

# Importance of Employment for Adults with ASD

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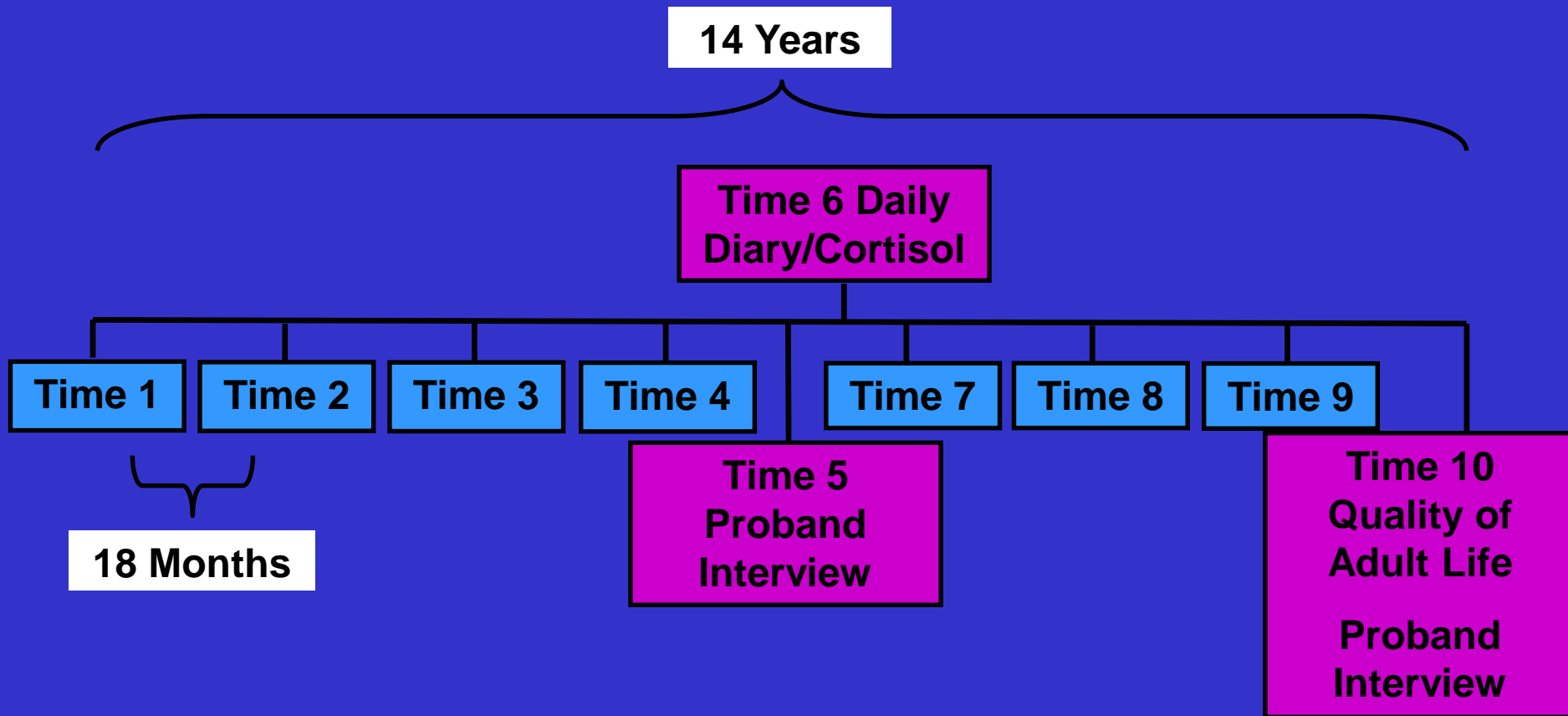
waisman center, university of wisconsin - madison

# Adolescents and Adults with Autism Study (Mailick, Greenberg, & DaWalt)

- Longitudinal study started in 1998 (10 data collection points over 14 years)
- Large sample (n=406 families)
- Wide age range -- 10 to 52 years of age
  - ▶ 62% adolescents age 10-21
  - ▶ 38% adults age 22-52



# Study Timeline




# Study Measures

- Autism symptoms
- Daily living skills
- Behavior problems



# Employment

**Table 1** Vocational index, from most to least independent

	Score	Category
	9	Employment in the community <i>without</i> supports greater than 10 h a week
	9	Postsecondary, <i>degree-seeking</i> educational program greater than 10 h a week
	8	Postsecondary, <i>degree-seeking</i> educational program or employment in the community <i>without</i> supports—total activities 10 h a week or less
	7	Employed in the community <i>with</i> supports greater than 10 h a week. No time spent in sheltered settings.
	6	Employed in the community <i>with</i> supports (no time spent in sheltered settings)—total activities 10 h a week or less
	5	Sheltered vocational setting and supported community employment—total activities greater than 10 h a week
	4	Sheltered vocational setting and volunteering in the community—total activities greater than 10 h a week
	4	Sheltered vocational setting (workshop or day activity center) with no community employment/volunteering—greater than 10 h a week.
	3	Sheltered vocational setting—total activities 10 h a week or less
	2	Volunteering with no other activities or postsecondary <i>non-degree seeking</i> education with no other activities
Least independent	1	No vocational/educational activities

Taylor & Mailick Seltzer, *JADD*, 2012



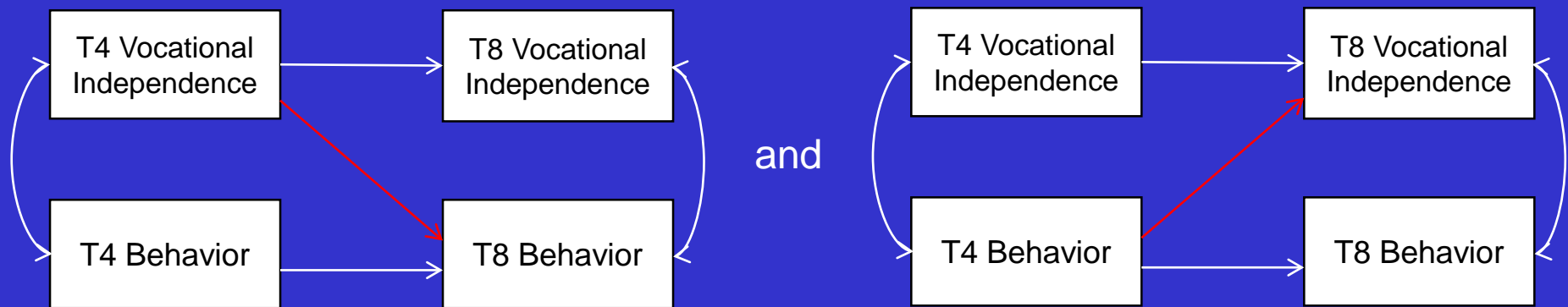
# Effect of Vocational Activities on Behavioral Development

- Among adults without disabilities, competency in work is one of the strongest predictors of psychological well-being (stronger than financial autonomy, romantic/peer relationships) and losing a job is one of the greatest risk factors for personal and familial dysfunction.
- For adults with autism, does the level of engagement and independence in vocational activities lead to change in behavior?



# Vocational Independence and Behavioral Development

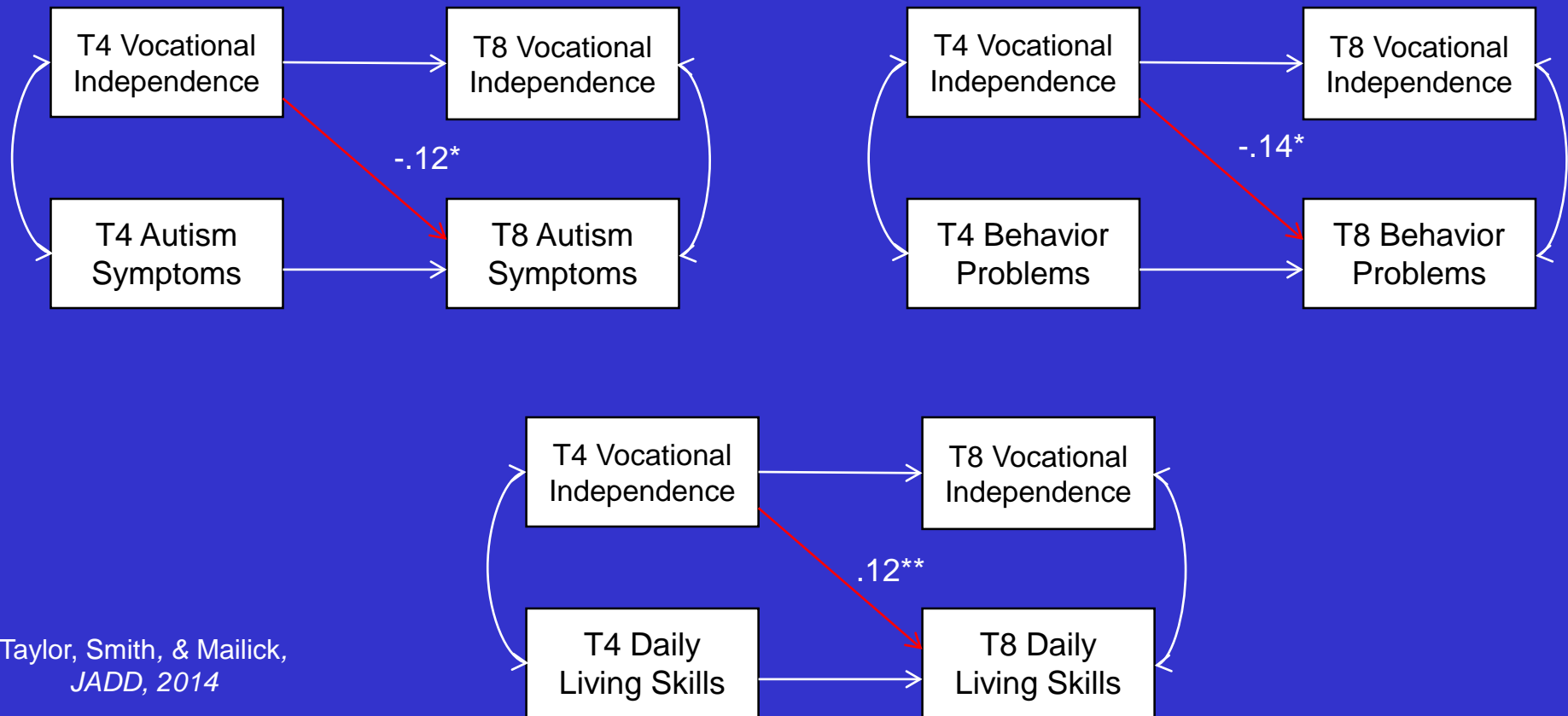
- Sub-sample who had exited high school at Time 4 (n=153)
- Estimated with cross-lagged models



Taylor, Smith, & Mallick,  
*JADD*, 2014



# Vocational Independence Predicts Significant Behavioral Change over 5.5 Years

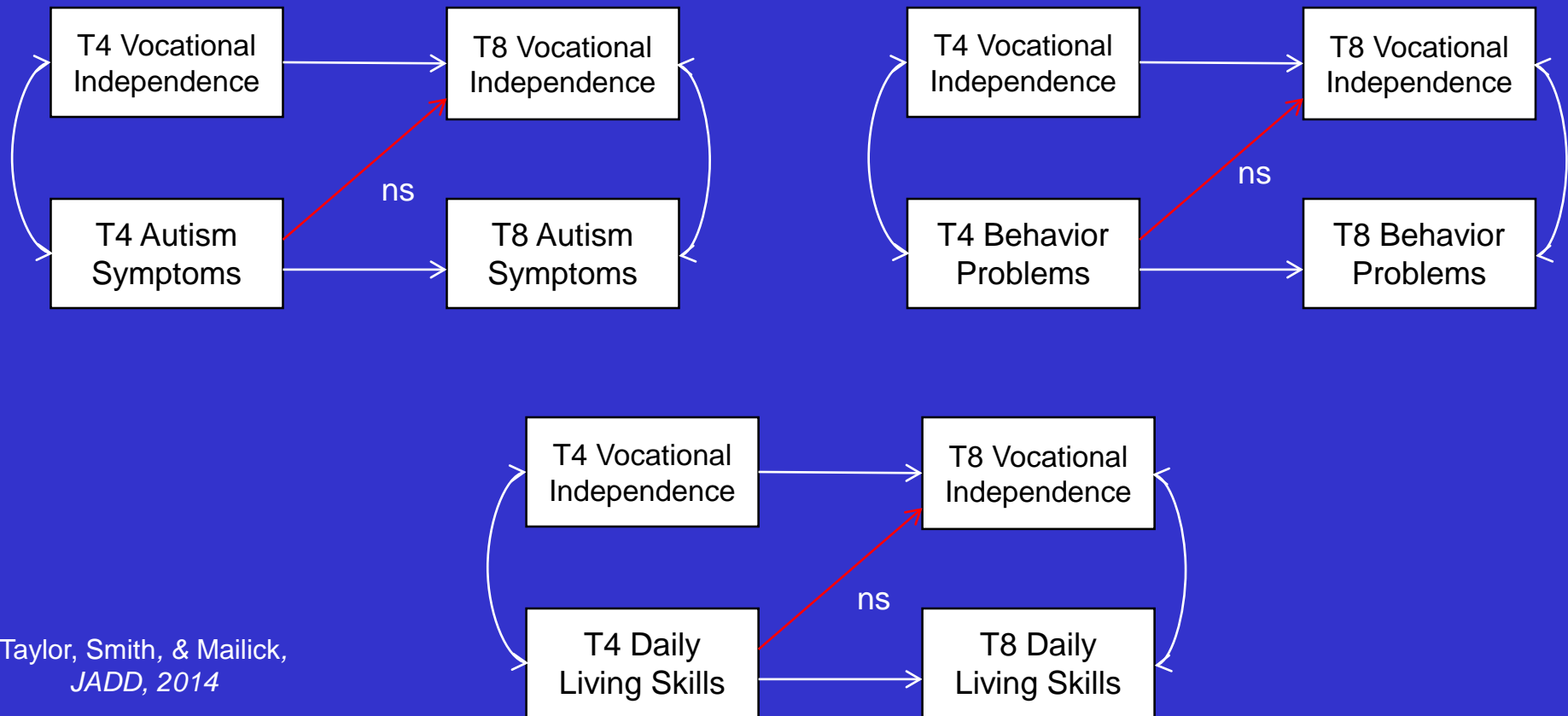


Taylor, Smith, & Mailick,  
*JADD*, 2014





# Behavioral Level Does Not Predict Change in Vocational Independence over 5.5 Years



Taylor, Smith, & Mailick,  
*JADD*, 2014



# Impact of Employment

- Direction of effects: from vocational engagement to behavior.
- The reverse pattern was not significant.
- Working appears to have significant benefit for autism symptoms, behavioral self-regulation, and self-sufficiency – work is an important influence on independent functioning and well-being for adults with autism.



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## THANK YOU!!

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