In the area of educational research so called `skills' are increasingly becoming a subject of major interest. Generally, skills are a concept for the measurement of ability that is needed in real life. The importance of noncognitive skills in educational and career outcomes has been stressed in many studies; however, it has rarely been shown empirically. To be `book smart' often isn't enough to be successful in modern educational and work contexts. It is also necessary to be well adapted to environmental and social needs and to have control over one's own cognitive resources.

In this paper I want to discuss different definitions and measurements of noncognitive skills. The aim is to answer the question what noncognitive skills are and to explore their influence on educational and career attainment over different stages of the life course. A special focus lies hereby on the influence of parental background of the development of noncognitive skills.

The first part of the paper answers the questions of what noncognitive skills are and in how far they influence outcomes over the life course, such as grades and labour market placement. The second part tries to explain the results found in section 1 by elaborating theoretical approaches considering resources and parental care. It questions in how far noncognitive skills are given from the parents to their children and if there is an influence by educational styles on this relationship.

For the empirical analysis the Youth questionnaire of the GSOEP is used in combination with parental information and follow-up information of the youths of the original panel study.