42.7)	273 (46.8)	35 (6.0)
Electronic monitoring discriminates against the poor because they may not have phones.	21 (3.6)	152 (26.1)	329 (56.5)	80 (13.7)
Electronic monitoring turns the home into a prison.	26 (4.4)	175 (29.9)	325 (55.6)	58 (9.9)
Electronic monitoring is more likely to be given to middle class or wealthy offenders.	63 (10.8)	256 (43.8)	212 (36.2)	53 (9.1)
Electronic monitoring perpetuates a racist judicial system.	28 (4.8)	124 (21.4)	328 (56.7)	99 (17.1)
Electronic monitoring is unfair because the wealthy stay in nicer arrangements than the poor.	57 (9.8)	166 (28.7)	282 (48.7)	74 (12.8)

* The first figure in each cell is the number agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. The figure in parentheses is the percentage.

Findings

Table 3 provides the descriptive statistics for how respondents perceived electronic monitoring. A few general comments about the overall patterns characterizing the respondents' attitudes about electronic monitoring are warranted. First, for the most part, electronic monitoring issues are not typically ones that the respondents felt "strongly" about. In looking at the "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" columns for the statements, for most items, very few respondents indicated strong opinions about the statement. The strongest opinions elicited were for the statement that the sanction "is a severe punishment…" Approximately 20 percent of the sample strongly disagreed with the statement.

Second, note that the respondents tended to hold mixed views about electronic monitoring. On the surface, there were no clear patterns suggesting general agreement or disagreement about the specific statements. Although, in general, the sample did not see the sanction as punitive (80 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that it "is a severe punishment…"). Nearly two-thirds of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the sanction "ensures that the offender is punished." Also, respondents tended to disagree or strongly disagree that the sanction perpetuated racism or was discriminatory. Note, however, that nearly a fourth of the sample described the sanction as perpetuating racism and nearly a third said the sanction was discriminatory.

Table 4
Race and attitudes about electronic monitoring*.

	Whites		Non-Whites			
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Chi square	Sig.
Electronic monitoring deters crime in general.	122 (45.5)	146 (54.5)	118 (36.8)	203 (63.2)	4.65	.019
Electronic monitoring as a threat keeps those who have been on it from committing future crimes.	117 (43.8)	150 (56.2)	133 (41.3)	188 (58.4)	1.17	.557
Electronic monitoring as a form of punishment is too lenient.	170 (64.6)	94 (35.6)	175 (54.3)	147 (45.7)	6.05	.014
Electronic monitoring is an effective method of punishment.	100 (37.5)	167 (62.5)	153 (48.3)	164 (51.7)	6.90	.009
Electronic monitoring is a severe punishment because it restricts the offender's mobility.	42 (15.7)	225 (84.3)	77 (24.0)	244 (76.0)	6.16	.013
Electronic monitoring ensures that the offender is punished.	84 (31.6)	182 (68.4)	119 (36.8)	204 (63.2)	1.79	.181
Electronic monitoring is an effective method of controlling offenders.	120 (44.8)	148 (55.2)	152 (47.6)	166 (52.0)	1.38	.503
Electronic monitoring is dangerous because it's too easy to escape.	131 (49.2)	135 (50.8)	143 (45.3)	173 (54.7)	.92	.336
Electronic monitoring discriminates against the poor because they may not have phones.	56 (21.4)	206 (78.6)	117 (36.7)	202 (63.3)	16.11	.000
Electronic monitoring turns the home into a prison.	79 (29.9)	185 (70.1)	121 (37.8)	198 (61.9)	4.94	.043
Electronic monitoring is more likely to be given to middle class or wealthy offenders.	133 (50.0)	133 (50.0)	185 (58.2)	132 (41.5)	4.92	.043
Electronic monitoring perpetuates a racist judicial system.	44 (16.7)	219 (83.3)	108 (34.2)	208 (65.8)	22.57	.000
Electronic monitoring is unfair because the wealthy stay in nicer arrangements than the poor.	76 (28.9)	187 (71.1)	146 (46.3)	169 (53.7)	18.45	.000

*The first figure in each cell is the number agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. The figure in parentheses is the percentage.

Cross tabulations were conducted to determine if race differences existed. For purposes of analysis, the strongly agree and agree categories were combined, as were the disagree and strongly disagree categories. Table 4 shows the relationship between race and various statements about electronic monitoring. As shown in the table, several statistical significant differences were found. These included the following:

- Whites were more likely to agree that the sanction deters misconduct. In all, 45 percent (n = 122) of Whites agreed that electronic monitoring deterred crime, as compared to 37 percent (n = 118) of Blacks (chi square = 4.65, p = .031, phi = .09).
- Whites were more likely to agree that the sanction is too lenient. In all, 64.6 percent (n = 170) of Whites agreed that the sanction was too lenient, as compared to 54.3 percent (n = 175) of Blacks (chi square = 6.05, p = .014, phi = .11).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that the sanction was an effective punishment. In all, nearly half of Blacks (n = 153) agreed that the sanction was effective as a punishment, as compared to just over a third of Whites (chi square = 6.90, p = .009, phi = .11).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that the sanction was a severe punishment. In all, nearly one-fourth of Blacks (n = 153) agreed that the sanction was a severe punishment, as compared to less than one-sixth of Whites (chi square = 6.16, p = .013, phi = .11).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that the sanction discriminates against the poor. About one-third of Blacks agreed with this statement, as compared to one-fifth of Whites (chi square = 16.11, p = .000, phi = .24).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that electronic monitoring turns the home into a prison. In all, 37.8 percent of Blacks agreed with this statement, as compared to about 30 percent of Whites (chi square = 4.94, p = .043, phi = .09).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that the sanction is more likely to be given to wealthy offenders. Approximately 58 percent of Blacks agreed with this statement, as compared to half of Whites (chi square = 4.92, p = .043, phi = .09).
- Blacks were more than twice as likely to agree that electronic monitoring perpetuates a racist system. More than a third of Blacks agreed with this statement, as compared to one-sixth of Whites (chi square = 22.57, p = .000, phi = .20).
- Blacks were more likely to agree that the sanction was unfair because wealthier individuals stay in nicer arrangements. Nearly half of Blacks agreed with this statement as compared to 28.9 percent of Whites (chi square = 7.86, p = .005, phi = .12).

That so many significant differences were found between respondents from majority and minority racial groups lends plausibility to the central question addressing the effects of minority status and attitudes toward electronic monitoring.

Regression analysis

The regression analyses utilized OLS estimation to determine the explanatory power of minority racial group to account for variation in attitudes toward electronic monitoring. Race was defined as minority = 0 and majority = 1. Marriage was defined as non-married = 0 and married = 1. Age was a continuous variable representing the actual age of students in years. Gender was coded so that male = 0 and female = 1. University status referred to HBU = 1 and the other university = 0. The regression analyses followed the same procedure for the three dependent factors, with models first estimating a simple regression using the race variable and then full models including four additional controls of marriage, age, university, and gender.

The first regression models assessed the effects of race on respondent attitudes toward the lack of class equality in electronic monitoring applications. Table 5 reveals that minority racial group was a significant explanatory variable of one's attitudes toward the level of inequality present in electronic monitoring sanctions. Racial group was significant in both the simple (p<.000) and the multiple regression analyses (p<.000). Besides minority racial status being a significant explanatory variable, gender was also significant at the .01

Table 5
Inequality factor regressed on race, age, gender, marriage, and university status (N = 537).

Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2
	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test
Race	.268 (.083)** 6.432	.278 (.096)** 5.802
Age		-.022 (.005) -.486
Gender		.108 (.094)* 2.523
Marriage		.026 (.119) .569
University status		-.017 (.109) -.358
Constant	-.246	-.380
Adjusted R squared	.070	.075
F statistic	41.4	12.123
Prob.>F	.000	.000

* p<.05.
** p<.001.

Table 6
Punishment factor regressed on race, age, gender, marriage, and university status (N = 537).

Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2
	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test
Race	-.112 (.085)* -2.599	-.088 (.086) -1.798
Age		-.147 (.005)* -3.812
Gender		-.060 (.096) -1.378
Marriage		-.005 (.121) -.113
University status		.063 (.110) 1.318
Constant	.091	.603
Adjusted R squared	.011	.034
F statistic	6.752	5.754
Prob.>F	.000	.000

* p<.05.
** p<.001.

level. A bit of clarity is in order for interpreting the regression results. The survey items were coded such that higher values infer a more optimistic perspective of electronic monitoring. The items constituting this factor were coded so that higher values indicated a respondents' strong disagreement with electronic monitoring perpetuating a racist judicial system. The regression slopes can be interpreted as showing that Whites have significantly stronger attitudes that electronic monitoring is not applied unfairly. These items can be interpreted as suggesting that significant differences exist to explain differences in the level of inequality perceived in electronic monitoring policies.

The punishment factor regression models (see Table 6) offered mixed empirical support for the theoretical argument of racial group status accounting for attitudinal differences. The simple model confirmed that race is a significant explanatory variable. Again, it is worth noting that the factor was coded so that higher scores indicated strong agreement that electronic monitoring can seriously punish offenders. The multiple regression model, however, failed to confirm racial effects above the 5 percent level, but it was significant at the 10 percent cutoff (p = .07). Interestingly, it was found that older students are more likely to view electronic monitoring as not offering a punitive mechanism.

The final dependent factor score measuring the attitudes of students regarding the deterrent effects of electronic monitoring (see Table 7) did not produce any significant relationships. The F-test also showed that the independent variables' coefficients did not move past zero.

Discussion

These results provided a glimpse into understanding public perceptions of one intermediate sanction. The findings presented in this article demonstrated some important associations between racial group membership and attitudes toward electronic monitoring. The findings showed that attitudinal differences exist between minorities and non-minorities, and much of these differences can be attributed to perceptions about the inequality that minorities see in the application of the electronic monitoring sanction. Collectively, these findings are significant for at least six reasons.

First, on theoretical grounds, punishment scholars have long recognized that society's attitudes about punishment are an indicator of the nature of society at a given moment in time. As one author team writes, "a great deal of cultural awareness can be found through empirical examinations of punishment justifications" (Payne et al., 2003, p. 42). In addition, a great deal of *subcultural* awareness surfaces through research comparing how various groups perceive different sanctions. In this study, the fact that the two groups (minority and non-minorities) perceived electronic monitoring differently based upon perceptions about inequality provides additional insight into the way that subcultural values influence attitudes about punishment. In addition, it is plausible that the collective memories of the two groups (which for minorities include a history of inequality and discrimination) influence how members of each group perceive electronic monitoring.

Second, understanding the differences in the way groups perceive electronic monitoring provides policymakers with information needed to develop public awareness campaigns. Some of the attitudes that respondents demonstrated about electronic monitoring are possibly based on misperceptions about this form type of alternative sanction. Misperceptions about community-based sanctions result in public demand for incarceration (Mauer, 1997). Determining whether these misperceptions exist is the first step in assessing whether increased public awareness about community-based sanctions is needed (Bryant & Morris, 1998; Fairchild, 1998; Huskey & Wiley, 1993). In turn, understanding what the misperceptions are provides policymakers the information they need to counter prevailing misconceptions. Respondents tended to see electronic monitoring as lenient and less than effective in deterring crime. Interestingly, a number of recent studies had pointed to the punitive nature of electronic monitoring (Payne & Gainey, 1998, 1999), and other studies had demonstrated the punitive nature of community-based sanctions in general (Crouch, 1993; Wood & Grasmick, 1999). Gainey, Payne, and O'Toole (2000, p. 749) found that "many downplay the punitiveness and deterrent value of alternative sanctions because they are generally perceived as lenient and lacking as a potential for deterrence." Research found that attitudes about electronic monitoring could be changed with education about the sanction (Gainey & Payne, 2003). In particular, members of the public should be educated about the following

Table 7
Deterrence factor regressed on race, age, gender, marriage, and university status (N = 537).

Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2
	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test	Coeff. (S.E.) t-test
Race	.050 (.085) 1.167	.047 (.098) .957
Age		-.071 (.005) -1.482
Gender		-.080 (.097) -1.790
Marriage		.016 (.122) .348
University status		.016 (.112) .321
Constant	-.040	.282
Adjusted R squared	.001	.008
F statistic	1.362	2.039
Prob.>F	.244	.088

* p<.05.
** p<.001.

aspects of electronic monitoring: (1) the punitiveness of the sanction, (2) the strengths and weaknesses of the sanction, (3) the goals and purposes of the strategies, (4) the cost of electronic monitoring, and (5) evidence of program effectiveness (Gainey & Payne, 2003).

Third, given the current recognition that culturally competent service provision is a necessity in criminal justice administration, probation and parole officers must be aware of culturally influenced attitudes about various sanctions they administer. Culturally competent service provision means that probation officers must be sensitive to the way that cultural influences dictate the probation or parole experience. Understanding what these influences are will help probation and parole officers to more adequately supervise various types of offenders. The racial differences uncovered suggest that it is imperative that probation and parole officers working with electronically monitored offenders are aware of these differences so that they can provide culturally competent services. As others have noted, offenders who are under correctional supervision define themselves by their race (Maghan, 1999). The importance of recognizing the role of race and how different probationers and parolees will perceive their community-based sanction cannot be understated. Consider the following: "Practitioners who are aware of these possible differences can place themselves in positions to offset any negative consequences that may arise as a result of [culturally influenced] problems. Being in a position to prevent problems will increase the possibility that the sanction will succeed for the offender and society" (Payne & Gainey, 2002, p. 68). What this suggests is that practitioners should recognize that offenders' cultural memories will likely influence their punishment experience.

Fourth, and on a related point, the findings of this study provided a baseline from which practitioners and researchers can determine whether differences in the way offenders experience punishment are tied to their differences in the perceptions of the punishment. Since racial and gender differences were uncovered, support for the possibility that subcultural influences contribute to the punishment experience exists. Researchers and practitioners should work together to determine whether the attitudes uncovered in this study are the source of offenders' perceptions about community-based sanctions. Recall that some groups of offenders prefer prison to intensive probation, and that research shows that Black offenders were more likely than White offenders to describe electronic monitoring as restrictive and punitive. While some researchers have suggested that incarceration is a form of status symbol for some offenders (Payne, 2003), implicitly community-based sanctions would not have the same intrinsic rewards for offenders. Based on this, one must question whether the source of inmates' preferences for prison over probation are rooted in culturally shaped (not determined) factors promoting specific images and understandings of electronic monitoring.

Fifth, based on the assumption that perceptions of sanctions are tied to how well sanctions accomplish various goals of the criminal justice system (Foglia, 1997; Paternoster & Simpson, 1996; Piquero & Paternoster, 1998), sanctions that are perceived as too lenient and not at all retributive or punitive may have little potential to deter misconduct. Alternatively, sanctions that are perceived as too punitive or unfair may actually breed misconduct (Bowers & Pierce, 1980; Potter, 1997). On these measures, electronic monitoring did not fare well among this sample of respondents. The sanction was not perceived as punitive, and the deterrent potential was not recognized by respondents. Also, the fact that minorities see that sanction as perpetuating inequality potentially means that the sanction has the capacity to be criminogenic rather than preventive in nature.

Finally, understanding how sanctions are perceived provides valuable information to determine whether increased use of particular sanctions will meet opposition from the public (Brown & Elrod, 1995). With electronic monitoring in particular, dozens of states across the United States have called for the increased use of electronic monitoring for certain types of offenders including sex offenders. These new policies have been developed devoid of public input. That respondents did not hold strong opinions about electronic monitoring was interesting, however, and at least tacitly suggests that there is little opposition to using the sanction on a widespread basis. Whether the public supports increased use of the sanction for sex offenders, as is the current trend, is an important question that remains to be addressed.

Researchers should also consider the source of Blacks' perceptions about the prejudicial nature of electronic monitoring. The sanction is designed to be less punitive than incarceration; therefore, it may be tempting to dismiss claims of discrimination and prejudice. After all, how can something that is supposed to give offenders a break from prison be applied prejudicially or in a discriminatory fashion? Looking at electronic monitoring from a narrow lens would not allow researchers to adequately answer this question. Instead, researchers must broaden their perspective and consider the way that this community-based sanction, as well as others, might be perceived, and experienced, as discriminatory and prejudicial.

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