Is bad in fact bad? And is good in fact good? The article “Vengeance Is Ours” by Jared Diamond investigates these questions. It was written in 2008 after his trip to Papa New Guinea. Jared is an American scientist and an author who is famous for many works, most being science-related. His article digs deeper into an additional question, “Is killing people sometimes acceptable?” Most of the American population wants to answer “no”. But in a community where killing for revenge is taught to be revered from a young age, can we seriously say that it’s not acceptable if that’s all they know? Jared talks about Daniel, a member of a village in New Guinea, who set out to kill someone for revenge for murdering his uncle. Daniel informs Jared of their norms and culture, which makes the questions even harder to answer. This article has the reader think and tap into his morals. It is interesting because it has me thinking about options and opinions which I have never thought about. How do we know that killing is “bad”?

Jared Diamond first got interested in this subject when he was doing environmental research in New Guinea. He talked to a native of the Handa clan while driving from one point to another and got most of his knowledge on this topic from him. Daniel and him would talk for hours on end and this topic just so happened to stir something up in Jared. Jared is writing from a biased view because Daniel is from the Handa clan.

Jared found out that it may not be at all wrong for the people growing up in a society that killing is frequent and not looked upon as horrible, as they do not know anything else. Our definitions of “good” are different from theirs and consequently, we face a dilemma on who of us are right- or if any of us are right.

The author explored his question with an expansive view. He analyzed different governments and the differences between the clan’s rulers and the rest of the worlds’. He explained that the villages in New Guinea do not have a state government. Even though our authorities are different, we still have the same mind sets. They are brought up in a lifestyle of hating the enemy and wanting revenge on them. When they do kill the enemy, they rejoice.

In the rest of the world, most societies grow up to love others. As soon as war strikes, we learn to hate the enemy only when in war with them. Since we grow up to love others, American soldiers come back from fighting and are damaged for life. The tribes in New Guinea grow up with seeing killing all throughout their lives so they are not traumatized. The differences in our societies are not so large.

This article is strong in that it looks at all options of the possible answers. He looks at governments, cultures, feelings, and attitudes. His paper will help people view others as unique. Many inhabitants grow up differently and this is why people having colliding views. This can help us understand why people/cultures do what they do. Is shows the reader that just because there is a universal code of the definition “good”, it doesn’t mean that it’s right or if there even is a right answer.

A weakness of this study is that the author did not view both sides of the wars in New Guinea. His base of research was from a man from the Handa clan but he did not interview or get in contact with the opposing clan, Ombal. If he did talk with them, he would have seen their view on the war and maybe Jared would have found the reason why it started and why it continued. Also, only one story from a clan was told in this article even though there are thousands of natives living there. Different views on many natives would make the answer a better quality.

I learned that our definition of “good” might not be the same definition as people worldwide. Even though we learn our definition in school, at home, and on television, we still don’t know why it’s good. Jared explains this very well. “Traditional New Guineans, by contrast, have from childhood onward often seen warriors going out and coming back from fighting; they have seen the bodies of relatives killed by the enemy, listened to stories of killing, heard fighting talked about as the highest ideal, and witnessed successful warriors talking proudly about their killings and being praised for them. If New Guineans end up feeling unconflicted about killing the enemy, it’s because they have had no contrary message to unlearn.” (2) This confirms that in New Guinea, the people grew up with revenge being good and war being normal. This is sad but this is all they know, therefore their “good” is not our “good”. Jared tells the reader that Americans hate too because we are taught to hate. Our civilizations are the same in that we both hate, but Americans feel bad when they hate and kill because they grew up with love. “Then, too, for Americans old enough to recall our hatred of Japan after Pearl Harbor, Daniel’s intense hatred of the Ombals may not seem so remote. After Pearl Harbor, hundreds of thousands of American men volunteered to kill and did kill hundreds of thousands of Japanese, often in face-to-face combat, by brutal methods that included bayonets and flamethrowers. Soldiers who killed Japanese in particularly large numbers or with notable bravery were publicly decorated with medals, and those who died in combat were posthumously remembered as heroes. Meanwhile, even among Americans who had never seen a live Japanese soldier or the dead body of an American relative killed by the Japanese, intense hatred and fear of Japanese became widespread.” (2)

Civilizations throughout the world are similar in the way we hate. The only difference is what we feel when we hate because of what the norm in our country is. I believe that this article is very well written and the question is well laid out with supporting factors for the answers. I learned that cultures are different, therefore our ways of life are different, and therefore we have different definitions of things and concepts. I think that in the future, people will be more understanding of cultures because of the technology bringing us together and because of an increasing interest in other walks of life. People will probably understand this concept more but still think it’s bad because of the way they were brought up and our society’s morals. We will still be taught to love people who are nice to us and likewise the natives in New Guinea will still be taught to hate people who are mean to them. But hate is a norm for them and love is a norm for us. It is harder, by means of guilt, to hate when brought up to love than to hate when brought up to hate. Because of this, we have our definition of good.