**PAPER NUMBER #220**

**Untapped potential? Scoping review of how boundary objects are used to embed research into practice**

**Presenting Authors**

Dr Jo Day

**Affiliation**

NIHR CLAHRC South West Peninsula

**Country of residence**

United Kingdom

**Objectives/aims**

Promoting the uptake of research findings into real-world settings requires the development of both research methods and theory. The concept of boundary objects, defined by Star & Griesemer (1989) as objects that are “plastic enough to adapt to local needs yet robust enough to maintain a common identify across sites”, is one promising way to focus research and evaluation on how to improve implementation approaches and strategies. Our aim was to map how boundary objects have been used in health and social care research with a focus on the implementation of findings into practice.

**Methods**

Systematic scoping review using a structured search of databases plus supplementary searches. No design or language restrictions were applied. All identified titles and abstracts were double-blind screened by two researchers. Disagreements were resolved by discussion. Included studies cited and/or used Star & Griesemer’s (1989) definition of boundary objects or other work that had drawn on this definition. Characteristics of the included studies’ methods, settings and contexts, topics, type of boundary object, and way the concept is used to implement research into practice were extracted.

**Main findings**

Sixty-nine papers met the inclusion criteria, of which 27 considered implementation issues. These studies focused on the implementation of assessment tools, electronic health records, integrated care pathways, and inter-organisational collaborations. Many of the included studies were ethnographies and drew on analyses of observations, documents, and interviews. Boundary objects provide a promising way of framing research on implementation. The absence of a framework to facilitate cross-disciplinary learning and synthesis of findings across studies inhibits the development, investigation, and the application of the concept of boundary objects in implementation science.