

Key Question – Model Answer

Can psychology help explain genocides (such as Rwanda in 1994)?

Describe a key question from Social Psychology (4)	
Intro: The start of the genocide	When the Hutu president's plane was shot down, a campaign of violence quickly spread from Kigali and 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered in just 100 days at the hands of Hutu extremists, the Interahamwe, who formed barricades and road blocks, checking ID cards, before beating and maiming Tutsis.
Radio propaganda	The radio station 'Libre des Milles Collines' called the Tutsis "cockroaches, cannibals and childkillers" and ordered the Hutus to "cut down the tall trees" (kill the Tutsis).
20 years on: Memorials and commemoration;	Today, the genocide is commemorated through memorials containing the bodies of mummified Tutsis left in the positions where they died to remind the Rwandans of their very bloody recent history. A re-enactment of the genocide took place in 2014 in Kigali football stadium, to commemorate the 20 th anniversary of the genocide attended by many world dignitaries.
Justice / BBC documentary controversy	The UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Tanzania heard the cases of hundreds of Hutu killers and local courts in Rwanda called Gacaca tried 1.9 million perpetrators. Many of the killers fled to France and lived there freely until very recently.
Why this Key Question matters to contemporary society	Genocide – and the murder of innocent civilians, continues to be a problem in the world. If it can be understood and explained, then perhaps psychology can help to prevent it happening in the future.

Explain the key question using concepts, theories and studies from social psychology (4)

The Hutus and Tutsis were issued with Identity cards by the Belgian colonists	Tajfel would say that the hostility between the two groups was escalated when the Belgian colonists issued ID cards in 1916, identifying the population as either Hutu or Tutsi. This was a form of social categorisation and social identity theory says that the mere existence of a group to which you do not belong is enough to generate discriminatory behaviour.
Cyasa Habimana, Interhamwe official - "the tool of more powerful men"	Some of the barbaric acts committed during the genocide could be explained by Milgram's agency theory , for example one Hutu extremist said "I was the tool of more powerful men" arguably suggesting that he felt that he was in the agentic state , acting on orders from higher authority figures, and thus diffusing responsibility for the atrocities that he committed.
Political and economic uncertainty and hardship	Sherif's Realistic Conflict Theory is able to explain why the genocide was ignited in April 1994, following many years of peace; this theory says that intergroup competition and frustration of the group's efforts to achieve a goal can lead to hostility and in this case the poor coffee harvest the previous year led to an economic downturn which meant that people were fighting for jobs and the limited resources for all were making people more competitive.
Not all Hutus got involved (Paul Rusesabagina saved 1268 Tutsis in the Hotel Mille Colline)	It should be noted that individual differences in personality for example may have led figures such as Paul, a moderate Hutu to save the lives of 1268 Tutsis at the Hotel Mille Colline. He might score low on Social Dominance , meaning he does not feel the need to behave in a derogatory manner towards others to experience high self-esteem.