



# **Contested Policy: The Rise and Fall of Federal Bilingual Education in the United States, 1960-2001 (AI Filo: Mexican American Studies Series)**

*Guadalupe San Miguel Jr.*

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Bilingual education is one of the most contentious and misunderstood educational programs in the country. It raises significant questions about this country's national identity, the nature of federalism, power, ethnicity, and pedagogy. In *Contested Policy*, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., studies the origins, evolution, and consequences of federal bilingual education policy from 1960 to 2001, with particular attention to the activist years after 1978, when bilingual policy was heatedly contested. Traditionally, those in favor of bilingual education are language specialists, Mexican American activists, newly enfranchised civil rights advocates, language minorities, intellectuals, teachers, and students. They are ideologically opposed to the assimilationist philosophy in the schools, to the structural exclusion and institutional discrimination of minority groups, and to limited school reform. On the other hand, the opponents of bilingual education, comprised at different points in time of conservative journalists, politicians, federal bureaucrats, Anglo parent groups, school officials, administrators, and special-interest groups (such as U.S. English), favor assimilationism, the structural exclusion and discrimination of ethnic minorities, and limited school reform. In the 1990s a resurgence of opposition to bilingual education succeeded in repealing bilingual legislation with an English-only piece of legislation. San Miguel deftly provides a history of these clashing groups and how they impacted bilingual educational policy over the years. Rounding out this history is an extensive, annotated bibliography on federal bilingual policy that can be used to enhance further study.

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