**Introduction:** Across the U.S. Southwest, preceramic hunter-gatherer archaeology lags well behind research focusing on the advent of agriculture and sedentism. Surveys often yield a wealth of surface evidence of hunter-gatherer presence on the landscape but, lacking stratified sites, this evidence is seldom interrogated. My doctoral research will focus precisely on the systematic study this disenfranchised archaeological record: I aim to understand the evolution of Paleoindian and Archaic groups in the Southwest by investigating their colonization of and persistence in this arid landscape.

For the past two years I have participated in archaeological investigations conducted by the Arizona State Museum (ASM) at Rock Art Ranch (RAR), located on 6 sq. mi. along the Chevelon drainage in northeastern Arizona. Chief among the rich archaeological record of RAR are 88 previously unrecorded preceramic localities, 162 projectile points, 58 bifaces, and debitage dating from 10,000 B.C. to A.D. 500. Additionally, natural cobble accumulations in two areas atop the petroglyph-rich Chevelon Canyon were found to be stone quarries associated with preceramic lithic production. These findings make RAR a strong analytical case for investigating Paleoindian and Archaic landscape uses through surface data.

**Research Questions:** Given the potential of the surface record I wish to interrogate, my research questions are: (1) What does the distribution of diagnostic projectile points say about hunter-gatherer place making? (2) How do key elements of the landscape (water, fauna, flora, landforms, and lithic quarries) determine place persistence or repeated visitation to the area by highly mobile Paleoindian and Archaic people? (3) What does the spatial patterning of surface artifacts say about place-specific and broad landscape use? And, (4) how would the association of projectile point deposition and landscape configuration be acting as agents to create a remembered place through time?

Thus far I have identified two complementary theoretical bodies for hunter-gatherer research to inform my analysis of preceramic lithic assemblages at RAR and help me answer these research questions: Binford’s (2001) construction of frames of reference through cross-cultural ethnoarchaeology, and cultural landscape theory (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Kuwanwisiwma and Ferguson 2009). While Binford’s approach is best applied to hypothesis-driven, quantitative reconstructions of hunter-gatherer subsistence and organization, cultural landscape theories furnish a more nuanced approach to native landscape use that emphasizes memory work and place inscription beyond narrow subsistence pursuits. I believe both frameworks may be combined in a seamless research design.

**Research Design and Methodology:** Surface collections are sometimes regarded as suspect datasets offering only preliminary data about buried cultural contexts. Yet, under certain environmental conditions (e.g., prolonged aridity) surface artifact accumulations illustrate, at various levels of confidence, broad landscape use patterns as well as place-specific occupations. For example, the *Paleoindian Database of the Americas* (Anderson and Faught 2005) gives almost as much analytical weight to a majority of surface projectile point findings as to the far fewer buried remains associated with the earliest Americans. Recent surveys of dry lakes yielded high-quality information on the early Paleoindian colonization of Utah’s desert (Duke 2015). Across the world, systematic recordation of early Holocene artifacts found atop Saharan sand sheets attest to the fact that dune surfaces comparable to those found in RAR have preserved *in situ* refitatable lithic artifacts over millennia (Close 1996). Surface sites in RAR exhibit high refitability (and thus limited post-depositional displacement) of preceramic lithic artifacts.
A baseline survey and systematic site and artifact recordation conducted by ASM at RAR provides a solid starting point to my project. Yet, answers to landscape-wide and place-specific questions require, at a minimum, the following analytical steps: (1) **Physical landscape assessment** will entail a geomorphological assessment of dune stability through time to ascertain confidence in the integrity of preceramic surface accumulations. The feasibility of luminescence-dating of stable dune deposits lying just below surface artifact accumulations must also be determined by specialists. (2) **Cultural Landscape Assessment** will include a detailed GIS analysis of the association between known artifact accumulations (particularly projectile points) and singular resources (natural and anthropogenic landmarks, shelters, water, and lithic raw materials) so that procurement areas, camping locales, and mobility requirements may be identified. (3) **Place-specific cultural practices**: A total shoulder-to-shoulder survey of two key localities will be conducted to accurately map and catalogue individual artifact locations, artifact types, artifact raw materials, and their associations. Statistical and GIS analyses of survey data will be combined with research outcomes from Steps 1 and 2; the resulting information will be instrumental in assessing length of occupation and degree of commitment to specific localities in the broader landscape (e.g., as evidenced in persistent site reuse, place inscription through marking, and memorialization through rock art). And (4) **Cross-cultural ethnoarchaeological research** will help to situate findings in RAR within the vast world of hunter-gatherers, systematize the comparative study of preceramic surface sites, and establish their significance for reconstructing mobile hunter-gatherer subsistence and organization within and beyond the U.S. Southwest.

**Resources and Feasibility**: After working closely with the ASM in RAR and conducting my Master’s Thesis research, I have established key contacts to foreground my doctoral project. I am currently in contact with landowners who have collaborated with ASM for six years. Additionally, my connection to ASM will also allow me to acquire necessary permits from the State of Arizona to survey portions of a key locality bordering state land. Furthermore, access to the database compiled at RAR that is currently curated at the Homol’ovi Research Program Lab at ASM will allow me to investigate the full archaeological record thus far collected in my project area.

**Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts**: Many Native American tribes are keenly interested in archaeology that uncovers evidence of their deep past. While there has been extensive study of early agriculture in the late Archaic period, there remains a massive gap in the literature of the earliest hunter-gatherer ancestors of Southwestern tribes. A key component of this research will be public outreach, especially with local descendant communities such as the Hopi Tribe. I will disseminate research results through public talks at local and regional venues as well as through more traditional scholarly publications and conference presentations. Overall, my research will tap into an under-utilized body of data in the U.S. Southwest and contribute to the refinement of current methods for the study of Paleoindian and Archaic landscape use through surface collections.