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**SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COHESIVE URBAN COMMUNITIES:
EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF CULTURE, RELIGION AND OTHER
LIVED EXPERIENCE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PROCESSES IN INFORMAL AND SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS IN
FIJI.**

**A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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DECLARATION

I, *Kirk Yates*, hereby declare that this supervised research project is entirely my own work. All ideas, data and other information that have been reproduced and compiled herein have been duly acknowledged to their respective sources. Any other omissions and errors technical or otherwise, I fully acknowledge as my own.

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND COHESIVE URBAN COMMUNITIES: AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF CULTURE, RELIGION AND OTHER LIVED EXPERIENCE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN INFORMAL AND SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS IN FIJI

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Urbanisation of Pacific cities is causing substantial growth in squatter settlements, particularly in Fiji. This growth in squatter settlements is placing government resources under stress in terms of affordable housing solutions and extension of essential services on government capacities. Furthermore, unregulated urbanisation processes are leaving many squatter settlements living below the poverty line and placing settlers increasingly under survival pressures. Many have studied the various poverty and social dynamics affecting squatter settlements in Fiji as well as the government and non-government institutional responses to these situations. This thesis addresses how the urban poor in settlements marshal the necessary resources to organise inclusive and effectual communities that can influence public policy directions on issues that affect them. The assumption in this thesis considers that squatters face significant cultural and ideological barriers that either support or block their ability to function adequately in their challenging settings. Furthermore, this thesis explores the impacts of culture, religion and lived experiences on urban community development processes and how these experiences may affect the socio-economic well-being of community members.

This research was based on primary data collection from a sample of eighteen householders across three contrasting squatter settlements in Suva, Fiji, during 2008. Householders were surveyed with application of a structured and internationally authenticated social capital-integrated questionnaire. The survey

was used to investigate settlers' perceptions of the various organisational and social cohesion indicators in communities considered necessary to support community functioning. Of particular interest was the relative significance and importance of key social capital indicators. Social capital was seen as prerequisite for community development in a Fijian, Indo-Fijian and an integrated settlement. This thesis investigated how people might work together to sustain socially cohesive communities. The community organisational and interactive data indicators were analysed to compare the capacity assessment results and presented in a visual format to provide a 'snapshot in time' of the status of community relations in the squatter settlements studied. It is contended that this approach could present a potential application for communities, government institutions and development practitioners to employ as an instrument to monitor the progress of community capacity development in future.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEU	Adult Equivalent Units
AFNH	Actual Food-basket Needs Per Household
AHI	Actual Household Income
ANFNH	Actual Non-Food-basket Needs Per Household
BNPL	BASIC NEEDS POVERTY LINE
CCT	Caubati Topline Squatter Settlement
cpi	Consumer Price Index
CSI	Civil Society Index (<i>Civicus</i>)
CSR	Colonial Sugar Refinery
ECREA	Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy
FJD	Fiji Dollar
FML	Fiji Muslim League Squatter Settlement
FPL	Food Poverty Line
FPR	Fiji Poverty Report
FSI	Food Security Index
FST	Food Security Threshold
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGC	Great Council of Chiefs
GSR	Greater Suva Region
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ISI	Income Security Index
IST	Income Security Threshold
MUHEC	Massey University Humanitarian Ethics Committee
Nan	Nanuku Squatter Settlement
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NZAID	New Zealand Aid Programme
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RBF	Reserve Bank of Fiji
SC-IQ	Social Capital-Integrated Questionnaire
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USQ-BNPL	Urban Squatter Basic Needs Poverty Line
WCC	World Council of Churches
WB	World Bank