



## Cross-Cultural Transitions: Expatriate Entry and Reentry

*If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.*

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Global assignments have become an increasingly important, if not essential, part of managers' careers and a source of competitive advantage for global firms (10;14;52;73). However, this has not always been the case. Historically, companies have sent managers to live and work abroad for many reasons, depending primarily on the level of globalization of their industry and the firm's specific business strategy (1;7;19;24;36;54;55;64). As shown in Table 8-1, domestic firms, of course, have no business need to send anyone abroad. Multidomestic firms, by contrast, send people abroad to transfer technology, and, more important from the perspective of the firm, to maintain control over highly autonomous operations in countries around the world. Multidomestic firms generally select home-country nationals—people who are known and trusted at headquarters—and send them abroad as *expatriates* to get a particular job done. Because the headquarters of multidomestic firms often (although generally erroneously) view international operations as simply replicating what has already been achieved at home, they rarely choose high-potential or top performers for expatriate assignments; rather they settle for average performers. When expatriates from multidomestic firms return home, they often find no job waiting for them, little value