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**Abstract**

Comparative studies describing the transition from higher education to work have often simplified the complex transition processes involved. In this paper we extend previous research by taking into account several steps that comprise labor market entry, e.g., recurrent education leading to more than one instance of labor market entry. By comparing Germany and the United States we also examine how the tertiary education systems influence these transitions via the mode of stratification (parallel tracks in Germany vs. consecutive tracks in the US), the coordination mechanism (state-controlled vs. market-based) and the degree of standardization in educational programs. In our empirical analyses using large-scale longitudinal survey data we find that transitions in the US are less standardized and regulated than in Germany. Furthermore, differences between students from lower- and higher-tier institutions are less marked than expected, both within and between the two countries. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Jacob, Marita, E-Mail: marita.jacob@sowi.uni-mannheim.de