Spanish stops are highly variable in syllable final position. Their phonetic realizations range from full stops to complete deletion. For example, for *aceptar* /ˈa cep tár/ ‘accept’, possible realizations are [aceptár], [acebtár] [aceβtár] and [acetár]. Other possible realizations across many Spanish dialects include the backing of post-nuclear obstruents. It is not uncommon for word-medial syllable-final consonants to be articulated as [k], such that *aceptar* is realized as [acektár]. Studies on Spanish coda obstruent deletion have focused on fricatives, especially /s/, and liquids, namely /l/ and /ɾ/ (Lipski, 2011). Syllable-final stops have not received as much attention. Lipski (2011: 79) mentions that in informal speech, most Spanish dialects delete voiceless coda stops, however the author does not provide data. Quantitative studies on Spanish syllable coda stops show that deletion is more common than velarization (González & Pereda, 1998; Antón 1998). Velarization has received more attention. Several researchers have attempted explanations to account for the labial>velar substitution (González, 1991; Guitart, 1981; Díaz-Campos, 1999). Recent work analyzing velarization of Spanish labial coda stops by Brown (2006) indicates that syllable-final, word-medial, velar stops have higher token and type frequency than labial stops. The schema […]CVELAR$C$ and not […]CLABIAL$C$ emerges as stronger and more productive, promoting the labial>velar substitution. The present study builds on the findings on elision (González & Pereda 1998; Antón 1998) and velarization (Brown 2006) to investigate sociolinguistic distribution of elision and velarization, as well the role of frequency in explaining variation.

Speech from thirty-six speakers was analyzed from the corpus *Estudio Sociolinguístico del Habla de Caracas* (1987) with equal representation of: socioeconomic levels (upper, middle and working class), age (14-29, 30-45 and 61 and older), and sex (male and female). The analysis takes into consideration retention, deletion, and velarization of syllable-final /p b t d k g/. Four independent variables were examined: 1. Socioeconomic class; 2. Age; 3; Gender; and 4. Lexical frequency. This combination of factors contributes to the overall understanding the elision and velarization of coda stops.

The findings of the present study confirm that deletion is more frequent than velarization. In a sample of 945 tokens, 32% were cases of deletion, whereas 3% were tokens of velarization. These results challenge long held assumptions of velarization as a widespread phenomenon in Venezuelan Spanish (González, 1991; Díaz-Campos, 1999). The results also show that these phenomena have different sociolinguistic distribution. While the younger generation, the working class and men favor deletion, speakers in the 30-45 group and the middle class favor velarization. This suggests deletion as the stigmatized variant and velarization as strategy for avoiding stigmatization in speech. Frequency was only significant for deletion. This suggests that velarization does not follow a pattern of lexical diffusion, while deletion does. The frequency of the […]CVELAR$C$ schema accounts for the direction of the substitution. Regarding the analysis of sociolinguistic factors, the results suggest velarization as hypercorrection. If the upper class favors retention, and the velar stop is more common in that domain, the middle class extends its use to avoid the stigmatized variant, elision.