

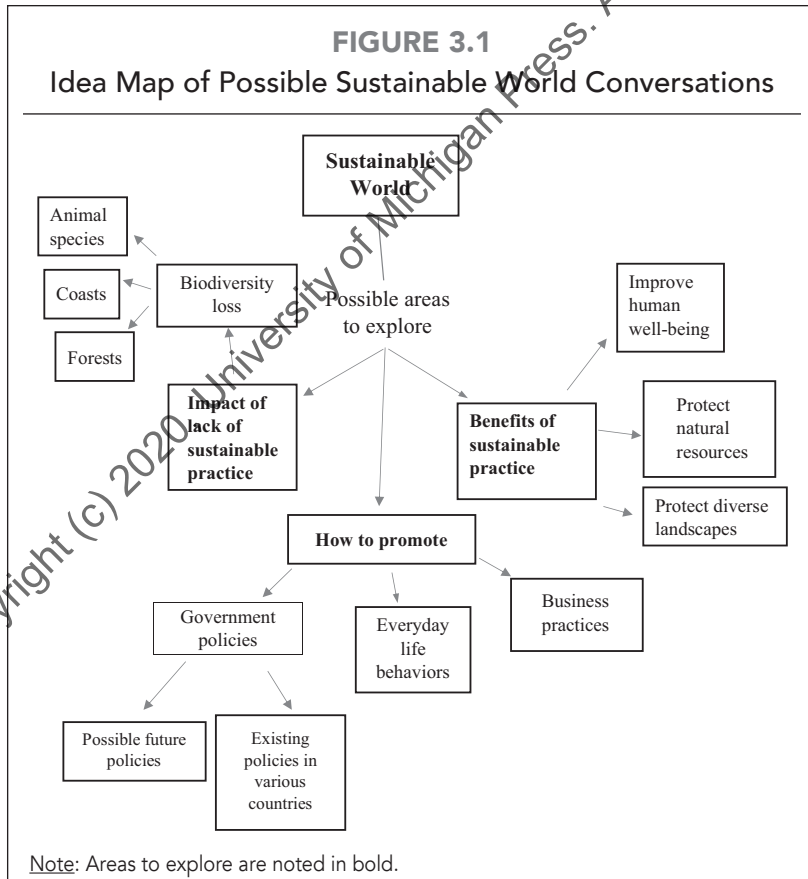
## LESSON 3

# Scholarship as Conversation 1: Identifying Possible Directions for the Conversation

Finding the key words on your topic (Lesson 2) is crucial for determining the scope of your research. Lesson 3 addresses developing an understanding of the key words on your topic and their relationships to one another. This allows you to move forward in your exploration of a topic because it helps you to **identify possible conversations** around the topic, which helps in the search for what other people have said about it. This is important because identifying others' perspectives will help you clarify your perspective for your project. The information from experts will act as support for your research so that what you say becomes part of the larger conversation.

## Idea Maps as Tools to Identify Research Focus

One way to identify how broad or narrow key words/ideas are in relation to one another and what relationships may exist among them is to use **idea maps**. Examples of relationships are *process*, *comparing/contrasting*, or *causes/effect*. By identifying relationships visually, you will have a better idea of which area you might want to focus on as you continue your research. Figure 3.1 shows an idea map for the Sustainable World conversation started in Lesson 2. It uses ideas from Table 2.1 and the list on page 24.



### Task 3.1

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#### Creating an Idea Map

1. On a separate sheet of paper, draw an idea map that shows the key words that you feel you would like to focus on and their relationships to one another.

#### What to Do with Idea Maps

A visual representation can be a guide to help you notice relationships or gaps. It can help you choose which area of the map you would like to focus on—where will you enter the conversation?

Make a list of questions to help you focus. Gaps in the idea map or areas of imbalance (too much in some areas and not enough in others) also help with focus and provide a direction for future research. Gaps and imbalances may be investigated through questions:

- I need to decide which area of the map I want to focus on: impacts? benefits? how to promote? something else? (In which direction do I want to go?)
- Am I interested in business practices? government policies? (In which direction do I want to go with “how to promote”?)
- Do I want to focus on one impact and look in depth at the process by which it occurs? Or do I want to discuss more than one? (Gap: What are impacts other than “biodiversity loss”?)
- Where do costs fit in? (Gap: costs)
- Do I want to look at how costs impact whether policies are made? how costs determine whether businesses implement sustainable practices? (Gap: What is the relationship between costs and policies or costs and implementation?)

- Do I want to look at sustainable practices and how they vary in cost? (Gap?)
- What new key words come to mind after thinking about this and seeing connections?
- Is there something else that I have thought of to add to the map?

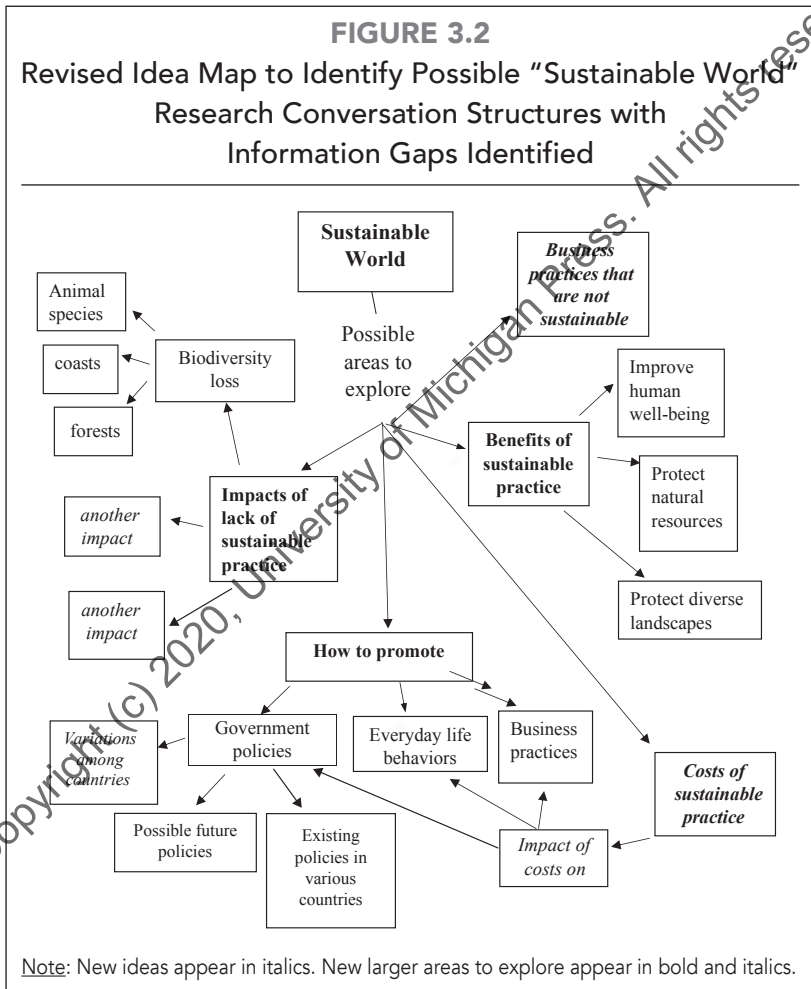
Choose one question or a group of questions to help you refine an area of research.

Using your notes and original idea map, identify where there may be gaps in the conversation. This is especially important if your assignment asks you to pursue a unique line of investigation. You may want to look at the relationships you have found to see where you can add more boxes for balance in an area that is imbalanced. The added boxes are areas that require more research.

### RESEARCH TIP

Keep all drafts of your idea maps so that you have a record of your ideas. You can return to them periodically as your research evolves.

Figure 3.2 is a revised idea map for the Sustainable World project with topics added based on the questions listed and gaps or imbalances in the original idea map. Ideas added based on analysis of Figure 3.1 are shown in italics.



Note: New ideas appear in italics. New larger areas to explore appear in bold and italics.

## Task 3.2

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### Identifying Gaps in Idea Maps

1. Look at what you created in Task 3.1. Write a few questions about ideas you get from the map regarding what you should pursue in your research. Then note where you see information gaps. What is missing?
2. Where is there a possible lack of balance? What could you add? Add to your idea map based on your notes.

## Lesson Connection

Review the information and tasks in this lesson. Write a paragraph that includes:

- *what* you learned in this particular lesson.
- *how* it is significant for you.
- *why* it is important for you to know.

Be sure to consider: *Which* information/activities were most valuable for you and *why*? How might you use this information in the future?