

Ethnographic Studies of the Development of Waacking in Hong Kong: Finding Real Self of Male Waackers

YUEN Chun Ting

Abstract: This research shall discuss the development of waacking, a dance genre started in 70s' Los Angeles, by viewing the stories and past experiences of male waackers with different sexualities in Hong Kong. They are from different generations who have been in different stage of development of waacking so their unique sharing will make this research more all-rounded. For this research, I will also focus on the self-exploration of waackers. Waacking is a dance encouraging dancers to show their real sides while performing. Due to its origins, gradually, it becomes a good tool for dancers to find their real-self. Last but not least, this research will discuss about the criteria that make a “good waacker”. I hope this research paper can give a brief introduction to readers about waacking and hopefully to promote this dance genre to more people in Hong Kong.

Introduction

It was January 2018, I was chatting with my friends whom I met in the Dance Society for Mass Dance 2017, discussing what team to join in the coming Annual Performance (AP) of our university. At that moment, neither of us knew that we were going to meet a dance style that would change our lives, and eventually become my Final Year Project's topic. It was a difficult choice as there were many options we would have liked to join, but the timeslots overlapped. We went to YouTube and searched for the performances of the previous year's AP.

'He had it comin'. He only had himself to blame...' The music flowed in our ears and our eyes were caught by the choreography of Panda Waack, who would then become my first waacking teacher. I loved the strong visual impact and the beautiful hand movements which are seldom found in other dance styles. The steps and the stage effect that her piece brings to the audience instantly made me feel that I would fall in love with waacking. At last, we signed up for the Waacking team in the AP without any hesitation and applied for the interest class taught by Panda as well to learn the basics of waacking before the AP training.

During the training in the interest class and for the AP, I could feel that waacking can perfectly illustrate the quote, 'Dance to Express, not to Impress'. I remember there was one

time, we were training for emotional expression by posing (one of the most important technique in waacking), striking different poses according to the feel of the music. As I was feeling the song and letting my body pose in whatever way it wanted, I felt my tears running in my eyes. This surprised me as I had only cried while watching a dance performance but I had never cried when dancing. At that moment, I could feel the deepest real self of me and amazingly, it was as if the people around me could also understand me. Waacking for me is more than a dance, it is spiritual support. Whenever I feel very stressed and depressed, I will go to the mirror room in my University and randomly play some songs to dance. After dancing, I can feel like the stress has been released out of my body.

Waacking has always been treated as an emotional dance. It is an old school dance style that was created in Los Angeles in the 1970s. During that time, the LGBTQ community, especially gay men, were suppressed by the government and the society around them. To express their feelings, they would go to the LGBT clubs and dance together. They would show their feminine characteristics by posing or swinging their arms when interacting with others. In those days, a bubble with the word 'Waack' written inside was shown when someone slapped their hands in a film or a comic. Thus, because they would sometimes pretend to slap when they danced, this style of dance was named waacking.

In Hong Kong these days, waacking is becoming more popular and there are more waacking dancers. Even for CUHK, the dance society will organize interest classes and annual productions for waacking. There are many different styles of waacking. Some are showing masculinity, some are showing the beauty of the feminine side. I, as a waacking dancer, find that people express a different self while waacking. Some of the waacking dancers claim that they can only express their real self while waacking instead of in their daily life. As a result, I chose this as the topic of my Final Year Project. My research aims to investigate how male waackers use waacking as a tool for self-exploration and expression. Also, the research will dig deep into the experiences and challenges they faced during their waacking journey. Last but not least, it will focus on the development and distinct features of waacking in Hong Kong.

Research Significance

Although originally waacking was used for LGBT group to express their sense of self, especially their feminine side, in Hong Kong waacking has already developed into various styles in which masculinities are also appreciated. Meanwhile, a lot of people still have misunderstandings about waacking even though it has started to be popular in Hong Kong.

I had one experience in this sense during rehearsal with the comments of one of the senior members on our waacking team's performance. The theme of our piece was Burlesque, an American movie from 2010. In that piece, we were asked to dance like the performers in the Burlesque, elegant and grand. We spent a month continuously practising and learning how to be as beautiful as Christina Aguilera in the movie. However, in the full rehearsal held one week before the show, an old member of the dance society commented on us: *'The general performance of your team is good, but there is one problem. The boys in your team are not masculine enough.'* These words hurt us as we wanted to show the audiences how we interpreted the piece during the performance. However, we were asked instead to perform a heteronormative male role and act like a masculine male. This is only one of the many examples I could mention. Waacking is a dance style originating from sexual minorities but dancers worldwide are still facing gender stereotypes nowadays. As waacking in Hong Kong is becoming more diverse now, some waackers have started to question: is waacking being more heteronormative now? This research would like to illustrate how the thinking of waackers' has changed as time passed.

Waacking is more common in Hong Kong as many younger generations, such as Dance Societies in different universities, choose waacking as one of their performing styles. Back in the days, there used to be only a few male waackers, but the number of male waackers

nowadays is increasing rapidly. Yet, there are only a few people, among both the public and the dancers who know the background and the historical changes of waacking in Hong Kong, as not many people research about this topic. Even Hong Kong waackers themselves often do not know how waacking developed and became popular in Hong Kong. This project is a good chance for people, including the public and also waacker themselves, to understand more about the history of waacking in Hong Kong.

Also, some male waackers in Hong Kong are from sexual minorities, but many people assume that all male waackers are homosexuals. The reason why people will have this thought is because waacking originally is a dance from the gay community in the United States, so the gay dancers can join the community more easily when dancing the waacking. Also, some of the male waackers like to express their feminine side when dancing. Such an alternative gender performance might set a stereotype about waacking so that people who do not know about this dance style might link it with homosexuality. Just as mentioned above, waacking has various styles so we should not generalize about how male waackers treat waacking. For this research, I have conducted various interviews with different male waackers of different sexualities to know more about their opinions and experiences of the relationship between sexuality and waacking. How does waacking, an expressive dance style,

enable them to show their real self is another point I will focus on. How does waacking as a tool help them explore their real selves including their sexualities?

Literature Review

In the field of anthropology, there are just a few pieces of research studying waacking. Most of the research focuses on dance in general. According to Jill D. Sweet's *The Anthropology of Dance: Textural, Theoretical, and Experiential Ways of Knowing* (2016), dance is just one of the cultures. It has so many similarities with what anthropologist study. For example, the cultural anthropologist's study target will shift over time, just as the trends in dance will also shift over time. They are also something that people will have a different interpretation of. As they are similar to culture, they will variate across different regions. Sweet's mentioning of movement from an anthropological perspective, immediately reminded me of the differences in waacking across different countries. For Japan, this is a female-oriented dance type as many waackers especially tutors, are female; whereas for Korea, it is male-oriented because waackers and tutors are predominantly male. In both countries, waacking is always an aggressive dance style, while in the US waacking could be very soulful. These differences inspired me to focus more on the singularities of the waacking culture in Hong Kong for style and atmosphere.

To me, dance is not only a culture but also a language. It can be the language that dancers use to communicate with each other and with their audiences. In the article, Sweet mentioned about how group dance could inform a particular view of the world. Let us take waacking as an example: this dance style originates from the suppression of the gay community by governmental policies and by the police in the 70s and the search for a venue enabling full expression of gayness. The community used waacking as a channel to express their feelings and anger towards the government, although they could only do so on LGBT friendly occasions and settings, such as in Gay bars.

Usually, dance ethnographies by anthropologists study the symbolic meaning of the gestures and posing. For example, the book *Paper Tangos* by Julie Taylor (1998), studied how the tango dance presents sadness and violence. Tango is always defined as movement along with tango music. The book also quotes some songs that illustrate how tango presents these emotions according to the lyrics. Waacking is also a dance style that is similar to tango dance. We always describe waacking as a dance style that can deliver stories of the music and the dancers. The most significant research regarding waacking is *Techniques of Black Male Re/Dress: Corporeal Drag and Kinesthetic Politics in the Rebirth of Waacking/Punkin'* by Naomi Bragin in 2014.

Naomi Bragin's research, published in 2014, is the most detailed journal study of waacking and it is referenced by a lot of journals studying sexualities and dance. She detailedly recorded the history and development of waacking in her studies. However, most of her work is based on second-hand analysis and focuses on the United States. Most research in anthropology regarding dance is similar in this sense. Personally, I prefer relying on first-hand analysis and data because I think that interaction with informants could let help me to understand their stories better. As there is already some research about waacking's history, I did not consider it necessary to add more information for the historical part. As culture will always change, so will dance. It varies a lot as time passes so the current dance culture deserves particular attention. For this project, I chose to focus on the current culture and development of waacking. As a result, I consider a first-hand approach more suitable to research this topic.

Research Questions

1. How did waacking develop in the past few years to become one of the most popular dancing styles in Hong Kong?
2. How to define a "good waacker"?
3. What are the particularities of waacking in Hong Kong?
4. How does waacking allow male waackers to explore and express their real self?

Methodology

As a waacker, I have experience in waacking that may relate to my informants' stories. For example, before I learned waacking, I was a dancer that lacks confidence. Even when I was on stage, I seldom dared to look at the audience and only danced while looking at the floor. After learning waacking, I started to appreciate every move and pose I made while dancing. During practice, I became more confident and would look at the mirrors while dancing. There is a saying among waackers, 'waacking makes me find and be who I am' [Waacking 令我搵到自己, 更令我夠膽成為自己]. During their waacking journey, waackers can find their real self and express themselves to others. This is very interesting as everyone's stories are unique. Second-hand research that only studies history misses out on these stories. I can have a deeper understanding while having in-depth interviews with my informants. This study will also use participant observation and auto-biographical ethnography as I think that the observation of several waacking battles and my own experiences in waacking will also be useful for the research.

Interviews are a suitable method to study this topic as the aim is to study an individual's personal experiences and opinions. From January to April 2021, various interviews were conducted with male waackers from different backgrounds, age groups and sexualities to

obtain more qualitative information. I approached my informants mainly through the social media platform Instagram and at some waacking competitions organized in October 2020. Most of them are current or old members of the dance society so I asked some of my friends to make connections between me and them. I also planned to interview the most experienced male waacker in Hong Kong, Sexy Lamelon, to learn about the changes of waacking in Hong Kong from his first-person perspective.

Participant observation was also conducted during various dancing competitions and events. In October 2020, I attended two waacking competitions. Moreover, being a dancer in these events gave me new perspectives. In November 2020, I participated to an all-style dance competition as a competitor instead than as audience.

Background of Waacking

To have a discussion of waacking, it is important to know about its background: the history, the development in Hong Kong etc. Then, by analyzing these developments, it is possible to observe the changes in the impression of waacking by Hong Kong people.

History of Waacking

According to Bragin's research (2014), waacking is an expressive dance originated in Los Angeles in the 1970s from the Latino and Black American communities. During the 70s, the government was implementing some anti-gay policies and the whole society was not LGBT friendly. The LGBT community could only gather in some clubs and free their real self in there. After the 'Stonewall Riot' in 1969, a gay liberation movement started out, inspiring many people to step out confidently to fight for their right to be a real self. Waacking is one of the products of the gay liberation movement. In that period, the LGBT community was so suppressed and chose to use dance to express their feelings in the club as they could get shot if they did so outside the club. At first, they were imitating the scenes of their favourite characters in some films, through acting and striking some signature poses. For example, the most signature and basic movement of waacking, *drilling*, imitates Bruce Lee playing with the nunchaku. Then, they started to imitate the slapping scenes in movies to express their anger so, in some waacking performance, you can see waackers swinging their wrists. Later, more hand movements were added and some variations of drilling were introduced. The gestures of your fingers and the scale of your drill will also create a different movement.

The original name of waacking was 'whacking' or 'punking' as its foundation of moving hands and arms over the head was called *whack* and the term 'punk' was used to refer to gay man. Gradually, some heterosexual communities started to imitate these styles of dancing,

but they did not want to link themselves with the gay minority. So, they changed the name to 'waackin' as in the 80s, the word 'waack' appeared when someone was being slapped in the comics or movie scenes. At last, Jeffery G. Daniel, an American sing-songwriter and a waacker, added a G at the end to make it become waacking, the name we are using today.

As it started in the clubs, most of the music that dancers listened to is disco music which deeply affects the culture of waacking in the current days. Donna Summer, an American singer who had the name 'Queen of Disco' has become a significant icon of 'waacking music'. She was one of the students in the Soul Train Studio which was created by the dancers in 'Soul Train', a dance TV programme, for learning the waacking style of dancing. Nowadays, a lot of waacking teachers and competitions will still use Donna Summer's songs to be the music played.

Development of Waacking in 20th and 21st century

Waacking was originally an underground dance performed exclusively in LGBT clubs. Tyrone Proctor, one of the pioneers and first wave dancers of waacking, brought this dance style on the TV Broadcast show 'Soul Train' and made waacking well known in the 1980s. This led to the creation of Outrageous Waacking Dancers, a local waacking dance group that

included members from 'Soul Train'. The group grabbed people's attention to waacking, but in the end it did not become very popular.

It was recognized again when Sasha Mallory and Ricky Jaime danced a waacking piece by Kumari Suraj on the show 'So You Think You Can Dance' in 2011. At this time, waacking started to gain people's attention more so the number of students learning waacking increased all over the world. Now, there are even some Korean and Japanese pop singers who will use waacking to be the main style of their choreographies.

The Uniqueness of Waacking

Waacking is a very unique dance style. It is not like *popping*, *locking* and *hip-hop* that have a clear definition of the dancing moves. One could argue that *popping* is about muscle control, contracting and relaxing muscles quickly; *locking* is about the instant moment of pausing according to the beats; and *hip-hop* dance is about the hip-hop spirit. But for waacking, there is no clear definition of what you need to do to be a waacker. In some waacking pieces, you do not even see a waack. Posing according to the beats and the lyrics, transition on stage, acting are also some important elements of waacking. In the world of waacking, you can be who you want to be and do what you want to do within the loose parameters of waacking. To

conclude, there is no solid definition of waacking and also a waacker. According to Mickey Yatar, a waacker from the Philippines, *'You are a waacker if you recognize yourself as one.'*

Acting in Waacking

Since the first day of waacking, this style is very dramatic. People were imitating their favourite movie characters and scenes for their posing and outlook. Acting is one of the key elements in waacking. At that time, acting represented an opportunity for the minorities to 'act' and be their real selves. So, even nowadays, it is easy to see waackers imitating different characters while joining competitions. In the UniWaack Vol.1, a waacking competition organized on 17th Oct 2020, there was a male waacker dressed up as Harry Potter. In one of his rounds, his partner acted like a monster and he waved his wand towards his partner. In their round, they danced as if Harry Potter was attacking the monster with his magic wand. Besides their dance moves, their acting and getting into the character are all part of the performance.

One of my senior teammates once said that *'When you are on stage, everything is also part of your performance.'* In waacking, different facial expressions can help to deliver different emotions to the judges and audiences. Also, as a storytelling dance, some waackers will use some props to help to deliver their stories. Just as with the Harry Potter at UniWaack, the

wand becomes a tool for telling the audience that he is fighting with a monster. A waacker is not only a dancer but also an actor. Sometimes, people will even do cosplay when attending the battles with full costume and hair makeup to get into the character. Every part of their body including their facial expression will be part of their performance.

Improvisation in Waacking

Besides acting, waacking also includes a lot of improvisations. As waacking does not have many foundational steps, it leaves a lot of space for waackers to expand their creativity. The basic foundation in waacking is drilling. Drilling is focused on hands' movement, so dancers can use their body and legs to make different variations. As waacking is a social dance, many waackers like to interact with their competitors, audiences and even judges, especially in 2 on 2 battles. Besides the quality of the dance moves and the ability of dancers to present the music through their movements, another grading criteria is the chemistry and interaction between partners.



(Photo captured in the recording of the final round of Uniwaack by SoloTop)

In the photo, we can see that both dancers are hugging each other in a 2on2 battle. It is striking that they were so intimate and in synchrony while partnering, as this was not rehearsed and all their action during the battle were improvisations. This is the reason why waackers need a lot of creativity and sensitivity. During your movement, you have to feel what your partner is doing and try to communicate with them. When you are leading, your partner needs to follow and cooperate with your movement, and vice versa.

Also, different audiences may have a different interpretation of the same dance. For example, in the above piece, my understanding is that they are a couple that has argued. The girl in green is trying to escape while the girl in white is trying to chase her back. My friend's understanding of this piece is that the girl in white is forcing the girl in green to face something she does not want to face. During the battle, performers are linking themselves to the music and characters they would like to present according to their understanding of the

music and their life experiences. For audiences, while they are watching the performance, they will also interpret the piece with their understanding so a different interpretation might take place.

The interactions are not limited to dance. An eye contact, the emotional connection and even the music are all integral parts of the creation. In the performances at Uniwaack, the judge Shiyanz asked the audiences to create some tempos with their body parts and things in their surroundings. For example, clapping, stepping on the floor, knocking on the wall, etc. The point of this performance is not about the techniques, but the interaction between performers and audiences. The audience is not just watching the show but also being a creator, a part in the performance.

Sexualities in Waacking

As explained above, waacking originated from sexual minorities, but there are still gender differences and stereotypes happening in it. Since waacking started appearing on TV like Soul Train, the nature of waacking has been changed from a minorities' dance to a majority's heterosexual dance.

Gender Stereotype and Differences in Waacking

Even though this dance style is becoming more popular these days, there are still gender stereotypes and differences appearing in waacking. For instance, in the past, male waackers would wear a dress and heels to imitate the feminine character they could not embody in the society outside, as they would be discriminated against. As time passed, dress and heels have been gradually employed to let female dancers illustrate their sexiness and femininity. Among waackers, there are still male waackers who will choose to wear dresses and heels in performances, but the general public, especially those who do not know the background of waacking, will not be able to understand their behaviour and think that they are acting like a girl. However, dressing in a feminine style might be a way that they used to express their real self while waacking as they cannot show this side of them during usual daily practices. More details about this will be discussed in the later section 'Vernacularization of Waacking in Hong Kong'.

Besides female waackers expected by the non-waacker to be sexy and feminine, male characters are supposed to be man and masculine. Just like the old member said during our full rehearsal, he expected to see our teammates to waack masculinely, so he thought that we were not manly enough. The waacking that we presented was supposed to be powerful and strong. To many non-waackers, the male waackers who choose to dance femininely are assumed to be homosexuals. Some of the heterosexual informants I approached said that people around them would think they are gay as they did not waack powerfully. People

expect to see male waackers perform their waacks with strength. But the beauty of waacking is that you can perform in any way you like.

In Hong Kong, the proportion of male waackers is lower than that of female waackers. When waacking just appeared in Hong Kong in the 2000s, there were just 2-3 male waackers. Many of the local dancers assumed this dance is a feminine dance like ballet. Ballet and waacking have a lot of similarities, as they are both assumed to be for females and both of them present stories. This impression decreased the number of males willing to try waacking as they would prefer a more manly and masculine dance style. A strong and masculine image is fixed into their mind as what constitutes a male. So, in Hong Kong, we can see that there are fewer boys dancing ballet and waacking. Even though the number of male waackers has now increased, the proportion of male waackers remains significantly lower than female waackers.

Waacking as a Heterosexual Dance

Back in the days when waacking was still an underground dance only for LGBT communities, they were using waacking to illustrate their stories and express their emotions. But when waacking appeared on the big screen in the 70s to 80s, acceptance of LGBT was still low so the male waackers could not dress as drag and be too feminine. Waacking in those days was

just a performance instead of expressive dance. As a result, waacking started to lose its original nature.

According to Naomi Bragin (2014), when waacking became popular because of ‘So you think you can dance’, the TV station FOX described waacking as a style of street dance that originated in Los Angeles in the early ’70s. “It takes a lot of skill, precision and control. It is typically choreographed to Disco music as the driving rhythms and defined beats compliment the quick hand and body gestures” was the quote captioned in its online dictionary. Its origin from the Black/ Latino American sexual minorities was erased and they tried to shape this dance style as heteronormative through the descriptions and by showing waacking as a heterosexual practice. Female waackers on TV were usually dressed in a proper dress and high heels while male waackers would be wearing pants and shirts, which was completely different from the underground waacking. Most waacking performances on TV were shaped as a sexy, charming girl with a boy admiring her. Gradually, waacking’s queer history became a secret that was seldom mentioned by the public.

For the years of Soul Train, around the 2000s, waacking was still described as a feminine dance that related to gender and sexuality. However, as time passed, people redefined waacking as a heterosexual dance to fit the heteronormativity of the society. The queerness of

waacking has been ignored. Tyrone once said, *'Don't do what you think ... do what it is.'*

Waacking is a dance for people to feel, express, and find themselves. The power of waacking is not about the strength that the dancer uses but about the energy and the stories he or she presents. So, in the heteronormative waacking, its value is erased as performers, especially those who are homosexual, may not be able to show their real stories.

Vernacularization of Waacking in Hong Kong

Waacking was brought to Hong Kong by Virago Carmen, an OG (Original Gangster) of waacking who is now the owner of Hong Kong Braid, a shop that helps customer to do African hairstyle. She started to teach waacking in Youth Outreach when waacking was not popular in Hong Kong. But then, she attracted many people to learn waacking in the 2010s and some of them even have become waacking tutors themselves now. An example is SexyLamelon, another OG waacker and teacher of many tutors. When years passed, waacking gradually became one of the most popular dancing styles in Hong Kong and many universities' dance society will now choose waacking as one of their performance styles. This chapter will focus on the history and the specialities of Hong Kong waacking.

Development of Waacking in Hong Kong

'At first, I was a Jazzfunk dancer. One day when I was freestyling with Carmen in the basketball court of Youth Outreach, I found that her hands were doing some beautiful movements that could not be seen in other dance styles. Since then, I started to dance waacking and waacking became my main dance style.' Said by SexyLamelon.

After this episode he began to practise waacking, joined many dance competitions and received some awards. But the most important thing is that his performances in those competitions also attracted some other dancers to the world of waacking. Fong Chuen and

Panda Waack are both waacking tutors in Hong Kong and when asked about the reason that makes them want to dance waacking, they will both mention the name of SexyLamelon. Just like SexyLamelon said, *'waacking is like a cult. The beauty of waacking is addictive and will make you addicted and want to get closer to it.'*

However, the development of waacking in Hong Kong has not always been smooth. Many experienced waackers, like Fong Chuen and SexyLamelon, agree that Hong Kong once had a decline and a gap between generations in the mid-2010s. *'I think it is because of the characteristics of Hong Kong people. They like to chase trends but the trend will fade out soon. Just like when the dance societies in universities do not organize events related to waacking, there will be fewer people to learn about it. Another reason is due to the popularization of commercial dance. In Hong Kong, many commercial dancers like to add a few movements of waacking in their choreography. However, they only understand the briefest layer of waacking instead of the inside of it. Gradually, there were fewer people dance waacking.'* said SexyLamelon.

What makes the situation get better is when waacking started to appear in the university communities and took up an important role like *Hip-hop* and other dance styles. The most significant event is the Annual Performance of Lingnan University's Dance society in 2017.

Lingnan University's Dance society was usually dancing urban dance and commercial choreographies before 2017. That year, members of the dance society wanted to try some street dances and between *Hip-hop* and waacking, they chose waacking.

'Some people think that Hip-hop is very difficult then we start to think of waacking. We start to watch videos of waacking and discover that it is something dance with hands and similar to choreography that is easier for us to handle. When I research waacking, I met Panda when she just started to teach waacking and choreographing. At last, Panda became very popular as well as Lingnan Dance society.'

Piu is very proud of their decision of finding Panda to be the choreographer of their piece as Lingnan University becomes the pioneer of waacking among the university communities. He claims that after the Annual Performance, waacking became his interest, and he would even go to other countries to have lessons to make himself improve. Before Panda's choreography, people thought that waacking was just a dance style that could not appear on the big stage (上唔到大台). Waacking is a social dance, mostly performed in dance battles and celebrations. Different from *hip-hop* and *house* dance, dance styles that are spectacular and performed by a group of people, waacking is a comparatively restrained dance for individuals to tell their stories to the audience through their dance moves and poses. Panda's piece comprises both

storytelling and grandiosity, which led people to change their mind. After Lingnan's Annual Performance, waacking officially entered the university dance communities and more waacking pieces and performances were done afterwards. Most of my informants agree that Hong Kong's dancing culture is dominated by the Universities' Dance societies. For example, most of the dancers are from dance societies of different universities; the trends of different dance styles depends on the current team members' interests. So, in Hong Kong, dance societies are one of the main factors that contributed to the "re-birth" of waacking.

Specialities of Hong Kong Waacking

When I asked my informants, what is the speciality of Hong Kong waacking culture, there was a consensus among informants and tutors who had similar answers. Fong Chuen said *'In Hong Kong, we cannot conclude what is special as every waacker in Hong Kong is very unique. They are more likely presenting their character so we cannot conclude.'*

Piu has a similar idea. When I asked Piu that what makes Hong Kong waackers different from other Asian places, like Taiwan, Japan and Korea, he said that Hong Kong waackers are more willing to be their real selves. *'Although I do not think that we can generalize waackers by region, comparatively Hong Kong waackers are truer to themselves. Like in some other countries, some waackers will dance what the battle requires them to do, which is different*

when they teach classes in the studio. But in Hong Kong, even waackers are in battle mode, they are still themselves and will try to express their real personalities. Back to the root, waacking is something that requires people to express themselves. And I think Hong Kong has an advantage on it due to the teaching of individual thinking and performing arts in schools.'

In many of the primary schools in Hong Kong, there are some performing arts lessons, for instance, Chinese Opera, Drama, Music, etc. As a result, many of the Hong Kong students had experiences in doing performance and performing themselves. Waacking, as a storytelling dance that includes the element of acting will be easier for Hong Kong people to learn and create their styles. Also, compared to other Asian regions, Hong Kong has a mixed-mode of Western waacking and Asian waacking. For waackers, we always have a saying that Western waackers like to focus on emotions and storytelling while the Asian one like to focus on the visual impacts. Hong Kong, as an ex-British colony in Asia, has had a strong inclination to be eclectic in combining different styles and thereby developing various styles locally.

This is also the reason why there are diversities in the character of waackers. Some people can be emotional, and some can show their techniques while performing. After waacking

became more popular in Hong Kong, more waacking dance crews appeared. For example, 甩 is a crew of waackers in their early 20s from different universities' dance societies who are students of Panda, whereas Waackanda's crew members are students of Fong Chuen, and so on. Different crews and crew members will have their own style. In my opinion, 甩 usually has a strong visual impact in their piece and Waackanda will usually mix some other dance styles in their performances. Although these waacking crews are usually formed by students of the same teacher, they all have their characters and specialities. Take Taiwan as an example, we can divide waackers in Taiwan into a few types by their dancing styles, the most famous being Chrissy, Akumadiva and Bobo. And mostly, one can trace the style of a waacker to his or her teacher. When we watch a Taiwanese waacker's performance, we can easily tell that this waacker is AkumaDiva's student and that student is Bobo's student. Even after a long time of learning, it is still very different to add in their styles. But in Hong Kong, this feature will fade gradually when students start to practice themselves and soon develop their styles. The reason why that Hong Kong waackers can develop their styles more easily than in other regions is that, rather than having to learn and master the specific styles of their tutors, or learning the "right" moves, Hong Kong waackers are encouraged to develop their styles by the motto of "be true to yourself."

Real Selves of Waackers

'Waacking is a dance that requires high acceptance of diversity. Due to the historical background, it has high acceptance towards different people. As a result, after dancing waacking, it gave me more self-confidence.' Said by SexyLamelon.

As mentioned before, waacking seldom judges whether a performance is correct or wrong.

As a result, no criteria to judge right and wrong may be the reason why people always think that waacking is a free dance that allows them to be their real self. No one will judge how you perform but more likely, they are appreciating how you present your stories. In the interviews completed, most of the informants agree that waacking give them chances to present their own emotions which are seldom shown to others in usual life.

While talking about waackers' styles, informants will always mention the term 'real selves'.

Actually, what is the real self? For me, the real self is a very vague thing that does not have a definition. Real self can be the side of an individual that they would like to present in front of others; Real self can be the deepest side of an individual that they ignored before; Real self can also be the side that an individual does not want to face. Waacking has a very amazing character that makes people have courage and confidence in their real selves.

Venus is a waacker who is born as male and chose to identify herself as a 'she' after learning waacking. Before she learnt waacking, she would only dress and wear makeup in a feminine

style when she was alone at home or at the student hostel. Even when I was having an interview with her, she was dressing in T-shirt and jeans which is generally a gender-neutral outfit. She said that as she needs to work in the daytime so she might not be able to wear a dress and put on make-up. *'I am working in a government department that the office and colleagues might not be that open-minded to accept me in a feminine outfit. So, I can only wear some gender-neutral style to make myself comfortable.'* Venus said.

She knew waacking from the training camp of the dance society that TaSha gave a waacking workshop in. *'When I tell my bros in the dance society that I want to learn waacking, they will tease me that I am gay. I felt a lot of pressure as I do not want to be outed. The reason why I choose to come out in the waacking community first as this is my comfort zone and people in it are having higher acceptance comparing to the general society. In the waacking community, either people are belonging to our community (LGBT community), or they are those who can accept us. So, I choose to come out to two of my waacking tutors before anyone including my family. Waacking not only letting me find someone who can accept the real me, but also letting me accept myself. Originally, I thought I have a large body shape that looks 'man' and not pretty. However, after learning waacking, I will start thinking that these things are also part of my bodies. The most important thing is that I can appreciate my*

beauty. So basically, it is waacking that make me accept myself and give confidence to myself.' Venus said.

Since then, she started to dress in a feminine style in the battles, and gradually in her daily life. The 'real self' character does not only appear when waackers dance but also due to the effects on their mindset, they will become more confident to show these sides of them also in real life.

Expressive versus Performative

There are mainly two ways to present waacking in the world. Firstly, waacking as a stage performance. No matter whether it is a team in a dance showcase or a solo performer in a judged battle, they are mainly for performing to the audience. The other way to present waacking is in a manner more expressive and focused on the self, for example, workshop, training camp, cyphering with friends, etc. So, what are the differences between these two ways?

Two Tensions: Expressing in Regional Styles

Dancing is usually treated by the audience as a form of performance and so is waacking. However, waacking appears on many occasions besides stage performances in the form of

social dancing. It will be at parties, dance cypher, dance battles, etc. Moreover, waacking is also a unique dance style that people used to express their stories.

Just as mentioned in the section on waacking's background, minorities like Latino, Black and homosexuals used waacking to express their own emotions in the LGBT bars in Los Angeles in the 70s. This has become the uniqueness of waacking, as there is seldom a dance that can tell the audience a story. Especially in Western countries, as they are culturally closer to the place where waacking was founded, dancers are more likely to use waacking as a way to express their feelings. During waacking's development, different styles of waacking have appeared. Some of the waackers from Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan and Korea choose to present their waack powerfully. Some examples are, Ibuki, Lip J, Chrissy. They started a trend in powerful waack as their waacking performances are visually stronger. Although this dance style ignores the storytelling part of waacking, it is still a type of waacking that people appreciate on stage. Similar to *contemporary* dance, the original waacking's emphasis was on the message delivered. Mainstream dances like *hip-hop* and *house* are not about storytelling, but they are originally eye-catching even with just one performer. The powerful waack is a style to make the audience more excited just like other dance styles. In Hong Kong, there are also two types of waackers. Some like to use waacking to express their emotions and the

stories of the music, in a way similar to *contemporary* dance, while others like to use waacking to impress the audiences with their techniques and skills.

Storytelling Versus Techniques

I will divide waackers in the world into two types, storytelling and technique types. Not saying that the storytelling side does not have techniques and skills, but they will emphasise the emotional part while waacking. Sometimes, the technique side waackers will also present some stories in performance, but they mainly emphasise the visual image of their pieces. In battle, the differences between these two types could be seen very obviously. Usually, the dancers focusing on techniques will be more aggressive, having sharp movements, as they usually want to make a visual impression on the judges. Some of them are like the powerful waackers, having faster turns of hands and arms for *drill* and *waack* moves. During their performance, you can feel passion and aggressiveness through their body language and facial expressions toward their opponents. Meanwhile, the storytelling performers usually like to express the stories of themselves or of the songs to the audiences. Instead of some fast and sharp movements, they will usually dance with posing and travelling. To explain it simply, it is as if they were recording a music video of the song. Instead of interacting with judges and their opponents, they will usually interact with the audiences more. You cannot say that they

are without techniques, indeed, many of their videos in dance battles are widely spread in the global waacking community.

Waacking is not only a dance but also an attitude. Many of my informants agreed that storytelling takes a great part in waacking when we discussed what components a waacker should have. As Piu, one of my informants and a storytelling side waacker said, *'Emotion is an extra need if you would like to have a breakthrough of your waacking life. Some people will practice adding emotions into their dance after they think they got enough skills to support them. It might be hard for people who practice techniques first to add emotions as there are standard ways to practice for skills but not for emotions.'* The father of waacking, Tyrone, had shared that he would use half a year to ask the student to practice just for skills and techniques, then to ask them to freestyle and explore themselves. In waacking, the technique is an important tool to support dancers for self-exploration and expression, as the message can only be fully delivered if your physical condition allows it. However, what makes every dancer different is their emotions and personal stories. If you would like to win a battle, good technique is a must, as people will judge people seeing how 'good' you waack, but an emotional dance, showing your emotions will make you different from other waackers.

One example that can perfectly illustrate the beauty of the storytelling of waacking is Piu and Fan's battle during the Let's get Waack Vol.3 in 2020. In their round, they were requested to dance to the song Million Reasons by Lady Gaga and express the emotion 'Sadness'. They were supposed to be opponents but instead, they danced a love story to the audiences. In their battle round, they held each other's hands, staring at each other, touching each other's faces, eventually, they acted like each other's partner and completed this amazing round of battle with their chemistry. The recording of their battle was widely spread and even shared on the Instagram of some foreign waacking pages. They are presenting a story instead of just performing their dance. They might not be very professional in techniques, but their interactions show us the uniqueness of waacking and improvisation.

Of course, there are also many examples of powerful waacking being shared on social media. For example, Ibuki's battle and choreographs are always eye-catching. Even people dancing with other dance styles or who just view her as an audience will find her charming by looking at her videos. Something interesting is, many people do not understand why sometimes the storytelling side waackers will win the battle instead of those visually impressive ones. I think maybe this is one of the uniqueness of waacking. Not judging by only the outside, the technique, and skills, but also focus on the deeper side, on the emotions and stories that the dancers would like to bring out.

For the storytelling side waackers, the most common and biggest challenge they faced in waacking is feeling lost during their waacking journey. As emotion is a very vague thing that you cannot measure, storytelling waackers will easily be frustrated when they do not know how to improve. *'There are sometimes I will enter a loop that I do not know how to improve myself in a further way,'* said Piu, *'then, I used a year to travel and join dancing workshops and lessons worldwide.'* People will usually travel to other places to join the battles and have lessons with different teachers to explore more about different styles of waacking. During Piu's travel, Princess Lockeroo, a waacker from the United States, told him that if he wants to express his feelings well, he needs to train up for body conditioning and techniques. Then, Piu started to learn soul dance to make himself fit the music. There are also other ways for dancers to train themselves to improve their waacking techniques. For example, some will learn *popping* in order to familiarize themselves with popping music, some will train their arm muscles to have enough foundation to support their emotional expression.

For the technique-focused waackers, they usually get frustrated as they do not know how to improve besides keeping practising techniques. As they will train for different combos and skills, once they reach their limit in techniques, they will be lost. Tintin is a waacker that knows waacking through watching battle videos on YouTube. At first, he was deeply

influenced by this mindset that waacking is used for battles, so he trained himself hard for technique.

'At one day, I started to think that I am staying in the same place without getting any improvements. Every day, I was training for the same things, but I did not find I was doing better. Then, I started to explore more of waacking and I found that there is another way to dance waacking.' Tintin said.

To improve this situation, many technique waackers will just let themselves improvise and let their body flow with the music. We can see that besides emphasizing different aspects, the challenges that the two sides face are different too.

Expressive Versus Impressive

Tyrone also once said that in his sharing, 'Dance to express, not to impress.' For dancing, especially for waacking, the aim of dancers should be to express their emotions and thoughts through their body movements. This is very important in waacking, as waacking is one of the very few dancing styles that can directly express the stories of the music and the dancers themselves. For example, the UniWaack performers mentioned above delivered their interpretation of the music story in the final round.

The biggest difference between expressive waackers and impressive waackers is that expressive waackers focus on themselves while impressive waackers focus on the ones who watch them. For instance, people who do not dance would prefer to watch Ibuki's video rather than Piu's one, as Ibuki dances more powerfully and in a more visually appealing way. Audiences do not need to interpret what message the performers are trying to deliver and can simply enjoying the visual impression. However, Piu and Fan are showing the audiences a romance story, which other styles of dancing can seldom do as this requires the audience to be into their performance and follow what they are doing. In Hong Kong, it is hard to win by dancing a storytelling piece in battle, especially in the all-style battles, as in battles, the most important thing is to impress the judges with your dance. It requires a lot of technique and experience to impress others through dancing to express. However, although they may not be able to impress others, these dancers enjoy more the process of expressing how they interpret the song.

Some waackers will join the battle to express certain messages through different songs, while others waackers will focus more on the result and would like to impress the judges. The latter kind of waackers will usually train themselves with many dance combos and skills, such as side cartwheel, handstand, bone-breaking, etc, to make themselves well prepared for the

battles. Just like Tintin, who has danced waacking for three years. At first, he was attracted to waacking when searching dance videos on YouTube. One day, he saw the video of a Taiwanese waacker, Chrissy, competing in a dance battle in Japan called Freestyle session. At that moment, he was attracted by the specialty and beauty of waacking. As he said, *“When I just know waacking from YouTube, I was attracted by the beautiful hand movements and the power delivered in the performance.”*

As he knew waacking because of competitions, he automatically had the mindset that he should focus on training for battles. He would train to improve the speed of his waack, the turning while dancing, and other dance techniques. After he explored more about the waacking culture and communities in the later stage, he started to link waacking to personal experiences and emotions and transformed from an impressive waacker to an iconic expressive one. Besides training for skills, he would also train for his emotional expressiveness to make the audience feel the deepest side of him. He was no longer just focusing on the technique and how visually strong his performance is. He would also focus on what message and emotions he would like to deliver to the audience through his performance.

We could not say that either side is better than the others but if one waacker can equip him/herself with both styles, that is an ideal waacker. However, it is hard to achieve as the performer has to equip good techniques and the ability to deliver the message.

Emotional Versus Rational

For me, I am an emotional waacker. The aspect of waacking that I love the most is the ability to present a story through movements. While I am dancing, I feel the song instead of thinking about what I should do in the next line of lyrics. There was one time, I was suffering from a lack of self-confidence and depression. That night, I had to go to training for the Annual Performance of the Dance society. When the team manager played a slow-tempo song and asked us to freestyle, I was moving slowly and felt the song with my body. Suddenly, I could feel that tears were rolling in my eyes without any reason and people around told me that they could feel my emotions through my dance moves.

Waackers belonging to the two different styles will have different training methods and points to focus on while practice. Usually, waackers will plan for what train in their training time. The common point of both types of waackers is that they will both warm-up before doing their usual practice to make their body well prepared for the next training. It will include body-stretching and fitness. Then, the technique waackers will start to train their arm

muscles and their waacking speed by doing quick waacks. They will also practice for a few combos and routines to prepare for the battles. I would call them the rational waackers as they are clear about what they would like to train for in these times. And for the emotional waackers, they will usually do cypher—a freestyle open circle where people take turns dancing in the middle—with different kinds of music to make their body familiar with different styles of music. They will also train their muscles, but they will emphasise training on feelings and freestyles. Most of the time, they will let their emotions lead them. Some will even empty their mind and just let their body follow the groove of the music.

Different training patterns make these two types of waackers more diverse. The song list they use during practice is different too. For rational, technique waackers, they will use traditional disco music which the original waackers used. These songs are strong in beat and energetic so they can show their powerful side while waacking to these songs. Meanwhile, the emotional waackers like to try more types of songs, including slow-tempo love songs. These slow songs can allow them to move with the flow. Most dancers will listen to more songs while practicing, as in the battle the DJ will play music randomly. Listening to more music can increase the chance for dancers to be familiar with the song in their round.

Both types of waackers have their strengths and beauty so, usually, we will not judge either side as right or wrong. Waacking is a dance that encourages people to be someone they want to be, so both kinds of waackers are appreciated and respected.

Good Waacker? Bad Waacker?

In other dance styles, there are a lot of grading criteria that can judge what is a good dance and what is a bad dance. For example, if you can do muscle contraction and relaxation in a short time, you can be a good popper. For *locking*, there might be a lot of foundations like *Scoobie Doo*, *Skeeter Rabbit*, *Which a way*, etc. There are some standards for these foundational steps, but this does not exist in the world of waacking. For waacking, the only foundational step is *drilling*. In waacking culture, there is no right or wrong. As mentioned before, waacking encourages people to be themselves and present themselves. Even for beginners, they might not be familiar with the techniques and skills of waacking, but we will only say that their waack is not fluent enough, rather than saying that they have a bad waack.

Different judges will have different standards when judging the results during battle. Some judges would like to see the ability of waackers to present their stories, while others will choose the dancer who made fewer mistakes. Talking about mistakes, these are not about the strength of your waack or the posing you use. It is something simpler, like how much of your

movement follows the music. But we never judge the content of the performance. We will not say, you should choose another pose to make it more grandiose. This is because, at that moment, the performers choose to use a certain pose to tell people about their stories. In waacking, we will enjoy more the attitude and character you projected during your performance. So, performance-wise, we do not have a criterion to judge whether it is a good performance or a bad one. But is there a criterion that defines how to be a good waacker?

Good Waacker = Good Person?

'When a waacker is strong in techniques and has a good result in battles, we would say that he/she is a strong waacker. However, is he/she a good waacker that will receive respect from the others?' asked Piu.

There are many elements in waacking and the criteria of a good waacker are much more than the abilities to win a battle. The most common version to use for defining a good waacker is 'Music, Love and Be yourself'. This means that a good waacker should have a good ability to present the musicality, to deliver love and to show their character. Although it seems to be very clear to define, these three things are actually very complicated.

First, in the world of waacking, musicality is not only about how good you can hit the beat. As waacking is an emotional dance used to present stories, waackers should tell the story of the songs through their dance moves. So, if you want to be a good waacker, even though you lean towards the technique side, you should also practice the ability to show the audience the stories and message that the song presents. And even if you lean towards the storytelling side, you should also show your understanding of the rhythm and the beat to the audience. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a storytelling side waacker should have enough skills and techniques to help them to deliver their message.

Princess Lockeroo, a waacker from the United States, once said: *'If you want to improve yourself, there are a few things that you should do. First, you need to dance very clean. No unnecessary movement should be done. Only dancing cleanly can help you to deliver the message to others. Second, you have to have the technique to support yourself to have the ability doing all movement smoothly.'* So, if you are good at listening to music and have a body condition to support it, you can be a good waacker who can play with the music.

Second, talking about being oneself, due to the historical background of waacking, waackers should have and express their character. As in the origin the LGBTQ communities and Black Latino danced waacking to perform their real characteristics which were forbidden in their

usual life, waacking has kept the spirit of presenting your true self. For example, wearing drag and dancing as they like. People always think that waacking is a free dance that allows them to be their real self, due to the high acceptance of the community. No one will judge how you perform but, more likely, they are appreciating how you present your stories.

In the interviews completed, most of the informants agree that waacking gives them chances to present their own emotions which are seldom shown to others in usual life. *'I am a cool person when you first met me, I will be more mature when thinking and talking to others. I am a Capricorn that I like to judge and analysis about others, so I am a comparatively rational person in daily life. But while I am dancing, I will keep the rational side of mine but meanwhile, I would like to be emotional,'* said Piu. *'For waacking, I think you can 100% present yourself. For me, I did not dance for victory nor impressing others. I dance for myself so I would like to deliver my message while dancing. And this is what waacking give me. In daily life, I might be very serious and will challenge while working. Expressing myself is something very personal that only will present to my closest friends. Other than that, I will do it while dancing. I think it is an exit of expressing myself.'*

So, maybe some people will seldom present the deepest side of them to others or mainly only disclose it to their closest ones. While they are dancing waacking, they will be more willing to present their emotions to the audiences and the public.

Last but not least, the most complicated and controversial element: the ability to show love.

While talking about this with my informants, they agreed that this is the most important element of all. Showing love does not relate only to you as a waacker and to waacking culture, but also as a person. If you would like to be a good waacker, you need to be a good person.

So, how can we define someone as a good person?

First, a good waacker should contain positive energy. Many dancers use dance as one way for them to release stress collected in daily life. This is especially true for waackers because waacking is more emotional and waackers can directly express their anger and depression through their dance. As waacking is a social dance, waackers will have many chances to interact with others. So, while the others are showing negative energy, a good waacker can release some positive energy to inspire others and to show support to them. *'Maybe a good waacker should be very friendly that do not mind sharing their knowledge with the others,'* said Siu, a waacker who is very cheerful and keen on finding different dancers who have the same interests for collaboration. The reason why waackers should deliver a positive message and be friendly is because in daily life people might suffer from many relationship issues; if they can meet some friendly person that does not mind interacting with them and make them feel connected, they could feel warm and become part of the community.

Second, a good waacker should respect others. Not only containing positive energy, but a good waacker should also have a good personality. Most of the informants agree that among all personalities, the most essential component is to respect others. During the battle, waackers might be very aggressive to their opponent to show their fierce side, however, after the battle round ends, waacker should be humble and respect everyone including their opponents. As the proverb goes, respect begets respect. This means that you can only earn respect when you also respect others. You might not like all of the performance as they might not be your style, but you should respect them. One example in Hong Kong is that there is one female waacker who is identified as a strong waacker as she got many awards and achievements in her life of waacking. However, other waackers think that she is defiant and disrespectful in person sometimes. Waacking community is not very big, so gossips about her are easily heard. As waacking culture is trying to spread peace and love to others, her personality is not appreciated by others. As a result, some other waackers do not think she is a good waacker and will even publicly show hatred towards her due to her personality.

Third, a good waacker should respect and know about the waacking culture. This is very important because waackers are not only people who dance waacking, but they are also representatives of the waacking culture. If people who do not dance waacking would like to

understand more about it, most of them will ask waackers as they think they are the ones who are familiar with it. Also, in this paper, I frequently mentioned that waacking is a community with high acceptance of diversity which will appreciate others' performances more than judging them. I did so because this is an extremely important aspect of waacking culture. So, to respect waacking culture, you should also appreciate others' performances. Most importantly, waackers should respect the history of waacking. As waacking is a dance that comes from the minorities, we should welcome everyone to perform waacking in the way they like.

Good waackers should also respect the whole culture of waacking: music, history, spirit, etc. For example, songs from Donna Summer, the Queen of Disco music. As with performance, you might not like all the spirit that the other waackers bring out as there might be differences between theirs and yours. However, as a good waacker, you should embrace and love the culture by showing respect to everything and everyone in the community.

Some experienced waackers also claimed that a good waacker should equip with one more character, that they should leave a good inheritance. Sexylamelon said that *'A good dancer should make a good continuity of the waacking culture and community. For example, if you are a tutor or an experienced one, you should share the history and spirit of waacking to the*

newbies.’ He said that in the current waacking community, waacking has become more about impressing the audiences and focusing on the commercial aspects. So, waacking performances are now focusing on spectacular displays of techniques rather than self-expression, which is the spirit of waacking. Some waackers just dance based on what others like to watch, but the original spirit of waacking is to show their inner beauty to others. The main reason for this is that people do not know about the historical background of waacking and do not understand the culture fully. So, more experienced waackers should share their own experiences to help others improve and understand the waacking culture. Making waackers know more about the culture can avoid it turning into more commercial dancing and losing its original spirit. To be good waackers, people should help maintain the original spirit.

Therefore, being a strong waacker equipped with good technique does not make you a good waacker. Although in waacking community, we do not have a clear standard of a good waacker, according to my informants, there is a slogan that is commonly used: ‘Music, Love and Be Yourself’. These criteria are mostly based on the origin of waacking. A good waacker should share love and be himself, as people in the 1970s danced waacking because they were being suppressed and discriminated. So, as good waackers in 2021, we must not be disrespectful toward others.

Conclusion

As a waacker myself, I used interviews, participant observation and auto-biographical ethnography to complete this research. During my research, I found out that there are a lot of differences between waacking nowadays and the original waacking, especially while comparing the waacking in Los Angeles with the waacking in other Asian regions like Taiwan and Japan. After conducting in-depth interviews with seven informants, a conclusion could be made that Western waacking like that in Los Angeles is more emotional and expressive, while the Eastern ones like those of Taiwan and Japan are focusing more on the technique and style of performance. However, Hong Kong is quite different from these Asian regions as the Hong Kong waacking community does not have a particular standard for how waacking should be. As this research is focusing on the development and specialties of waacking in Hong Kong, the section 'Presentive versus Performative' has illustrated that how the technique style and the emotional style coexist and have both developed in Hong Kong. Informants from both styles talked about their interpretations of waacking and the difficulties they faced in their waacking life. Due to different personalities, they choose to perform waacking in terms of different styles, which lead them to different paths of waacking. In the very beginning, there will be a lot of waackers who choose to follow the technique path as it is easier for beginners to have a chance to copy the style seen on social media and by their

teachers. In Hong Kong, the battle culture in the waacking community is having a high influence on the beginner so that more people will focus on the technique and performance. But just like Venus said, after some time of self-exploration and developments, students will be able to find and develop their own styles, just as Tintin has.

It might be a little bit hard for non-waackers to understand that, unlike other dancing styles, waacking does not have a solid definition generalizing what waacking should be and what should be regarded as right waacking. In waacking, we usually appreciate all performances. Even in battles, there is no good waacking and bad waacking, only a good one and a better one. Although we do not have a standard for waacking style, we do have a standard for a good waacker. It is not universal but most of the informants I interviewed agree that a good waacker should be a good person. They should deliver positive energy and the message of love. Due to the background and meaning of waacking, the waacking community has a high acceptance of different values. However, we will still speak up if we see something we do not agree with. Maybe to outsiders, waackers could give the impression of having a lot of gossip and arguments. However, arguments happen in every dancing community and social circles. It is just that waackers will seldom talk at someone's back so people will know what happened.

Also, the Hong Kong waacking community has a higher acceptance for different styles which makes people feel comfortable to be their 'real selves', no matter in sexuality, personality or character. I think that no matter what your style of waacking is, it will always lead you to the path of self-exploration and reflection, as waacking makes it easier for dancers to explore and reflect about themselves because it does not have many constraints. While you are exploring yourself, you will have a deeper understanding of who you are and be able to start thinking about what you want to be like. Some waackers will show these sides of them while dancing, and some will even have a change in their daily life. Venus is a good example that shows how waacking gives courage and confidence to waackers to be themselves. Going from someone who is frustrated about his self-recognition to a girl that is confident and proud of her identity, waacking has been an important aid for her.

Before doing this research and conducting interviews, I believed that waacking in Hong Kong is still intimately related to sexuality, as the background and origin of waacking is deeply influenced by the LGBTQ community. As in I was choosing male waackers as a focus group, I predicted that I would listen to many stories of self-confession and coming out. However, after talking to my informants, I realized that sexuality is only one part of the waacking spirit. Waacking is only a tool for them to re-think and be proud of who they are. It is the same for all of them, even though they have different sexualities. Waacking is asking people to be their

real selves instead of being feminine or even gay. In current days, waacking is not only a symbol of femininity. It is the symbol of Pride, a way to let you explore and express your real self.

Although this project might not be a professional academic research project, I hope this research project can still be a great opportunity for any of you who read till here to start knowing about waacking. I wish that there will be more people attracted by the beauty of waacking and hope to promote this precious culture to more people.

Acknowledgements

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all my informants. At first, I thought I knew waacking deeply as I had done a lot of research about it and I was familiar with its origin. However, after doing this research project, I found that the things I knew were only the thinnest layer of waacking. For waacking, the most important thing are the dancers themselves. Their stories, how waacking and they affected each other, how waacking developed, these things are more worthy to study. They let me officially step into the world of waacking. Thank you FongChuen, Piu, SexyLamelon, Siu, Timothy, Tintin and Venus. Without any of you and your sharing, it would have been much more difficult for me to finish this research, and more importantly, to be a good waacker.

At last, I would like to thank Professor Sealing Cheng for being my supervisor of this research. Without her help and guidance, I would have been very frustrated and confused during this journey of research. Her knowledge in the field of performing arts and sexuality gave me and my research a big aid. I hope that she enjoyed the waacking videos I showed her during meetings.

References

- Ahlberg, Danella. 2018. "Waacking: A Shift from Gay Refusal to Gender Refusal." In-quiry@Queen's Undergraduate Research Conference Proceedings. doi:10.24908/iqurcp.10434.
- Bragin, Naomi. 2014. "Techniques of Black Male Re/Dress: Corporeal Drag and Kinesthetic Politics in the Rebirth of Waacking/Punkin'." *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 24 (1), 61-78. Doi:10.1080/0740770x.2014.901599.
- Chazin-Bennahum, Judith. 2016. *Teaching Dance Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Dance Studies Association. "The Popular as the Political." DSA. Last modified 2018. <https://dancestudiesassociation.org/publications/conversations-across-the-filed-of-dance-studies/the-popular-as-the-political>.
- A Johnson Publication. 1978. "The 'Outrageous' Waack Dancers." *Ebony*, August 1978, 64-66.
- Sweet, Jill D. 2016. "The Anthropology of Dance: Textural, Theoretical, and Experiential Ways of Knowing." In *Teaching Dance Studies*, edited by Judith Chazin-Bennahum. New York: Routledge, 149-164. doi:10.4324/9781315539157-14.
- Taylor, Julie M. 1998. *Paper Tangos*. Durham: Duke University Press.