The book, unfortunately, however, also has some shortcomings. In Chapter 1, Dr de Beer makes a number of statements about apartheid, which, although peripheral to the main aims of the book, should not go unchallenged. Two examples stand out in particular. First, on p. 3 he states that “it is common knowledge that the apartheid policy’s aim was to develop the whites and the blacks in different geographical areas or environments. In practice the development of black employees was thwarted.” Second, on p.4 he seems to almost justify the apartheid government’s Bantu education policy by arguing it was an “over-reaction” to the “verengelsing” Afrikaners had been subjected to after the Anglo-Boer war. He says that “In an attempt to prevent the same mistake being made, the Afrikaner educational system introduced a separate educational system for blacks.” The imputations in these statements, that the intentions of the apartheid policy-makers were essentially innocent and its discriminatory educational practices merely an “over-reaction” to past injustices, do the book no credit. Another shortcoming of the book is the lack of any reference to the Employment Equity Act, which had been published in Bill form by 1998 (the date of first publication of this book). It is recognised that it is difficult to keep books completely current when it comes to changing legislation. However, given that Dr. de Beer defines his “top down affirmative action paradigm” as one in which affirmative action is enforced through legislation (p. 47), this seems like a strange omission. Finally, any discussion which focusses on one race (or gender for that matter) in comparison with another, as this book does, runs the risk of exacerbating perceived differences rather than reducing them. In focussing so strongly in the book on African versus Western values (a controversial issue in itself), Dr. de Beer sometimes seems perilously close to endorsing rather than overcoming stereotypes.

In conclusion, someone looking for an in-depth analysis of the complexities, controversies and ambiguities inherent in the areas of affirmative action and managing diversity may be disappointed with this book. However, the book does provide a useful overview of employee development efforts in South Africa and presents some interesting models and approaches for taking such development efforts further.