

## **The Feel-Good Society: How the “Customer” Metaphor Is Undermining American Education, Religion, Media and Healthcare**

**Jim Hutton, Silberman College of Business, Fairleigh Dickinson University, USA**

Students as *customers*? Patients as *customers*? Religious believers as *customers*? In the past 30 years, the “customer” metaphor has infiltrated virtually every corner of American life. Proponents suggest that schools, doctors, hospitals, governments, media and religious organizations become more accountable when they treat their constituencies as customers. But has that really happened? And what might be the dangers of that strategy?

In “The Feel-Good Society,” Dr. James G. Hutton argues that the customer metaphor is undermining—perhaps even diametrically opposed to—the fundamental purposes of institutions such as churches and schools. In examining the long-term implications, he suggests that the customer metaphor has fundamentally changed the attitudes and behaviors of Americans, and the nature of American institutions. Among other things, he says that it has helped to create a lack of personal responsibility among average Americans and a dearth of leadership in American institutions.

In his conclusion, Hutton recommends solutions to the problem, and discusses how the customerization of American society is a cautionary tale for other nations.