

ABSTRACT

THESIS: An Exploratory Study on the Vocation Discernment of Women in a Latin American Religious Order

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This ethnographic case study explored the vocation discernment process for Latina women who have entered a religious order. The researcher spent three months participating in and observing the daily lives of religious sisters and conducted interviews. The eight religious sisters interviewed for the study were predominately of Mexican and Central America descent. Similar to Lester's (2005) findings, sisters describe persistent feelings of *inquietud* before entering the religious life, and sought fulfillment through religious means. Participants often feel joy and admiration when they met a religious sister for the first time. Participants recount a religious or sensory experience which provided clarity to her decision. The participants indicate a sense of urgency to enter the religious life as soon as possible. The results are compared with other studies on religious life and vocation discernment through a sociological and psychosocial perspective.