

Faculty of Arts and Education

Summer Research Scholarships

2026/2027 Projects (Te Wānanga o Waipapa)

Project code	ART041
Project title	Rewriting Fertility: How Pacific Conception, Miscarriage, and Infertility Are Storied
Discipline	Te Wānanga o Waipapa
Supervisor(s)	Sarah McLean-Orsborn
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Skills Needed	<p>We are seeking a Summer Scholar to work alongside us on key components of this study. The primary task will be to undertake a focused literature review on Pacific conception, infertility, reproductive health, healthcare inequities, and Indigenous health practices. This work will draw on scholarship from Pacific Studies, Māori and Indigenous studies, anthropology, history, sociology, and population health, with close attention to the project’s central research question. The main output for this phase will be a well-structured literature review that maps what is known, identifies gaps, and clarifies how Pacific experiences of infertility have been framed across disciplines. Building on this review, the Summer Scholar will then, under our guidance, contribute to the development of the Ethics application for the next stage of the research. This will include learning to translate literature insights into methodological and ethical justifications and to articulate cultural, relational, and equity-focused considerations for UAHPEC.</p>
<p>Project description</p> <p>Narratives positioning Pacific peoples as inherently ‘highly fertile’ have long obscured conversations about unexplained infertility, miscarriage, and chronic reproductive conditions such as PMOS and endometriosis. These issues are often discussed only in confidence, despite evidence that more than a quarter of couples in Aotearoa New Zealand experience difficulty conceiving at some point in their lives (Health New Zealand, 2025). For Pacific peoples, family sits at the centre of social life and decision making is grounded in collective belonging, kinship, and genealogical ties (Teariki & Leau, 2023). As Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi (2008) Wendt (1996) remind us, the ‘self’ is relational, shaped through obligations to family, village, and nation. Within this worldview, the desire for children is often deeply connected to love, continuity, and collective identity. When conception does not occur, the emotional, psychological, and financial impacts can be profound and are frequently underestimated (Allot et al., 2013). This Summer Research Scholarship will examine how Pacific conception, infertility, and reproductive misconceptions have been storied across literature. By analysing work from Pacific Studies, Indigenous studies, anthropology, history, sociology, and population health, the project aims to clarify what is known, what is missing, and how Pacific experiences of infertility have been framed. This review will form the foundation for a larger research programme planned for 2027.</p> <p>This topic can take 1 Summer Research Scholar.</p>	