Comparing and Contrasting Robert Whitaker's "Anatomy of an Epidemic "and Rosenthal's "Drugs Mind Body and Society."

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**Introduction**

Robert Whitakers’s book Anatomy of an Epidemic and Martha Rosenthal’s book Drugs, Mind, Body, and Society provide scintillating knowledge and information in the field of medicine and psychology. The books are multidisciplinary texts that give readers comprehensive discussions about drugs and its effects. The Books weave together information from different fields, including psychology, physiology, media, culture, society, neuroscience, pharmacology, law, history, and religion. The authors emphasize aspects of critical thinking and teach students to evaluate information, critique data, discern and differentiate facts from opinions, and make intelligent decisions to improve quality of life. These books, especially  Drugs, Mind, Body, and Society by Rosenthal, do not only benefit psychologists and students studying medicine, but they also benefit every reader seeking information about drugs, diseases, quality health standards, and other information on drug use. Given critical importance of these books, it is necessary to compare and contrast them in the view of gaining more knowledge and benefitting from specific tenets presented in each of these books.

**Comparing and contrasting**

**Differences**

Whitaker’s text and Rosenthal’s book share a notable difference between them. To start with, Whitaker’s Anatomy of an Epidermic is a contextual study focusing specifically on mental illness and psychiatric drugs, while Rosenthal’s book is information and knowledge-based resource providing information in many fields, including medicine, psychology, drug abuse, and disease control. Reading Whitaker’s book, one can easily see that it is a focused study divulging details about mental illness and related drugs in American society. It is a longitudinal study covering 50 years of reviewing drugs used in the treatment of mental illness. Rosenthal’s book provides general knowledge in medicine, revealing details about drug regulations, laws, diseases, and prevalence of health conditions in American. For instance, Whitaker reviews the literature on psychiatric cases for over 50 years, and he reports that mental illnesses continue affecting many people today than several decades ago. He notes that the number of those affected by mental illness increases at the rate of about 400 cases per day. Besides, Whitaker realizes that different drugs consumed by Americans have led to an unprecedented increase in mental illness. He notes that drug-related effects have contributed to the rising of mental illness among users, and this has impacted on possible mitigation measures.

Secondly, notable differences existing in terms of scope and breadth of the information, details, and facts available in the books; in terms of size and number of pages, Rosenthal’s books are larger and broader. It is broader in the scope of information and knowledge it provides. Whitaker's Anatomy of an Epidemic is narrower in scope because it allows for a specific range of study. For instance, Rosenthal’s books provide deeper interdisciplinary information, including economics, history, and law, which are not found in Whitekar’s text. Additionally, Rosenthal’s book has unique features, including biographical profiles, historical case studies, points of cultural and clinical relevance, self-knowledge texts, and pages that provide critical evaluation questions designed for users to learn contemporary medical practices. Besides, in terms of content coverage, Rosenthal’s book is organized into topics and chapters, each elaborately delving into controversial topics. Each topic teaches students the evaluation of information and research for different perspectives to encourage learners to reflect and discuss their ideas. With five sections and eighteen chapters, each dealing with distinct topics such as drug addiction, prevention, prescription, and non-prescription drugs, Hallucinogens, Opioids, etc., Rosenthal’s display in-depth of knowledge, information and ideas not included in Whitaker's text.

Another notable difference exists in terms of the approach of presentation of information and depth of knowledge in the books. Whitaker's book founded by a longitudinal scientific study focusing on mental illness among Americans over five decades with large junk of sources used coming from a review of scientific literature. While Whitaker's book delves into scientific studies on mental illness and related drugs, Rosenthal’s book reveals a variety of data, information, and knowledge-based on different levels of study, including case studies, reviews, scientific articles, and other materials. Presentation of information, facts, and data in Whitaker's book follows formats for writing peer-reviewed evidence-based articles. Unlike Rosenthal’s book, which is organized into sections, chapters, topics, and sub-section, Whitaker’s article has topics dealing with specific ideas and data. It contains data derived from different scientific knowledge and information from government sources, which the author used to provide evidence and back up the topic of the study. Importantly, Rosenthal’s books cover a range of knowledge-based on government and different credible sources that have added gist to the book, making it a reference book used by teachers, professors, and students. Importantly, Whitaker’s book is limited in terms of knowledge scope as it focuses specifically on the prevalence of mental illnesses in the United States, unlike Rosenthal’s book, which spans a broad range of details.

Another aspect differentiating the work of these two authors is the aspect of subject matter/content, which reveals authors differing intentions. While both texts have content related to mental illness, Rosenthal focuses extensively on drugs that increase the chances of one developing mental illnesses, which according to the text, include stimulants such as cocaine, opioids, sedatives, inhalants, Marijuana, tobacco and other that affect the nervous system. Whitaker’s text focuses on the prevalence of mental illness and reasons the cases are gradually increasing over the years. Unlike Rosenthal’s book, Whitaker wrote explicitly on the effects of mental illness and its prevalent status. For instance, Whitaker’s text discusses the rise of mentally ill people in America, which increased sharply from 1987, especially after releasing of Prozac, a drug used to treat the psychotic disorder. Furthermore, Whitaker claim that number of adults and children affected by mental illness has increased from 1.2 million in early 1990s to more than 4 million today. Looking at Whitaker’s text the author wanted to find a correlation between the manufacture and release of different psychiatric drugs and an increase in the number of adult and children mental illness cases. This shows a notable difference in terms of this content and one provided in Rosenthal’s book.

A notable difference is also seen in the intentions of the authors of these books, especially in terms of how they presented their contents. Rosenthal’s book elicits critical thinking by offering readers a wide range of knowledge and comprehensive discussion about the effects of drug abuse. The author intended to excite critical skills among readers who include teachers, students, and people interested in studying drug abuse and their impact on society. Equipped with essential thinking skills, Rosenthal notes that scholars reading the book can discern data and make intelligent decisions that positively impact the society and improve quality of life. Thinking critically, according to Rosenthal, brings new perspectives, answers, and solutions about drug abuse. It also teaches readers on ways of researching drugs and how a reader can evaluate and validate sources. Different from Whitaker’s book that focuses on providing scientific knowledge on mental illness and drugs, Rosenthal offers critical evaluations about controversial topics and encouraging students to devise creative ways of evaluating information from multiple perspectives. Importantly, at the beginning of the chapter, Rosenthal provides open-ended true/false questions designed to draw leaders into the content by asking provocative questions created to challenge common misconceptions about drug abuse and mental illnesses. Importantly, Rosenthal’s book, unlike Whitaker’s text, has “quick hits” and “ask yourself,” which are specially included in the text to encourage readers to reflect their ideas and discuss content in each chapter. Quick hits provide students with anecdotes, fun facts, and briefs from various disciplines such as history, law, and economics. Unlike Whitaker’s text, Rosenthal’s book included “The Straight Dope” texts containing self-knowledge tests, biographies, historical facts, case studies, and other information.

Whitaker’s text Anatomy of an Epidemic is a critique of the modern medical practices commonly used by practitioners. Whitaker explains that it increases the prevalence of mental illnesses in society. Unlike Rosenthal’s book, which gives general information and critical analysis as well as inspiring readers to consider different opinions and perspectives and challenge misconceptions, Whitaker criticized psychiatric drugs, noting that modern drugs have led to poorer long term health for people with mental illnesses. As Rosenthal’s book provide evaluations, and critical analysis of facts and information about drug abuse and mental illnesses, Whitaker’s book give analysis of modern psychotropic medications and their ineffectiveness in mitigating mental illness. Whitaker elucidates connections of psychiatric medication with a prevalence of mental problems such as bipolar and unipolar complications, schizophrenia, and other hosts of anxiety disorders.

**Similarities**

Whitakers’ book Anatomy of an Epidemic and Martha Rosenthal’s book Drugs, Mind, Body, and Society share a myriad of similarities in different aspects, which make them both unique and incredibly important in psychology. Firstly, both books predominantly have similarities in terms of content, facts, and knowledge. In both texts, there is extensive emphasis on issues touching on mental illness and their treatment measures as the authors wrote intently about psychiatric problems and things that have contributed to the increase in the number of affected people. For instance, Whitaker’s text wholesomely addresses the problem of mental illness in America by looking at scientific literature about the same and reviewing the treatment measured used by practitioners over the years. Besides, Whitaker’s thesis touched on the controversial topic of the prevalence of mental illness and the effectiveness of drugs used to treat the illnesses. In the same way, Rosenthal’s book focuses primarily on mental illness touching on different issues related to psychiatric problems such as the effects of psychoactive drugs like heavy use of marijuana, tobacco, Opioids, hallucinogens, cocaine, and other stimulants. The book delved more into causative agents of mental illnesses, including abuse of popular drugs such as cocaine, which Rosenthal claims that they are primarily blamed for increasing cases of mental illness in society.

Both texts examine drugs related to mental illnesses, explicitly focusing on the impact of those drugs on the aspect of mental problems. Both texts have an intensive analysis of drugs to determine their related effects on influencing mental illnesses. Whitaker hugely succeeded in linking the manufacture and proliferation of new psychiatric drugs to an increase in reported cases of mental disturbance. Whitaker claims that there is an increase in several mental disorders today than the pre-drug era due to overdependence on mental drugs. Whitaker notes that during the pre-drug era, half the number of people hospitalized for bipolar and depression were asymptomatic; however, in modern times, those hospitalized for similar conditions report symptomatic cases meaning that drugs used by patients before admissions hasten the development of illness. Similarly, Rosenthal discussed in great length about the drugs-related illness, though, in a different circumstance. She detailed different types of drugs that may increase the rate of development of mental illness in both adults and children. Notably, Rosenthal outlines different drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, antidepressants, stimulants, and other drugs, which, according to Rosenthal, has significantly contributed to increase in the number of those affected by mental illnesses.

**Conclusion**

Rosenthal’s book and Whitaker’s text share differences and similarities, as discussed above. Predictably, these books have many differences than the similarities. Their existing differences context of their presentation, the scope and breadth of information available in each book, subject matter, and the content as well as the intent of each author, as shown in the books. The books have similarities in terms of similar content and topics presented, which is predominantly about drug abuse and mental illnesses. The books are crucial in the field of psychology and medicine, since it provides critical information, especially concerning mental health problems and drug abuse. Rosenthal’s book has a considerable significance to students and readers as it elicits critical thinking and encourages evaluation of perspectives to improve the living standards of people. Rosenthal’s book is best suited for students and teachers because it provides study questions, discussions and observations design to enable the reader to reflect on what he/she has read and elicited further discussions on the topic. I like Rosenthal’s book since it provokes new ideas and creative, especially on controversial topics such as drug abuse and mental illness. Apart from being captivating to read, it uses simple language that is easy to understand by students. Generally, although the above comparison and contrast focus on content and styles in the two books, I think considerable significance should be given to Rosenthal’s book due to its prowess in content.

**References**

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