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DISCOURSES OF POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY:  
INTERSECTIONS AND SEPARATIONS

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Abbreviations used:

ABC - Australian Broadcasting Corporation

BBC - British Broadcasting Corporation

## SUMMARY

The thesis establishes a particular concept of discourse in order to analyse populism as a discourse privileging the category 'the people' as a unified essence. This approach is distinguished from other accounts of populism, in a survey of the field.

The thesis then outlines the historical conditions of possibility for populist discourses, tracing the varied deployments of the term 'the people', and challenges populist accounts of its status. The conflation of populism and of dominant notions of democracy is noted. To question the adequacy of centring explanations of politics, or power relations, on the category of 'the people', the historical emergence and implications of a different category, that of 'population', is discussed.

Examples of various forms of populist discourse are considered in an analysis of the twentieth-century phenomenon of opinion polls, and as contributors to the figure of 'the public' in public opinion. An argument is made as to the significance of cultural practices in shaping available political literacies, and a range of print media and televisual texts described and analysed as contributing to current populist forms of understanding and organizing politics.

Finally, and drawing on earlier observations as to the relations between the two political forms, the thesis argues the necessity and the possibility of distinguishing populism and democracy. Recent reconsiderations of the concept of democracy and its dependence on a popular sovereignty are used to exit from a disabling populist framework.