One of the historical precedents of the Morales presidency is the installation of a largely indigenous cabinet. Morales also moved swiftly to begin to reverse Bolivia’s legacy of neoliberalism. He repealed the infamous law 21060, which dates from 1985 and ushered in the privatization of Bolivia’s public sector economy. He “nationalized” the country’s hydrocarbon industry, including the hemisphere’s second largest natural gas reserves. He also rejected the “zero coca” policy of the US-dictated War on Drugs, instead promoting the expansion of a legal market. But, most importantly, Morales and his MAS party have worked toward a full-blown constitutional referendum—perhaps the most repeated and important demand of the country’s indigenous and social movements throughout the at times violent clashes of the last six years. Morales’s legacy is largely tied to the success of this referendum.

If, however, Morales has successfully ridden a wave of popular enthusiasm throughout 2006, nine months into his administration difficult waters are on the horizon. The US has continued to view Morales as part of a leftist cabal led by Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez, and has not embraced his administration. Morales’s government has yet to figure out how to diffuse continued tensions in Bolivia’s coca-growing regions without suffering a loss of legitimacy. Embarrassingly, five months after soldiers were sent to occupy Bolivia’s gas fields and the new gas plan was put into place, the government has yet to bring on board transnational partners like Brazil’s Petrobras, and had to put its plans on hold because of lack of funds. Ambitious agrarian reform measures, too, remain in limbo.

Even more importantly, despite the MAS having won an impressive 55% majority in the July 2 vote for delegates to the constitutional assembly, and since its formal inauguration on August 6, the referendum process has sputtered, frustrated by frequent procedural debates and hold-ups. An opposition to the Morales government has begun to take shape in the contest over the referendum process, led by four departments—Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando and Beni—interested in limiting the process, led by four departments—Santa Cruz, Tarija, Pando and Beni—interested in limiting the extent of constitutional change. Called the Media Luna, these departments are pursuing greater social divides and proving capable of altering the course of constitutional reform—is Morales’s greatest challenge.

Please send any comments, suggestions, ideas, including photos for future columns to Hortensia Caballero-Arias at hcaballe@ivic.ve or at Centro de Antropología, IVIC, Carrera Panamericana Km 11, Caracas 1020-A, Apartado Postal 21827, Venezuela.
what the price of gas will be at the beginning of November, there is no doubt from either the liberals or the conservatives that language will play a major role—perhaps the pivotal role—in the election's outcome. That is, at least according to two polar opposite pundit-consultant-advisor-gurus, Frank Luntz and George Lakoff.

Frank Luntz is a pollster and self-proclaimed “communications professional” who heads a number of consultancies that have been enthusiastically utilized by the current Republican administration. The Amazon blurb from his new book due out in January—Words That Work: It’s Not What You Say, It’s What People Hear claims that “the tactical use of words and phrases affects what we buy, who we vote for, and even what we believe in.” In a series of memos and position papers he has adroitly guided government officials (and even their spouses) to never talk about “estate taxes” (rather than “death taxes”) or the “privatization” of social security (which are really just “personal accounts”). Unabashedly, in April, 2005, Luntz even went on The Daily Show to demonstrate how it’s done: “drilling for oil” is “responsible exploration for energy,” “logging” promotes “healthy forests” and “manipulation” is “exploration and education.”

But what has most irked liberals is not just the clever and repeated use of euphemisms and Orwellian speech. What is more insidious is the so-called “Luntz GOP Playbook,” a 100-plus page Republican message-handbook which outlines their linguistic strategy for winning in 2006 (www.politicalstrategy.org/archieves/001185.php). There, Republicans are shown how to spin issues in subtle ways to influence and affect American peoples’ perceptions. For example, because these days actually “job insecurity is warranted” (section 3, p 1) the war on terror must always be inextricably verbally linked to discourse about the economy.

George Lakoff, professor of linguistics and cognitive science at Berkeley, has recently written several similar guides as well: Don’t Think of an Elephant! (2004), Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision: A Progressive’s Handbook (2006), and most recently, Whose Freedom?: The Battle Over America’s Most Important Idea (2006). In each of these books he argues that conservatives have, over the course of several decades, artfully defined virtually every issue in the public arena. In short, they have co-opted language for their own purposes. Language, Lakoff argues, is always framed in a particular conceptual and metaphorical context. For example, if you have something called a “revolt,” that implies several things: a population that is oppressed, a group of people trying to overthrow this oppression, and the moral high ground that naturally goes to both UNICEF and CARE on female genital cutting abandonment projects in Sudan. She authored The Female Circumcision Controversy (2001) and a recent article on sexuality issues in Medical Anthropology Quarterly (March 2006). She looks forward to compiling a historical perspective on the SMA and helping to shape its future.

Alan Harwood writes: “After completing my doctorate, I wanted to know if anything I’d learned in 25 years of formal education had any use in the world. I therefore joined the research team of a primary health care program. This launched me as a ‘medical anthropologist,’ though I often resist that designation. I therefore joined the research team of a primary health care program. This launched me as a ‘medical anthropologist,’ though I often resist that designation. In retirement I’ve been investigating the social history of the development of anthropology as an academic discipline in Britain. This quest has often led me away from the intellectual luminaries we read as students to more recent, and more often neglected, people who were politically important in this development.”

Lenore Manderson is professor at Monash University and holds an inaugural Australia Research Council Federation Fellowship, under which she is conducting research on chronic illness, disability, social relationships and well-being in Australia and Southeast Asia. The Federation Fellowship program comprises a series of related and complementary projects. It aims to contribute substantially to understanding how, in different cultural, social and economic settings and under different, more im-