

twelve

However, the main point in the preceding discussion is the most general one: I feel that it is important for social anthropologists to realize that we further our understanding of social change best by using concepts that make the concrete events of change available to observation and systematic description.

There is also a requirement of another order that needs to be observed in such studies. **To** speak about change, one needs to be able to specify the nature of the continuity between the situations discussed under the rubric of change. Change implies a difference of a very particular kind: one that results from an alteration through time and is determined by the constraints of what has been, or continues, in a situation. Let me use a very simple illustration: Imagine a situation where you stand looking into an aquarium, and you observe a fish. **A** moment later you find yourself looking at a crab in the same place where the fish was. **If** you ask yourself how it got claws instead of fins, you are implying a certain kind of continuity: this is the same body, and it has changed its shape. If, on the other hand, you say to yourself that this is the same aquarium, you are specifying another kind of continuity, implying a set of constraints that leads you to formulate other hypotheses about the dynamics of change in this instance.