

GenCyber

Student Interest

The end goal of GenCyber student camps is increasing interest in cybersecurity and cybersecurity careers. What is Interest?

Interest is:

1) a critical motivational variable and has been found to influence:

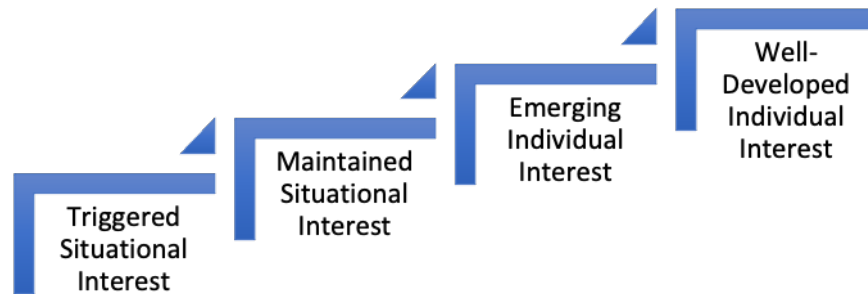
- Attention - what people pay attention to, when and for how long.
- Levels of learning and achievement.
- Effort.
- Goals.

2) a psychological state that occurs during the interactions between persons and their objects of interest. Sometimes the environment stimulates the interest. In the case of GenCyber, the intent is for the camp to stimulate and further cybersecurity interest. When people experience interest, their actions acquire an intrinsic quality; they are driven by enjoyment, and interest can develop into a more prolonged psychological state, where interest functions as a predisposition to reengage in learning/doing something.

3) Interest is partly affective (caring/valuing) and partly cognitive (knowing/doing). People become more interested in things they care about. And people become more interested in things that they can DO something about with their knowledge. Both aspects are necessary and they interact. Caring about something but not having the knowledge to do something about it diminishes interest. Likewise, knowing and being able to do something that one does not care about also diminishes interest.

The key question for proposals to address is how will the camp create a psychological state of interest? How will the curriculum provided in the camp relate to what the students who attend camp care about? How will the curriculum provided in camp give students knowledge and skills to do something about what they care about in cybersecurity?

The students who come to camp will enter camp with varying incoming interest levels in cybersecurity. The four-phase model (Hidi and Renninger, 2006) below is helpful in thinking about students incoming interest.



Some students come to GenCyber camp with no prior cybersecurity interest. Because they know little to nothing about cybersecurity, they do not know if they care about it, let alone what they can do about it. For these students, the job of the GenCyber camp is to spark their interest affectively and cognitively. While other students come to camp already interested “somewhat” in cybersecurity. For these students, the job of the GenCyber camp is to maintain/hold their interest. In both cases, camp is the situation where interest occurs/does not occur.

Other students come to GenCyber having had several other cybersecurity learning experiences that have resulted in cybersecurity interest. These students have elected to come to GenCyber because they are already interested in cybersecurity. For these students, the job of the GenCyber camp is to further their individual interests, which might be varied. For example, a student with incoming cybersecurity interest might already know they are interested in network security, but not in digital forensics. Or another student might come interested in software security, but not yet sure if they are interested in cryptography. For these students, the job of a GenCyber camp is to inventory these students’ existing interest and further it through exploration, interaction and challenge.

The key question for proposals to address is how will your camp serve the interest levels of the students who come to your camp? Who are the target learners for your camp? Do you expect them to come in with no existing interest in cybersecurity or do you expect some of them will have preexisting interest in cybersecurity? What are the implications of that for how you plan your camp? How will you uncover what is relevant to your target learners so that you can connect cybersecurity to their interests and lives?