

Here are two stories which illustrate this. Alone in the Dominican Republic I was sometimes considered odd or strange in the Dominican Republic in terms of my being used to having private space. For example, there would be times when I would want to sit down by myself in my own room and just read a book. And anytime I was reading a book, my Dominican neighbours always assumed I was studying. It was completely impossible for them that anyone would choose to sit alone, all by themselves, and read for pleasure. Often they would stop by with some food to 'help me study'. This would inevitably lead to long conversations. From the Dominican point of view, this was a gesture of hospitality. And Dominicans place a great value on hospitality. Another example of my being considered 'odd' was the fact that I lived alone and that, at times, I wanted to be by myself. It was hard for my Dominican neighbours to understand this. Very few, if any, people live by themselves in the Dominican Republic. Everyone has a family or is connected to a family or lives with a family or an extended family. If I wanted to be alone, they would think I was sick and send someone over to stay with me. If I wanted to be alone much of the time, they would think I was rude or ignoring them, and their feelings would be hurt.