

PERCEIVED PARENTAL ATTITUDES AND DRUG USING
BEHAVIOR IN YOUNG MALE ADULTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The present study was designed to establish whether or not any relationship exists between perceived parental attitudes and drug using behavior among young male adults. Three groups of 20 Ss each--no drug, marihuana, and hard drug--were compared based upon their response to the Fathers form of the Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire. It was found that Ss reporting hard drug usage perceived their fathers as least punitive, most casual, least demanding, and least rejecting. Subjects reporting only marihuana usage perceived their fathers as most punitive, least casual, most demanding, and most rejecting. The no drug group consistently scored between the two extremes established by the marihuana and hard drug group. It was concluded that clear evidence exists for a relationship between perceived child rearing practices and drug using behavior among young adults.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research in the area of drug using behavior has uncovered a number of relationships which contribute to a more thorough understanding of the etiology of drug dependence and addiction. Demographic data studying family structure, age, sex, and racial background of the drug user is continuously being gathered. Psychological testing of drug addicts is being conducted on a more rigorous and systematic basis in order to determine what factors differentiate the drug user from his non-drug using peers.

A number of descriptive studies based upon extensive investigation of family background, personal interviews with known addicts, and the social milieu in which the drug users live have suggested several interesting relationships. Easton (1965) stated that drug abuse in young adults is preceded by a long historical development of behavioral, social, interpersonal, and other problems. According to this researcher the initial experimentation with heroin and other dangerous drugs is a social phenomenon occurring through the medium of friends, and cannot be directly attributed to the drug "pusher." Brown (1963) in a profile of juvenile narcotics addicts and amphetamine users characterized these individuals as ungracious, demanding, suspicious-paranoid, fearful of sexual relations, and bitterly disturbed by feelings of rejection. He

suggested that omnipotence was the most common denominator in the magical thinking which is prevalent in these individuals.

A number of studies have been conducted using more objective means of assessing the attitudes and behavior of drug addicted or drug dependent individuals. Quantifiable indices such as the number of hours the parents attended to their children, the number of siblings, family income, and educational levels were used in a study of young male addicts conducted in Switzerland (Kieholz and Battegay, 1963). It was concluded that these individuals were exposed to physically and emotionally adverse conditions in their early childhood as compared to peers of the same socioeconomic class who were not drug dependent. In another study (Kurtzlung, Cavior, and Lipton, 1966) the differences between the human figure drawings of male opiate addicts and non addicts were examined. It was found that more addicts drew the female figure first and drew it larger than the male figure. They suggested maternal identification and sexual confusion as etiological factors in the male addicts. Gilbert and Lombardi (1967) also conducted comparisons between male narcotics addicts and non addicts of similar socioeconomic background using the MMPI. They concluded that the addicts had far more deep seated and widespread pathology than the non addicts. Outstanding among the deviant traits were psychopathic tendencies, depression, excessive tension, feelings of insecurity, feelings of inadequacy, and difficulty in forming warm and lasting interpersonal relations.

The present study is intended to investigate some of the factors which may contribute to drug using behavior among young adults. It is

also intended to determine if differences exist between marihuana users, non drug users, and those individuals addicted to or dependent upon barbituarates, amphetamines, opiates, or hallucinogens. The variable chosen for study was the relationship of young male college students' attitudes toward their fathers and these students' drug using behavior. It has been previously shown (Oltman and Friedman, 1967) that heavy drug users show high levels of parental deprivation in the period before their nineteenth birthdays. Along related lines, the present study is intended to extend this finding by examining relationships between perceived parental attitudes during childhood and drug using behavior.

The Parent-Child Relations questionnaire (PCR) (Roe and Siegelman, 1963) was chosen as the means of assessing perceived parental attitudes. The original questionnaire was simplified by the omission of the middle category, reducing the five point scale to a four category measure in order to facillitate ease of self-administration. The original questionnaire was not modified in any other way. The questionnaire was then administered to the sample population and the resultant answer sheets were divided into three groups based upon reported drug experiences. The scores of these Ss on the ten subscales of the PCR questionnaire were then compared individually and by groups. It was hypothesized that a differing pattern of profiles over the ten subscales would be obtained for the three experimental groups. This pattern should provide evidence for a more integrated conceptualization of the effect of child-rearing practices on drug oriented behavior among young male adults. For example, it might be expected that fathers who are generally

perceived as having been more permissive would be associated with sons whose drug related behaviors are less restrictive. This could imply a continuum of drug oriented behavior from no drug to marihuana usage to hard drug using behavior as a function of the permissiveness of the father.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

The three experimental groups were composed of while male undergraduate Ss ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-two, all of whom were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at The University of Arizona. Each group contained 20 Ss for a total N of 60. The Ss were contacted in their psychology courses by the E who requested volunteers to fill out his questionnaire.

Materials

The Fathers form of the Parent-Child Relations questionnaire was used to obtain the Ss' ratings of their fathers' behavior. This questionnaire is composed of 130 questions divided into 10 subscales, four of which containing 10 items each, and six containing 15 items each. The subtest reliability coefficients range from .687 to .896 for the Fathers form with the Harvard sample tested by Roe and Siegelman (1963). Descriptions of the ten subscales are as follows (Pgs. 558-564):

Demanding (DEM-15 items). Parents in this group set up high standards of accomplishment in particular areas, manners, school, etc. They impose strict regulations and demand unquestioned obedience to them, and they do not make exceptions. They expect the child to be busy at all times at some useful activity. They have high punitiveness. They restrict friendships in accord with these standards. They do not try to find out what a child is thinking or feeling, they tell him what to think or feel.

Rejecting (REJ-15 items). Parents in this group follow the more extreme patterns of the preceding group, but this becomes rejecting when the attitude is rejection of the childishness of the child. They may also reject him as an individual. They are cold and hostile, derogate him and make fun of him and his inadequacies and problems. They may frequently leave him alone, and often will not permit other children in the house. They have no regard for the child's point of view. The regulations they establish are not for the sake of training the child, but for protecting the parents from his intrusions.

Neglecting (NEG-15 items). These parents pay little attention to the child, giving him a minimum of physical care, and no affection. They forget promises made to him, forget things for him. They are cold, but are not derogatory or hostile. They leave him alone but do not go out of their way to avoid him.

Casual (CAS-15 items). These parents pay more attention to the child and are mildly affectionate when they do. They will be responsive to him when they are not busy about something else. They do not think about him or plan for him very much, but take him as part of the general situation. They don't worry much about him, and make little definite effort to train him. They are easy going, have few rules, and do not make much effort to enforce those they do have.

Loving (LOV-15 items). These parents give the child warm and loving attention. They try to help him with projects that are important to him, but they are not intrusive. They are more likely to reason with the child than to punish him, but they will punish him. They give praise, but not indiscriminately. They try specifically to help him with problems in the best way for him. The child feels able to confide in them and to ask them for help. They invite his friends into the house and try to make things attractive for them. They encourage independence and are willing to let him take a chance in order to grow towards it. Distinction between loving and casual categories can be difficult. A basic difference is the amount of thought given to the child's problems.

Protecting (PRO-15 items). This category includes parents who gave the child's interests first priority. They are very indulgent, provide special privileges, are demonstrably affectionate, and may be gushing. They select friends carefully, but will rarely let him visit other homes without them. They protect him from other children, from experiences in which he

may suffer disappointment, discomfort, or injury. They are highly intrusive and expect to know all about what he is thinking and experiencing. They reward dependency.

Symbolic-love Reward (S-L REW-10 items). The parents using this kind of reward praised their children for approved behavior, gave them special attention and were affectionately demonstrative.

Direct-Object Reward (D-O REW-10 items). These include tangible rewards as gifts of money or toys, special trips, or relief from chores.

Symbolic-Love Punishment (S-L PUN-10 items). Such punishments include shaming the child before others, isolating him and withdrawing love.

Direct-Object Punishment (D-O PUN-10 items). These include physical punishment, taking away playthings, reducing allowance, denying promised trips, and so on.

In addition to a mimeographed copy of the PCR questionnaire each S was given a multiple choice answer sheet designed for direct computer scoring. An instruction sheet was also supplied to the Ss. The seven page questionnaire was stapled together with the instruction and answer sheets attached to the questionnaire with a paper clip to facilitate their easy removal. Number 2 lead pencils were given to all Ss.

Procedure

Each S was given the questionnaire along with the attached instruction and answer sheets. The written instructions requested that the Ss place all answers directly on the multiple choice answer sheet using the pencils supplied. They were further instructed to supply only their age, level of education, and specific drug experience, if any. It

was suspected that detailed questioning of the Ss would reduce the number who accurately reported their drug experience. Therefore, the instructions were designed to minimize fear of exposure for being honest about revealing drug usage. No names were requested and demographic information was kept at a minimum in order to reduce the fear of identification or legal action against reported drug users. These precautions were taken to reduce the number of false positives and negatives in the sample group. The first twenty answer sheets collected that satisfied the criteria for each of the three categories of no drug, marihuana only, and hard drug experience were used for the experimental groups. The criteria for membership in each of the three groups were as follows:

NO DRUG: having never used or experimented with marihuana, amphetamines other than under a doctor's prescription (i.e., weight reduction); having never used or experimented with barbiturates or other narcotics or any hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, STP, or mescaline.

MARIHUANA: having used or experimented with marihuana and only marihuana, excluded from this group are any Ss having used or experimented with any barbiturates, hallucinogens, amphetamines, or opiates.

HARD DRUG: having used or experimented with amphetamines ("speed"), seconol ("reds"), heroin, morphine, or other opiates, hallucinogens (LSD, STP, mescaline) or any other narcotics or hallucinogenic drugs.

Those Ss reporting the use of hasheesh also reported usage of other drugs placing them clearly in the hard drug category. The 60 answer sheets were divided into three groups based upon self reported drug experience. Each of the answer sheets was then computer scored.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Inspection of the three profiles presented in Figure 1 reveals consistent differences between the three groups as a function of subscales. It will be noted, that the non drug group was consistently between the profiles of the hard drug and marihuana groups whenever sizeable between group differences were found. The marihuana group and hard drug group alternated across the ten subscales in contributing the highest scores. Inspection of the separate profiles of Ss within each of the three groups revealed that the mean profiles were representative of individual performances.

Separate one-way analyses of variance were applied for each of the ten subscales. The results, summarized in Table 1, confirmed the between group differences which were apparent in the profiles presented in Figure 1. Significant differences between groups were found for five of the ten subscales (PUN-S-L, REJ, CAS, DEM, PUN-D-0).

In addition, Figure 1 reveals that the groups responded differentially over the ten subscales. This observation is supported by the pattern of differences found in the ten subscale analyses. For example, there were significant differences between groups on the PUN-S-L scale which were exactly reversed on the CAS scale, indicating that the groups differed in their subscale profiles. It must be noted that two

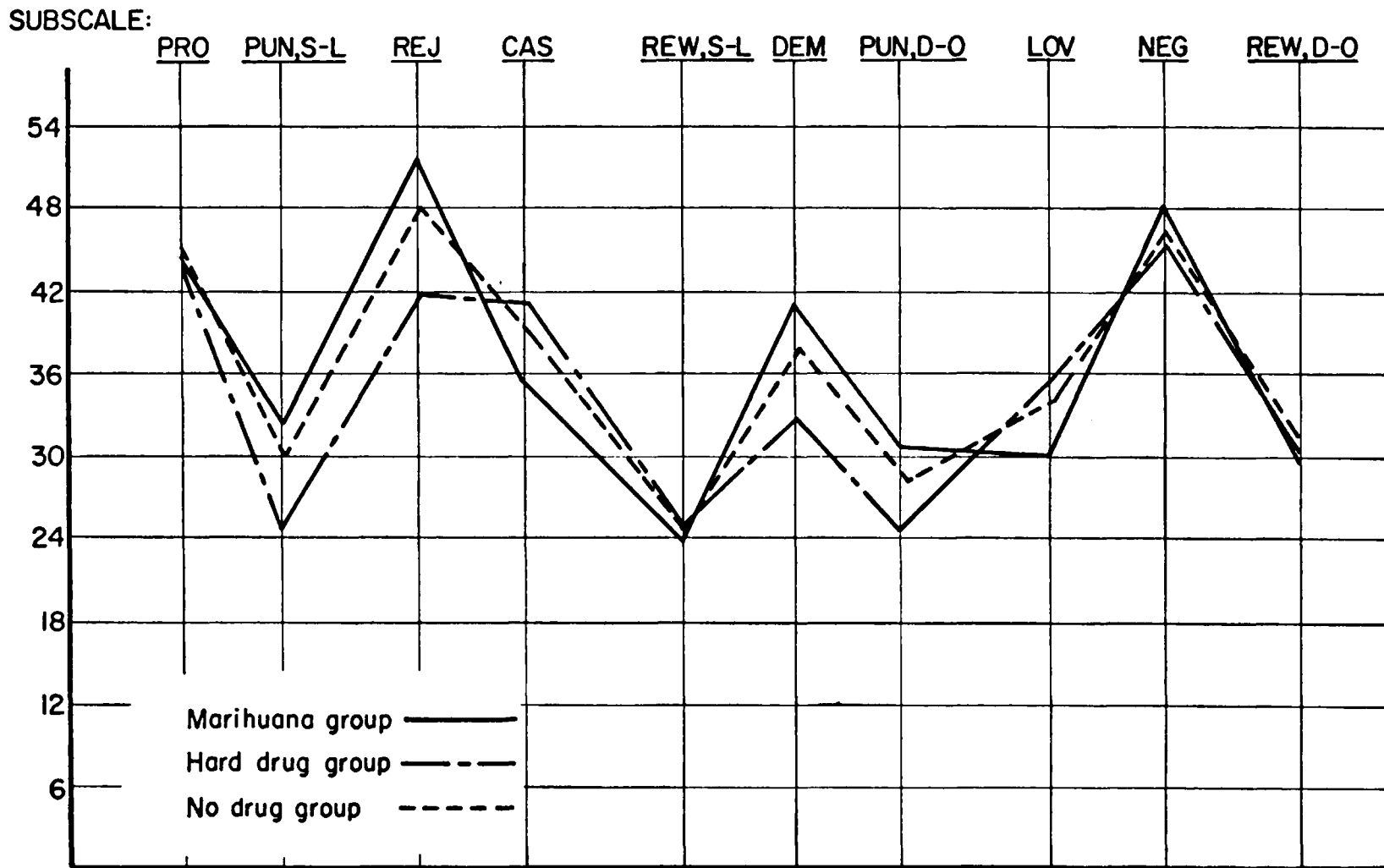


Figure 1. Profiles of Average Scores for the Experimental Groups on the Ten Subscales

Table 1. Summary of Analyses of Variance for Subscales

SOURCE	df	S _s	MS	F	p	SUBSCALE
Among	2	21.23	10.62	.24	n.s.*	PRO
Within	57	2,536.95	44.51			
TOTAL	59	2,558.18				
Among	2	152.03	76.02	3.34	<.05	PUN S-L
Within	57	1,297.90	22.77			
TOTAL	59	1,449.93				
Among	2	650.23	325.12	4.84	<.025	REJ
Within	57	3,826.70	67.14			
TOTAL	59	4,476.93				
Among	2	455.63	227.82	3.70	<.05	CAS
Within	57	3,509.10	61.56			
TOTAL	59	3,964.73				
Among	2	127.90	63.95	1.74	n.s.*	REW S-L
Within	57	2,096.70	36.78			
TOTAL	59	2,224.60				
Among	2	648.53	324.27	4.64	<.025	DEM
Within	57	3,986.45	69.64			
TOTAL	59	4,634.98				
Among	2	442.30	221.15	6.52	<.01	PUN D-0
Within	57	1,934.55	33.94			
TOTAL	59	2,376.85				
Among	2	520.00	260.00	2.84	n.s.	LOV
Within	57	5,219.00	91.56			
TOTAL	59	5,739.00				
Among	2	145.23	72.62	1.32	n.s.	NEG
Within	57	3,130.70	54.92			
TOTAL	59	3,275.93				
Among	2	69.10	34.55	1.07	n.s.	REW D-0
Within	57	1,836.55				
TOTAL	59					

*Not significant.

of the ten subscales contain only 10 items each, while the remainder consist of 15 items per subscale. This precludes direct comparisons across subscales for the experimental groups. However, inspection in Figure 1 of the relation between these groups combined with the observed pattern of results in the one way analyses clearly indicated that there are systematic subscale differences.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

It has been established in this experiment that differences do, in fact, exist between the three groups. The profiles in Figure 1 clearly differ from one another indicating that the non drug users, marihuana users, and hard drug users responded differently to the questionnaire. It is readily apparent that the continuum hypothesis in which non drug users and hard drug users would score at the extremes of the subscales with the marihuana users scoring in between is refuted by the data. The marihuana and hard drug groups were invariably at opposite extremes in their parental assessment with the non drug users falling between these extremes. No progression from no drugs to marihuana to hard drugs is even remotely suggested by the data.

The profile of the marihuana groups is distinctive in a number of areas of parental assessment. This group perceived their fathers as noticeably more punitive both on the direct-object and symbolic-love subscales. Their fathers were also seen as the most demanding and rejecting of the three groups. Their relationship to their fathers was also the least casual of the three experimental groups. In terms of the definitions of the subscales developed by Roe-Siegelman this would be interpreted to mean that these fathers subjected their sons to more

physical beatings, removal of toys for misbehavior, taking away of privileges, shaming, isolation, and the withdrawal of love than either the non drug group or the hard drug group. The lowest score of the three groups was obtained by the marihuana group on the casual subscale, suggesting that these fathers were the least affectionate, made the most definite effort of all of the fathers to train the son, were not easy going, made many rules, and strictly enforced those they did make. These fathers were seen as the most demanding of the three groups. In addition they were categorized as most rejecting, a trait which Roe and Siegelman describe as an extreme form of the demanding subscale. Thus the PCR profile suggests an overall picture of the fathers of the marihuana users as being perceived as having been very strict, punitive, demanding, and rejecting.

In contrast to the marihuana group's profile the hard drug profile presents a markedly different picture of the father. These fathers were the least punitive of all of the groups in both the direct physical sense and the symbolic-love orientation. Furthermore, they were the least demanding and punitive of all of the experimental groups. The relationship with the fathers in the hard drug group was seen as the most casual of all. Thus these fathers were the most easy going, only mildly affectionate, made the fewest rules, and made the least effort to enforce what rules they did make. The PCR profile of these fathers suggests that the parents of the hard drug Ss took the least interest in their sons and set the fewest limits on their behavior. Of all of the fathers these were apparently perceived as the least interested in their sons.

The non drug users presented a profile characterized as more moderate than either the harshly punitive and demanding fathers of marihuana users or the apathetic fathers of the hard drug group. The middle ground is covered almost completely by this group. The fathers were seen as less punitive than the marihauna group and more punitive than the hard drug group. Their relationship with father was less formal and demanding than the marihuana group but more so than the hard drug group. These fathers were perceived as setting fewer limits on their sons' behavior than the marihuana group but more limits than the relatively indifferent hard drug group.

A number of the studies mentioned in this paper would suggest explanations for the different profiles which characterize the three groups. The long history of behavioral and social problems reported by Easton (1965) as a factor associated with drug abuse is suggested in this study by the perceived lack of concern from the father for the sons' behavior in the hard drug group and the absence of any limit setting. Translated into behavior, this is in keeping with the highly illegal and physically deleterious drug abuse of the sons. The apparent absence of any intimate relations with the father would support Easton's conclusions.

The adverse childhood conditions suggested by Kieholz and Battegay (1963) as a factor in drug abuse is supported by the present study. It is apparent from the profiles that the fathers of the hard drug Ss were seen as the least concerned about their sons reflecting a passive, indifferent attitude. The punitiveness and high level of demands which characterize the marihuana group was perhaps perceived by

the sons as a negative expression of concern, but it was nonetheless a form of interest markedly absent in the profile of the hard drug group. The fathers of hard drug users were not interested enough in their sons to punish them or set any limits.

The identification hypothesis suggested by the research of Kurtzlung, Cavior, and Lipton (1966) also received support from the results of this study. It is possible to interpret the behavior of the hard drug users as an indication of a profound lack of identification with an adult male authority figure. Again the absence of parental concern characteristic of this group is a central factor. The sexual confusion suggested by the human figure drawings used in their research could be attributed to this lack of a concerned father figure with whom the son could readily identify. The perceived passive indifference of the parent could be a contributing factor to this lack of identification with the masculine role.

The inability to form warm meaningful relationships with others suggested by the MMPI study of Gilbert and Lombardi (1967) would also be consistent with the findings of this experiment. The crucial father-son relationship is apparently absent to the greatest degree in the hard drug group. The lack of parental concern in the hard drug group would suggest the early failure of these individuals to form a close rewarding relationship with another human being.

The above relationships suggest a central unifying set of factors which would help to clarify the meaning of the differences between the profiles of the three experimental groups. This set of

factors could be labeled attention, concern, the investment of the father's time in the son, or the amount of energy expended by the father on the son's behalf. In keeping with this theoretical orientation the more demanding, punitive fathers of marihuana users would not instill feelings of acceptance and worth in their sons by this behavior, but they were at least sufficiently concerned to demand from him and punish him for misbehavior. The least demanding and punitive fathers, those of the hard drug group, were seen as the least concern for their sons. They failed to attempt to regulate their sons' behavior. The sons' drug using could reflect this lack of self regard and the poor ability to set limits on one's own behavior.

It is interesting to note that the original normative data developed in the Harvard sample (Roe and Siegelman, 1963), while not directly comparable to the present study due to the use of a 5 point scale in contrast to a 4 point measure, can be compared in terms of the rank order of the 10 subscales. The most obvious difference in rankings between the original Harvard group and the three experimental groups of the present study was found on the LOVING subscale which received the number one ranking in the Harvard sample but was ranked eighth by the marihuana group, fifth by the hard drug group, and sixth by the no drug group.

A number of explanations exist to account for the fact that the entire sample population perceived their fathers as ranking lower on the LOVING category than the original 1963 Harvard sample. It is possible that the lower rankings of the LOVING category by all experimental

groups in the present study is attributable to the nature of the student population of The University of Arizona. These students may reflect a parental upbringing different from the original Harvard University sample. Such factors as the higher socio-economic standards of the Harvard samples parents, higher standards of academic achievement, and greater value placed on individual achievement may distinguish the Harvard population from The University of Arizona population. These and many other factors may combine to influence perceived parental attitudes in a manner reflected in a lowering of LOVING scores for the present sample groups.

Another possibility is that the prior knowledge that the present study dealt with drug using behavior attracted a group of volunteers who perceived their fathers as less loving than the Harvard sample who were not being questioned regarding their drug experiences. It would be advisable in the future to request subjects to identify their drug experiences after completion of the questionnaire.

Yet another explanation for the lower ranking given the LOVING category in the present study is the effect of the changes in American society which have taken place in the eight years separating the Harvard sample from the present sample groups. It is possible that during this period the college student population as a whole has become increasingly disillusioned with the older generation due to the upsurge in foreign and domestic strife and the movement toward mass student protest. This may effect perceived parental attitudes by negatively biasing the present subjects on the LOVING category.

While this study does not intend to illustrate direct causation between perceived parental attitudes and drug using behavior, it is interesting to note that the 20 Ss who reported the use of opiates, barbiturates, amphetamines, and hallucinogens described their fathers as being in many respects less concerned about their existence than either the marihauna users who described their fathers as the most punitive and demanding, or the non drug users who remembered their fathers as being more moderate in his attitudes. It is apparent that the perceived parental attitudes in early life do have some relationship to drug using behavior among young adult males. Further research is clearly indicated in this area with the goal of more clearly delineating the etiological factors which contribute to drug abuse.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY BY SUBSCALES

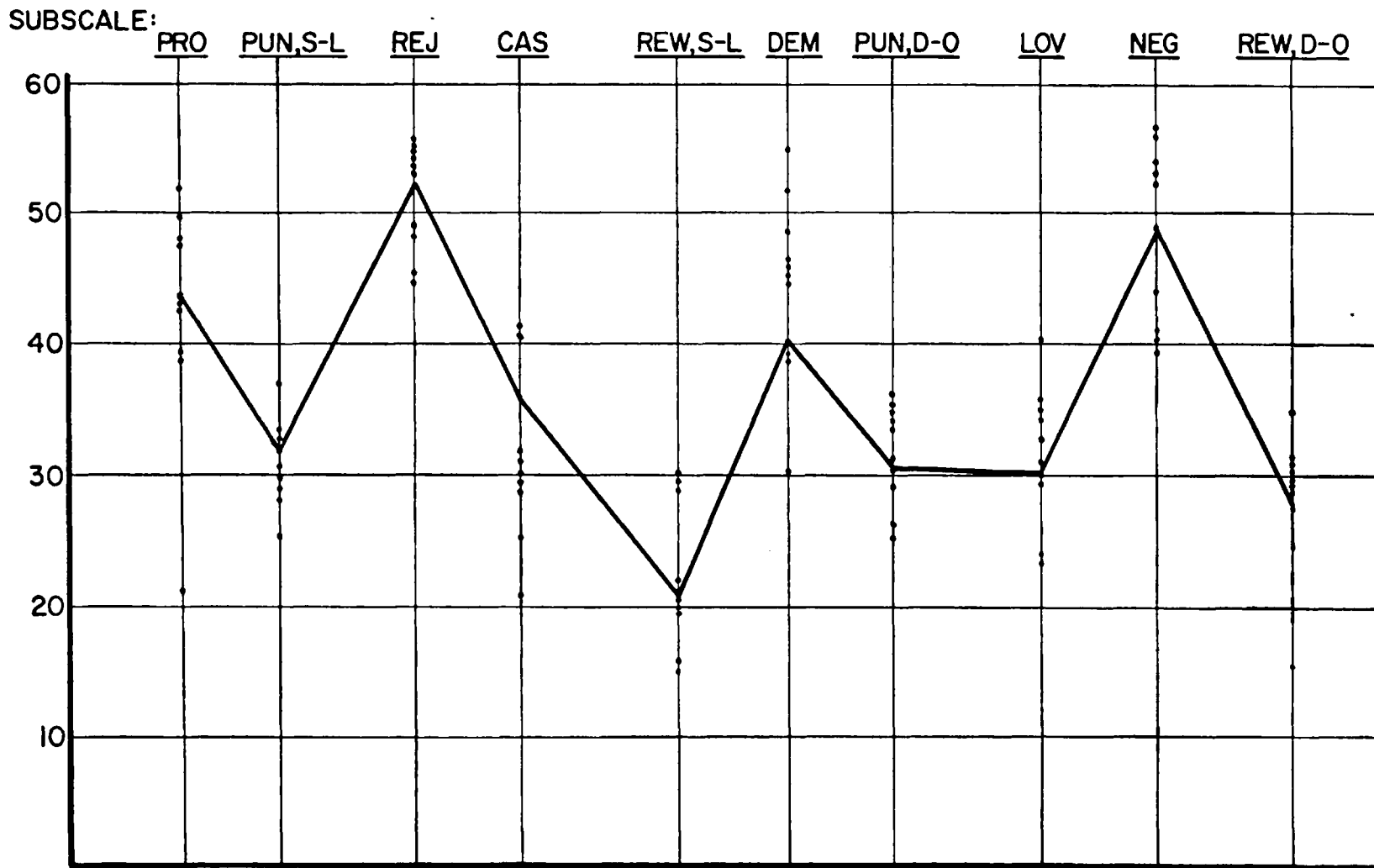


Figure 2. Individual Raw Scores and Profile of Mean Scores for Marihuana Group

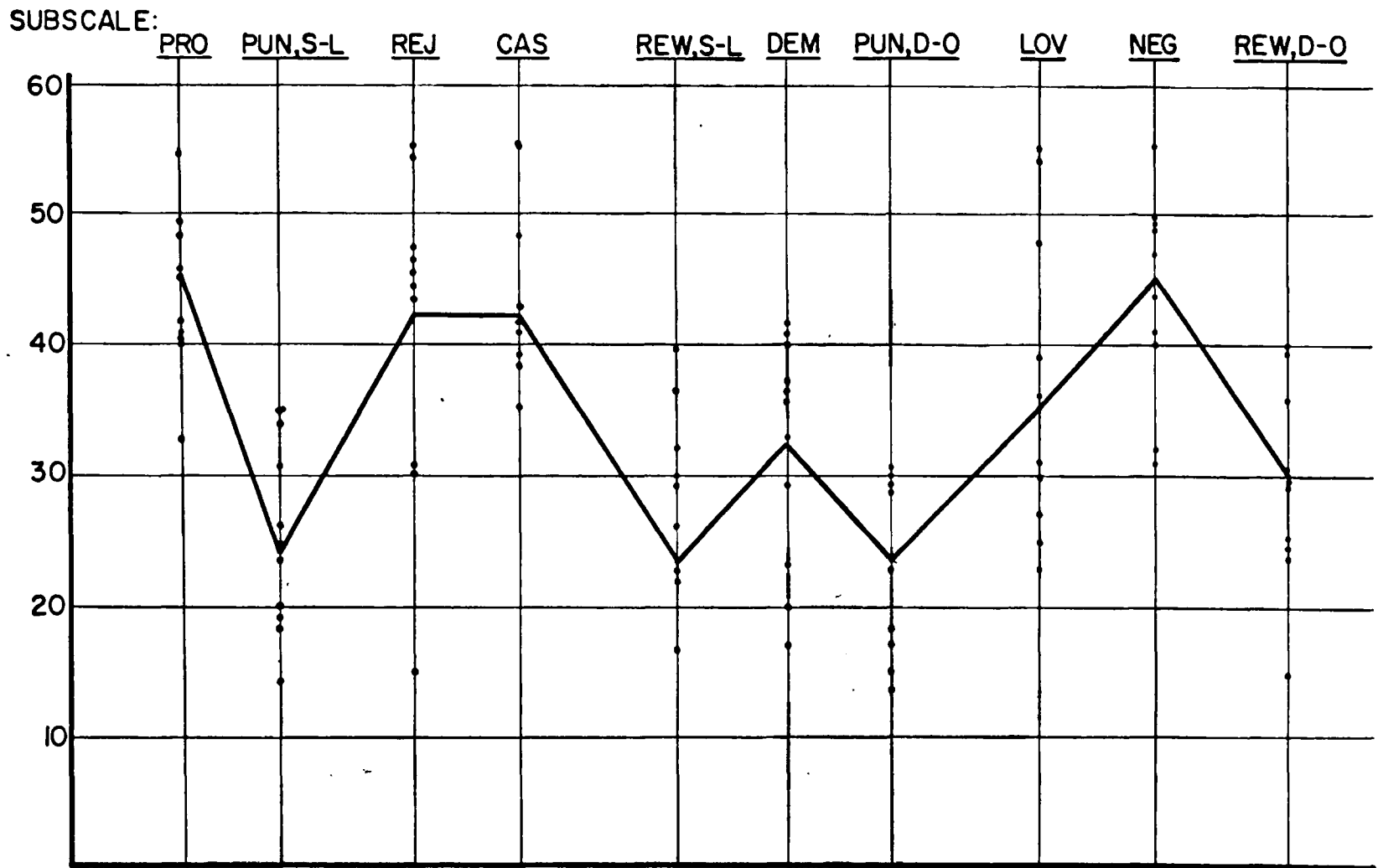


Figure 3. Individual Raw Scores and Profile of Mean Scores for Hard Drug Group

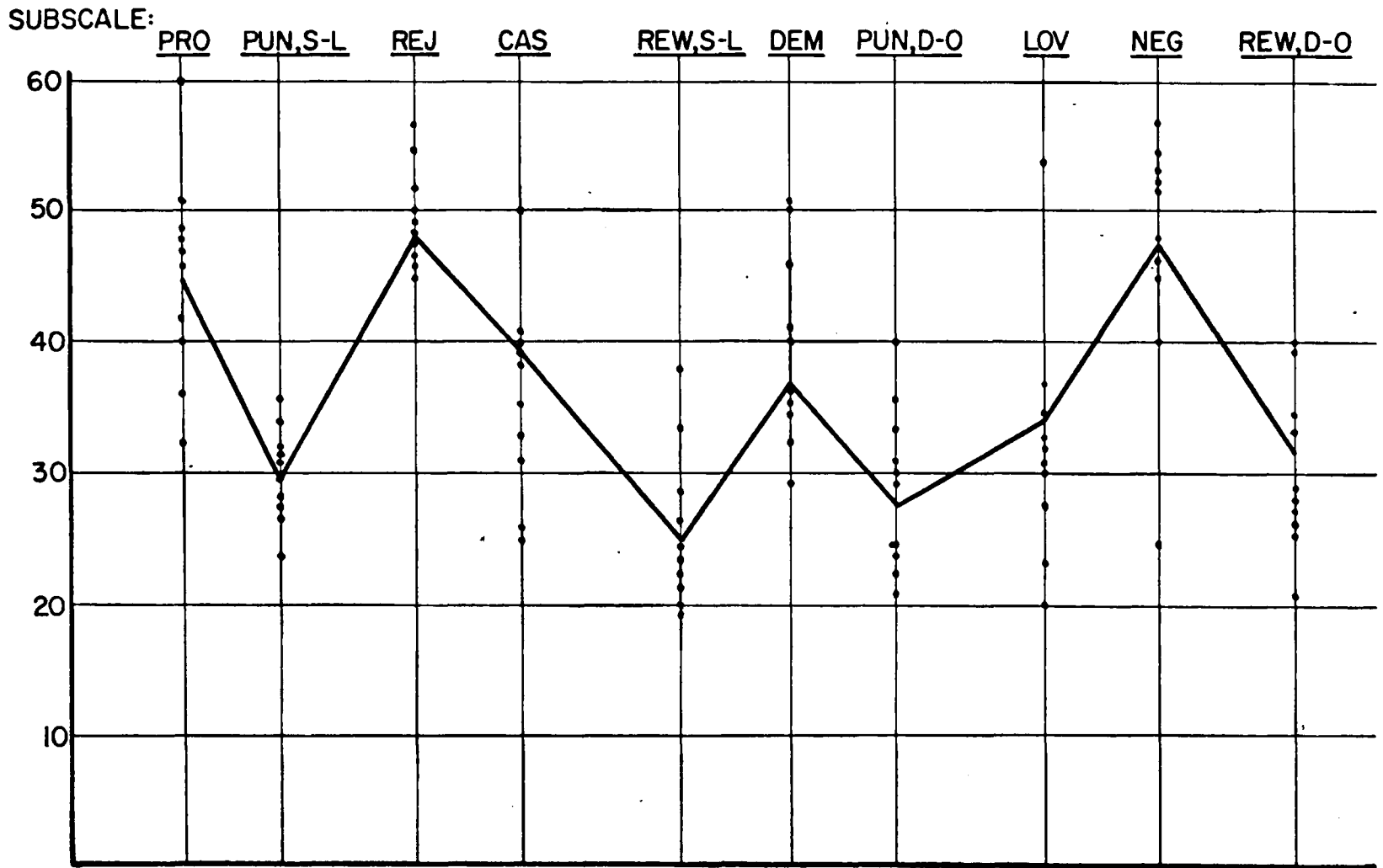
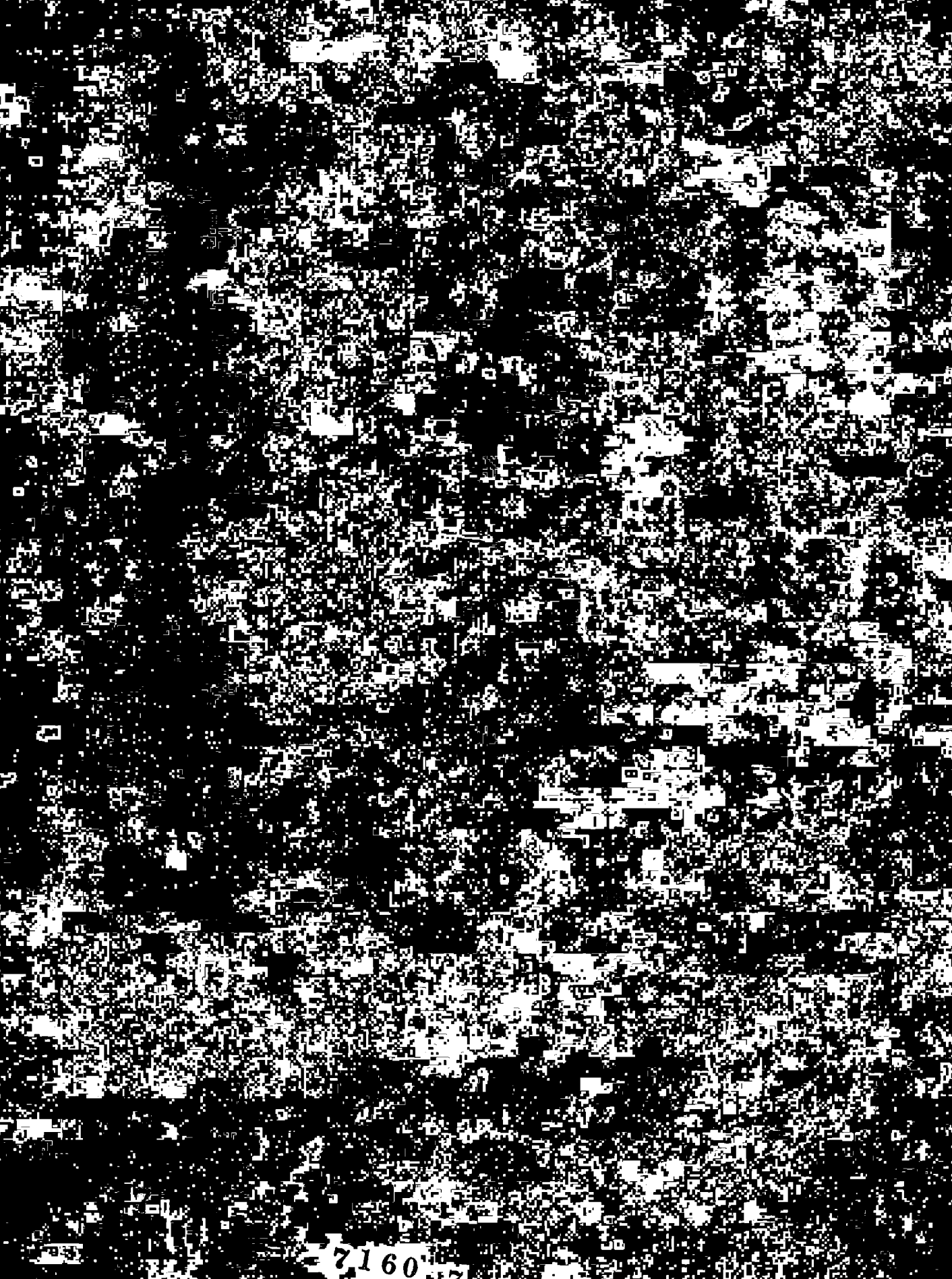


Figure 4. Individual Raw Scores and Profile of Mean Scores for No Drug Group.

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