

## **A herstory of Public Relations:**

### **Teresa Dorn, from Scott Cutlip to Burson-Marsteller Europe (1974-1995)**

#### *Abstract*

This research concentrates on Teresa Dorn's contributions to the history/herstory of public relations through the analysis of her first twenty years in the profession, fifteen of which were devoted to making Burson-Marsteller a prominent multinational company in Spain and Europe. The study explores the process of how Burson-Marsteller became one of the top consultancies in a country with a newly established democracy through the report of a life history. This methodology leads to a better understanding of when, why and how the first international consultancy was settled in Spain and succeeded under the guidance of an American female practitioner.

#### *Keywords*

Teresa Dorn, Burson-Marsteller, public relations history, Spain, life history.

#### **Introduction**

"I am not sure there is much to say", wrote Teresa Dorn when she first heard about our interest in writing about her life in public relations (PR). This witty, intelligent and hardworking PR consultant started in the business 40 years ago. She studied under Scott Cutlip, worked for two Spanish PR pioneers and helped Burson-Marsteller (BM) to open its first official delegation in Spain in 1981, when it became the first multinational firm to set up in a country with a fledgling democracy. She was appointed President/CEO of Burson-Marsteller Europe in 1994.

The study will focus on the precedents, establishment and reasons for BM success in a European country with a young democracy through the report of a life history. Other sub-questions will attempt to address a set of related factors: How did BM contribute to the development of the PR profession in Spain? Did the historical and political context influence the development of the profession in BM and Spain? What were Dorn's main contributions to PR in Spain and were due to her personality, habits and *modus operandi*? What obstacles and opportunities did she face? How was gender reflected in the practice?

This article represents the first attempt to research the role of women in Spanish PR profession and history by focusing on a single high-profile practitioner. In addition, it is the first approach to the history of the establishment of multinational PR agencies in Spain. This research contributes to the history of PR in two ways. First, it tries to shed some more light on the influences of political and societal contexts for the development of PR and, therefore furthers a national and international historiography as it may disclose alternative accounts for future developments (L'Etang, 2008; 2015). Secondly, the methodological approach to her biography and life history is unusual in the history of PR as the study seeks to understand the historical significance of this pioneer (Lamme, 2015).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY**

The biographical method has tradition in the study of social sciences that is almost a hundred years old, as it dates at least from 1920 (Pujadas, 1992: 13); however, a justification, or rather, an initial stance is always demanded. The reason for this lies in the very nature of biography. Biography, which began as a historical genre, implies a duality between the positivist scientificism exploited by the 19th-century historians –

biography as an exhaustive accumulation of historical data— and the humanism which began with Romantic individualism and sees biography as a literary tale searching to understand an individual's *raison d'être* and their role in the world (Ortega, 1945: 214; Strozzi, 1995: 175-182).

On the surface, the two positions still seem to be irreconcilable, when the truth is that journalism, literature, and, more recently<sup>1</sup>, history have used the biographical method and made the most of this duality. A great deal of information and data which contribute to understanding historical events can be found in a life story. Biography, in turn, allows for understanding of a person's motivation, decisions and personality, together with their influence and the effects they have had on their surroundings. This reencounter of the two natures of biography promoted a “triumphal return” of the biographical genre in the 80s, when historians such as Ginzburg and Davis introduced “microhistory” by “studying an era, a context, through one individual” (Aurell, 2005: 144). And since the beginning of this century there has been a “biographical turn” in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Caine, 2010: 23), although not everyone agrees on the relevance of biography as a gateway to history (Tosh and Lang, 2006: 119-122).

This reluctance to admit the possibility of accessing history through the biographical method, through its protagonists - recognized or not - goes back a long way. The Structuralists and Marxists considered that the individual figure of a person is irrelevant within history, and therefore does not merit study (Possing, 2014: 27). And in his famous annex, Bourdieu warned that life taken as a story is “one of those common-sense notions that have been smuggled into the world of science” (1997: 74). For him, seeing life as a story means giving it the characteristics of a narrative, that is, the

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<sup>1</sup> Although the so-called narrative about-face in historiography began in the 1970s (Aurell, 2005: 131-146), Ritter, like Ranke, a pioneer of scientificism in history, had already recognized that it is personalities that move history: “universal tendencies alone do not decide the outcome of history, they always require the great personalities to bring them into play” (Ritter, 1986: 19).

sequence of events leading towards an end, a sense, with logical and comprehensible order (Bourdieu, 1997: 76):

Producing a life history, treating life as a story, that is, as the coherent narrative of a significant guided series of events, may mean submitting to a rhetorical illusion, to a common representation of existence, which a whole literary tradition has not abandoned or stopped reinforcing.

From this perspective, the autobiography of a person will always be partially inspired by the desire to explain, to find “both a retrospective and prospective” logic; it will tend to establish intelligible relationships, such as that of the effect with the effective cause, between the consecutive stages (Bourdieu, 1997: 75). This means that the interviewee becomes the ideologue of their own life by selecting the events and noting the causalities, in accordance with the purpose proposed by the interviewer when asking for the story.

Strangely enough, this questioning of the idea of coherence or of a single meaning in an individual life also offers freedom to break the chronology of a life in order to avoid what Balzac called, “the history of fools” (Balzac, 1831: 100):

Before you judge a man you must know the secret of his thoughts, of his sorrows, of his feelings; not to be willing to know more of his life than its material events, is to make it a chronology, the history of fools.

Bourdieu thus admits the idea that the end of life –the end of the story- is not what gives it meaning. In other words, a person’s life is not a linear argument nor can be understood merely through the credits, we can look into different scenes, where we find the protagonist in different roles –worker, spouse, entrepreneur, farmer– and attempt to understand her significance within the scene –in her moment and her setting– while she simultaneously establishes a relation with other scenes, which may be chronologically separate.

Trying to understand the fragmented and multi-faceted life experiences of Dorn is the focus of our research. After establishing a basic chronology of the history of BM in Spain in a historical context, we enter Dorn's life-history, not chronologically, but rather by picking those moments or circumstances from her tale –rejected or corroborated by others– which help to comprehend how her personality, carved out over her lifetime, was fundamental to understand the identity and trajectory of BM in Spain. That is to say, the biographical method permits the retrieval of key concepts, patterns and themes to interpret BM history in Spain.

This article, therefore, uses the biographical method and, more specifically, the life history method, to find why, when and how BM grew and, in the late 1980's, became the most important PR agency in Spain under the guidance of Dorn, its founder and first CEO for BM in Europe in the early 1990s. We will show how Teresa Dorn -her trajectory, character, work ethic- was the decisive factor for the success of BM. At the same time, thanks to her story and the story of other people connected with her and her company, in conjunction with the printed sources of newspapers and official records, we have been able to reconstruct the history of BM in Spain.

A *life history* is taken to mean “the history of a life as told by an individual (*life story*) together with “any other type of information or additional documentation which allows the reconstruction of said biography in the most exhaustive and objective way possible”. This research method allows social researchers to position themselves at the point of convergence between “the subjective testimony of an individual in view of their path in life, of their experiences, of their particular perspective” and “the shaping of a life which is the reflection of an era, of certain social norms and values which are essentially shared with the community in which the subject lives” (Pujadas, 1992: 44).

Behind the apparent suitability of oral interviews for the biographical risk construction of a recent professional life in the PR field, lie two dangers about which L'Etang (2008) already warned. Firstly, oral history, rich in biographical nuances, is extremely useful to explain vital decisions or to explain diverse events; however, it does not guarantee accuracy in the dates or in the order of these events (L'Etang: 2008: 324). Secondly, and specifically in the case of PR pioneers or outstanding PR professionals, it is no surprise that, used as they are to the management of intuition, either consciously or subconsciously they deliver a life history which is more favorable than it should be (Ibid). Therefore, this research has complemented the biographical interview of the protagonist with other interviews with different people who have the common characteristic of having known her well, in addition to contrasting and revising each of the dates obtained in the oral interviews with material from professional and press archives. In short, the historical context has thus provided historical background to fit Dorn into a broader context in her oral history. And secondly, the effort of triangulating interviews with other external sources has allowed us to assess veracity, check errors and place the story within the existing historiography (Shopes, 2006 and 2002).

Twelve people were interviewed, either face-to-face, by telephone or through email, following a semi-structured questionnaire depending on whether the relationship was personal or professional, in order to obtain specific data on Dorn's professional trajectory, her professional contributions, *modus operandi*, personality and her role in the development of the first years of BM in Spain. Two interviews were completed through a-mail, three through face-to-face interviews, and seven by means of recorded telephone conversations. This material was gathered during March, April and early May 2016. The decision on who the interviewees should be (people with whom she had worked who could offer different perspectives) was begun by studying Dorn's

professional career, together with recommendations by Dorn herself –people who she considered to be her mentors or who were exceptional in her professional life– and recommendations by the interviewees themselves following the snowballing technique.

These 12 interviews include the “biographical interview” (divided into two parts with a break between them), along with other shorter, more informal interviews with Teresa Dorn<sup>2</sup>. The biographical interview, as suggested by Pujadas (1992), was intended as an open dialogue with just a few rules, in which the basic role of the interviewer was to “stimulate the subject analyzed to give clear, chronologically precise answers, which will, as clearly and broadly as possible, explain references to third parties, to surroundings and specific places in which the different biographical episodes occur” (1992: 66-67). The biographical-type interviews were held in Hoyos del Espino (Avila), where Dorn currently lives and works. In this way the researchers sought the quiet setting that Pujadas (1992: 65) suggests, with the aim of getting to know her current work and domestic environment, meeting her husband and employees, having access to personal papers -photographs which she showed us and documents which she herself consulted- and seeing her behave in her day-to-day life.

In the months before the interviews and before designing the questionnaires, we carried out documentary research into the history of PR in Spain and the contributions of Teresa Dorn from the moment when she arrived in Spain until she left BM (1974-1995). Documenting her life has not been an easy task, since she has not kept any private correspondence or archives. The methodology for this research has thus combined three approaches. First, a literature review of the history of PR in the United States (where Burson-Marsteller began), Spain and Europe, as well as the history of Spain in the transition to democracy, sets a basic timeline and context. Included in this

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<sup>2</sup> In the total interview tally, the various biographical interviews with Teresa Dorn count as one single interview of the 12 carried out.

literature review are not only memoirs and autobiographies of BM professionals (Leaf, 2012; Burson, 2004) considered primary sources, but also feminist perspectives and vindications for “herstories” that go beyond technical roles (Toth, 1988; Creedon, 1989; Kern-Foxworth, 1989; Toth and Grunig, 1993; Lamme and Russell, 2010; St. John et als, 2015; L’Etang et als, 2016), in addition to books, chapters and papers on biography as a methodology in Social Sciences. Secondly, archival research of the first Spanish PR agency has been used to document Dorn’s arrival in Spain (personal correspondence between 1974 and 1975), news accounts, government documents and unpublished papers. And, thirdly, this documentation was complemented with the aforementioned personal and e-mail interviews of Dorn, and people who have worked alongside her such as: Claude Marshall, Christopher Fisher, Carlos Lareau, Juan Astorqui, Carmen Varela, Lázara Sosa, José Antonio Llorente, Teresa García-Cisneros, Marisa Sánchez and her husband, Francisco Sánchez.

After the transcription of the interviews, we were able to make a chronological reconstruction of Dorn’s studies and her biography. Each of the dates and names obtained were verified in a thorough revision of professional archives and newspaper libraries. Next, the information was analysed in the light of the proposed hypotheses and was later divided (Pujadas, 1992: 69-73) into major subjects: the foundation and development of BM and the Dorn’s biography and character. The presentation of the results is, therefore, different from that of an objectivist or positivist piece of research. In this case what is desired is a “work of textual construction which links the discourse chronologically or thematically” and that this “obligatory (process) of the manipulation of the text should respect the subject’s literal intentions and motivations” (Pujadas, 1992: 79).



In this case, the subject is a woman, and our intention is that her history should contribute to the herstory of PR. As Caine has pointed out (2010: 44-46), biographies of women have proliferated since the 1970s<sup>3</sup> when the feminist movement proposed saving from oblivion the Women's Lib movement fighters and those women who have been ignored by history due to the shadow of their men. Many women's biographies "pay as much attention to the emotional conflicts, the familial relationships and the domestic lives of their subjects as they do to their public work or writing. This stress on the domestic and the private is important in itself, but it was also a way of exploring the significance of gender" (Ibid: 45). Here, however, in spite of dedicating part of the research to finding whether there were added difficulties in her labor field because she was a woman, we have deliberately attempted that the emotional area should not be more emphasized than it would be in the case of the life history of a man. Not only because we did not wish this to be a gender biography, but to be coherent, as we shall see, with Dorn's character and outlook on the world.

The research follows Lamme's (2015) argument for more attention to biography as a means to understanding who the pioneers were and what influenced them as a way of presenting "our critical appraisals of their historical significance and that of their contributions" (Lamme, 2015: 49). Teresa Dorn founded BM in Spain, and like any foundational story, the biography of the pioneer marks the course of history.

## **TERESA DORN AS A KEY FACTOR FOR BURSON-MARSTELLER'S**

### **INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION AND BUSINESS SUCCESS**

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<sup>3</sup> Though under-researched, there are outstanding precedents before this date. Apart from the well-known biography of Florence Nightingale (1918) by Lytton Strachey, the lives of other women started to appear in the illustrated Spanish magazines/journals in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the first one being of Concepción Rodríguez in 1835) (Gómez Baceiredo, 2010: 26). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several biographies also addressed women's issue (development, rights and education) in graphic magazines of the 30s (Pérez Álvarez, 2014: 155-159).

## **First, there was Burson-Marsteller**

Founded in 1953, after the merger of the single-person company Harold Burson Public Relations (1946) with Marsteller Gebhardt & Reed (1951)<sup>4</sup> with headquarters in Chicago, Burson-Marsteller began its expansion, first at a national level with the establishment of its head offices in New York, Chicago and Pittsburgh, and later internationally in the 1960s. Its first international and European office was opened in Geneva in 1961 and was managed by Claude Marshall (Burson, 2004: 67-68).

Later there were other European offices: Brussels –Bob Leaf- (1964), London – Bob Leaf- (1968), Stuttgart –Eric Sjogren- (1972), Paris –Chris Fisher (1976), The Hague –Ferry de Bakker (1981), Madrid –Teresa Dorn (1981), Italy –Gigliola Ibba (1982). The launch of the delegations practically implied starting an office from zero, although they always had qualified personnel who knew the country. As Harold Burson explained, “Entering a country by acquiring an existing agency was aberrational behavior for me. My goal was to build a company with a single culture worldwide –a goal most effectively reached by growing organically” (2004: 60).

Robert S. Leaf (born August 9th 1931, New York) arrived in Europe in 1965 with orders to set up the international BM network. Together with him, also outstanding was Claude Marshall (born December 28th, 1932, Heidelberg, Germany), founder of the first international office in Geneva and head of BM Europe since 1964. Regarding the differences between countries encountered as Leaf went around Europe looking for the right people to join BM and deciding how much they should ask the board to invest, he explains in his memoirs: “In each country the clients were different, the media was

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<sup>4</sup> “William A. Marsteller bought out Chicago-based Gebhardt & Brockson in 1951 and, shortly thereafter, the Pittsburgh office of McCarty Co. The new agency was renamed Marsteller, Gebhardt & Reed”, retrieved from <http://adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/marsteller/98763/>.

different and the attitude towards PR was different” (Leaf 2012: 67). However, “one of the major reasons for our growth was the increased acceptance by clients of PR approaches that were then relatively new in Europe. These not only increased sales and profits, but in turn got many companies to increase their use of PR to help improve sales even more” (Ibid: 72).

In entrepreneurial terms, 1979 was a key year for the international expansion of the company, particularly in Spain as we shall now see. That year BM was sold to Young and Rubicam: “We wanted someone who would provide backing and support and help us grow, but who would not try to run our business, leaving that to us” (Ibid: 88). They had two ad agencies in mind: Ogilvy and Mather, and Young & Rubicam, both creative and very staff-oriented. They ultimately selected Y&R. “On the PR side of our business, Young & Rubicam provided financial support and new business leads but never interfered with the management of the company” (Ibid: 88).

What were the keys to BM’s successful international growth and expansion? There is no doubt that the company managed to achieve Harold Burson’s longed-for objective of a global culture, a way of doing things in the same way in different countries (Leaf 2012: 89-90):

While the clients were different in most countries, both in their attitude towards PR and how they saw their needs, one commonality was the growing quality of the local staff throughout Europe as PR became more of an ‘in’ thing. With proper training of staff we could create a homogeneity regardless of the country we were setting up, as the new local teams would be taking the same approach we did on a company-wide basis – and thus implementing what we felt was the best way to fulfil the clients’ needs.

The loyalty and quality of the employees of the international BM network were crucial for it to become the PR company with the highest turnover in the world, ousting its rival, Hill & Knowlton. On being interviewed on reaching this top position in the

world ranking, Harold Burson summarized the keys to the international success of BM: “A core of seasoned top executives, many with over 20 years at BM, and a strong marketing orientation that moves the product off the shelves” (Harold Burson in Jones, 1984: D1). Leaf himself pointed to holding onto talent as the key to the company’s success in those years (Leaf 2012: 90):

The philosophy that Harold Burson instituted at the time he started the company – namely that everyone, regardless of position or size of office, was important – was followed rigorously. I established a European Management Committee consisting of the heads of each office, and camaraderie resulted to the degree that we very rarely lost any of our managers to a competitive company in those early years.

Indeed, in 1984, O’Dwyer’s Directory of Public Relations Firms crowned BM as the leading worldwide PR company, ousting Hill and Knowlton. In 1984, BM already had 42 offices, 1,400 employees all over the world and a net fee income of \$63.8 million, which was a 26% increase in its billing over the previous year (Jones, 1984: D1; Leaf 2012: 95).

Apart from its success in the company management, another key point was that it led the change in PR services forged in the 1980’s. As James H. Dowling, BM’s president and chief operating officer at the time described it (Jones, 1984: D4):

During the 50’s and until the 1960’s, executives came to PR firms and asked, ‘How do I say this?’ But during the confrontation period of the 60’s and 70’s, with the consumerists and environmentalists going after businesses, the questions changed to ‘What do I say?’ In the 80’s, the question has become ‘What do I do?’

In fact, the ever-growing and more specialized menu of services offered by the PR industry in the early 1980’s included: media relations, events, simulation of hostile news conferences and coaching of executives, guidance in pushing and stalling

legislation, strategic counsel, arrangement of corporate meetings and crisis communications (Ibid: D4).

The questions mentioned before, together with the increase in the services offered to the client, fitted in perfectly with the definition of BM's task as Harold Burson defined it in those years (Jones, 1984: D1 and D4):

We are advocates, we are being paid to tell our client's side of the story. We are in the business of changing and molding attitudes (...) We are also a client's conscience and we have to do what is in the public interest (...) Credibility is our brand integrity.

In 1984, the Spanish delegation of BM cannot be said to have contributed to this top world position. The Madrid office, headed by the young American Teresa Dorn, held a discreet but commendable fourth place in the Spanish ranking (it had only been running for five years) ("Economía: Relaciones públicas", 1983: 37). However, it wouldn't be long before it became one of the most profitable branches as can be seen in the genesis and evolution of the company in Spain described in the following summary. Towards the late 1980's, BM Spain was to be found among the top operations in the World in terms of growth and profit for the head office, and the profits it made were spent on covering losses in other international delegations (Llorente, 2015: 59-60).

### **Then, there was Teresa Dorn... and Spain**

Teresa Dorn literally landed in Spain on August 30, 1974<sup>5</sup> on a charter flight she arranged through the *Instituto de Cultura Hispánica*<sup>6</sup>. At the beginning of the summer,

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<sup>5</sup> Personal letter from Teresa Dorn to Joaquín Maestre. Cfr. Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra (AGUN) / Fondo Joaquín Maestre 144 / Box 431 / Folder 1.

<sup>6</sup> The *Instituto de Cultura Hispánica* was set up in December 1945, during a time when Spain was suffering from international isolation. Its objective was to promote relations between Hispano-America and Spain. It had earlier been called the *Consejo de la Hispanidad* (1940), which had, as one of its priorities, the awarding of scholarships in order to strengthen the cultural, educational and scientific cooperation links with members of the Latin-American community. In the following years, the *Consejo de la Hispanidad* was replaced by various

the young American, with a B.A. in Journalism from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, began to send letters from the US to Spain attempting to find work in the communications field. She was recommended by one of her professors, Scott M. Cutlip. That summer, Spain was unwittingly in the final stage of the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, who had governed the country since the end of the Civil War in 1939 after a coup d'état. The exterior vulnerability of an authoritarian regime, the transformation of Spain's economy and many social changes made the political situation untenable in a country that would begin its transition to democracy in November 1975, after the death of the autocrat (Powell, 2001).

Why did a young American woman decide to move to a country ruled by a dictator? How did she manage to break through professionally in Spain at the age of 23 and win enough confidence at BM to open a branch office in Spain? Dorn had always been a brilliant, intelligent student with great intellectual curiosity who adored challenges and travel. At 16, while at high school, she went on a 4-month exchange visit to the Philippines. Although no-one in her family had attended college and there was “no motivation” in her social setting, her academic excellence led her to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. There she studied for a B.A. in Journalism with scholarships and loans and began an advanced program, a pilot program for students with a high IQ, in small classes, which included a high level of humanistic learning (Greek and Latin studies) (Personal interview with Dorn, April 12, 2016).

The program covered numerous areas as it was logical that students of this kind should be interested in many things. She liked veterinary studies (“Everyone discouraged me as it was a 7-year course and a woman would not last seven years”),

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institutions for cooperation with Latin America, Africa and Asia, and was finally incorporated in 1988 into the *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (AECID). Cf. <http://www.aecid.es>.

anthropology, social work and journalism (although her professors thought she would be a mathematician). In the first, more general years, she adored genetics, “extemporaneous speaking”, and also studied a great deal of anthropology, psychology and some law (Dorn interview, 2016)<sup>7</sup>.

In the third year of her degree she attended the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (1972-1973), under the University of Wisconsin Junior Year Abroad Program<sup>8</sup>. She would have liked to go to Greece but there were no scholarships and Spain was closer. In Madrid she was living with a family. Although journalism studies were on offer at the Complutense, she did not enter that program, but a specific arts and humanities one for foreign students in the School of Philosophy. She was sorry not to share classes with Spanish students, but the programme was “a gem”: “Carlos Bousoño was my professor and we had art classes in the Prado three times a week” (Dorn interview, 2016). This multidisciplinary learning would, as we shall see, be a key point in her work, in which everyone underlines her great emotional intelligence and, particularly, immense interest in all areas of knowledge.

Perhaps it was here –and in her later involvement in the society of transition, as we shall see– that her ability to be “genuinely and effectively bi-national; for an American surprisingly Spanish” began (Personal interview with Fisher, April 4, 2016), and also the ability to understand Spanish culture and to feel, as Robert Leaf noticed years later “very comfortable in Spain” (Personal interview with Leaf, March 22, 2016). These abilities were a decisive factor for her bosses when it came to leaving BM Spain in her hands, as she herself recognises: “There were advantages to being a foreigner and

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<sup>7</sup> For the sake of brevity, quotes from the biographical interview with Teresa Dorn (April 12<sup>th</sup> 2016) will be attributed as: “(Dorn interview, 2016)”.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. AGUN (Archivo General de la Universidad de Navarra)/144/431/1.

to knowing Spain well. Because a foreigner who did not master this would flounder in the professional world”.

On returning from Madrid she saw that she had enough credits in Journalism and that, on finishing her degree, she needed “to earn money” to pay off her student loan and be independent. She realised that working in journalism would be extremely complicated: “I could only work in the press because I didn’t have the physique for TV or the voice for the radio. But I had already worked a lot in the press [in the high school and college newspapers] because there the degree is eminently practical. When I finished my degree I was fed up with working as a journalist” (Dorn interview, 2016).

She had already studied a PR subject in her first or second year, but in fourth year she decided to add PR to her degree: “I saw that I could enter the world of business and that there were greater possibilities of earning money”. “When I began to study it, it seemed to me that it had a future, that it was very exciting” (Dorn interview, 2016). In addition, this was when the Vietnam War was ending and there were many soldiers in the PR classes. The army became aware that their communications during the war had been very bad and they began to send their mid-ranking officers to communications classes. So she realised that something with a future was happening. One of her professors was Scott Cutlip. He wrote a letter of recommendation for her which helped her to get a job with Maestre in Spain. What she liked about Cutlip is that he made her see that PR was much more than mere media relations. “And this is my passion. Communication must not only be through the media, but for many other audiences. And the way Cutlip showed audiences, and how he explained how you communicate depending on the audience, was what I really liked” (Dorn interview, 2016).

She was advised to do a course on marketing, so she enrolled for a semester in the Business School. “There the students wore collars and ties while we were the protesters



against the Vietnam War. I stuck it out for a week. I couldn't bear to even go into the building. I don't know why I didn't realise that if I was going to work in PR, I would be working in corporations" (Dorn interview, 2016).

For this reason she regrets her lack of preparation in the business world, because she had to learn while working and surround herself with people who mastered the subject. Thus, she began to work in PR for a practical reason and because of intellectual curiosity, not because she had a clear vocation. But she was totally committed to the field, and threw all her intellectual aspirations and all her abilities and intelligence into it because it was a challenge.

#### **Teresa Dorn and Joaquín Maestre (1974-1975).**

Dorn tried her luck sending a letter of introduction with her CV to Joaquín Maestre<sup>9</sup>, a pioneer who had set up a PR consultancy firm in the city of Barcelona in November 1960. By chance, during the summer of 1974 Maestre had been "turning over the idea in his mind of setting up a branch of his company in Madrid"<sup>10</sup>. After Dorn's arrival in Spain, Maestre didn't take long to offer her an opportunity, as she was very well recommended (Personal interview with Joaquín Maestre, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003). However, the contractual relationship which had begun that autumn ended in spring (April 30, 1975). As can be deduced from the agency archive correspondence which some interviews have corroborated, the points against Teresa were the fact that she was a woman, her youth, her nationality and her lack of experience. The search for companies as clients did not turn out as expected. And the work conditions, on commission, did not convince her either. In spite of this failure and the short time period, the experience allowed her to make contact with the PR sector in Madrid.

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<sup>9</sup> Personal letter from Teresa Dorn to Joaquín Maestre, June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1974. Cf. AGUN/144/431/1.

<sup>10</sup> Personal letter from Teresa Dorn to Joaquín Maestre, July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1974. Cf. AGUN/144/431/1.

### **Teresa Dorn and Bernard Jennings (1975-1979).**

Bernard Jennings (1912-1985), also an American, was responsible for giving a second work opportunity to his fellow citizen in Madrid. In fact, during her PR training, in 1975 Teresa joined another of the pioneering agencies in Spain: Jennings Public Relations S.A. (Rodríguez-Salcedo and Buil, 2015: 241). After starting in publicity in New York (1935-40), joining the Marines to fight in the Second World War (1942-46) and then returning to publicity with work in Argentina (1946-1950), Cuba (1950-51) and Peru (1961-1964), Jennings set up Jennings Public Relations S.A. in Madrid on October 8, 1964 (International Public Relations Association, 1972: 51).

Dorn recalls that he was a ‘good person’ but was too secretive about his life (Dorn interview, 2016). Jennings’ Spanish was not very good and he relied on a partner: Joaquín Fontes. Dorn’s potential was still not being used, because, as she herself recognizes, the services offered by Jennings were very limited: “He wanted to keep the agencies small and profitable by doing things with the media with no diversification. He did not trust the political transition” (Dorn interview, 2016). Thanks to him, Dorn learnt about relations with the media, proofreading with his partner Fontes, the organisation of press conferences, and, above all, began to work with Burson-Marsteller, for which Jennings was the Spanish affiliate company. Dorn got their first national client for Jennings: the *Dirección General de la Mujer* [Directorate General of Women] with Carmela García Moreno. Jennings’ other clients were international and most came thanks to Burson-Marsteller: Dow Chemical, Boeing, Rockwell, General Dynamics and General Motors. In those years which saw the political transition of a dictatorial regime to a democracy, the multinational corporations ran into labour conflicts and had to use

the services of Jennings Public Relations when they wanted to publish a press release in Spain.

According to Claude L. Marshall and Harold Burson, BM contracted the services of Jennings on several occasions to cover the needs of international clients: “Companies that were mostly American-based companies, international companies that had businesses across Europe” (Personal interview with Marshall, April 22th, 2016; Burson, 2004: 64). This is how Marshall met Dorn. In this way, Jennings’ company became the initial meeting-point for Dorn and BM. Dorn stayed in Jennings until Easter Week (April) 1979. A slight personal misunderstanding which would be cleared up over the years made her decide to make a change in her professional life and take her chances as a freelance journalist.

The reality is that Teresa Dorn had never forgotten her Humanities studies or her interest in Liberal Arts, so, on leaving, she seized the opportunity to go back to writing. She loved interviews and her role models were Oriana Fallaci and Rosa Montero, prominent female journalists of her times. So, during the spring of 1979, Dorn worked as a freelance journalist and published cultural interviews in the left-wing magazine *La Calle*<sup>11</sup>, like, for example, the final interview given by Truman Capote on his visit to Spain shortly before his death<sup>12</sup>. She also wanted to write a non-fiction book. But, as she admits: “I only lasted three months. My Anglo-Saxon work ethic is too ingrained to allow me to relax without a job” (Dorn interview, 2016). And the job came at BM.

### **A new challenge: Burson-Martsteller Spain, at the right time and place**

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.revistalatinacs.org/a1999bno/23calleA.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> For more information Cf. Dorn, T. (1979). Truman Capote, profeta del nuevo periodismo. *La Calle*, 55, April 10-16, 46-48.

When Teresa left Jennings in April 1979, BM saw the opportunity of doing something on their own in Spain as the Jennings firm had become too small to “service the growing needs of B-M clients” (Burson, 2001: 64). Why Spain? “The answer to “Why Spain?” was simple. We wanted to cover all of the major countries in Europe having started with Switzerland, Belgium and England, and Spain we felt was one of the important ones” (Leaf interview).

As Marshall explains: “Just about when Young and Rubicam –Y&R- absorbed BM, Teresa let them know she was available” (Marshall interview). BM did not take long to decide on Teresa. Bob Leaf, who guided BM expansion and, back then, was chief executive of international, recalls (Leaf interview):

I can’t remember the exact year I first met Teresa but I can remember the first impressions because from the first meeting I wanted to hire her to run Spain for us. She radiated both confidence and intelligence. And I felt she was very comfortable in Spain.

As well as Leaf, Claude Marshall’s intervention and the purchase of BM by Y&R were definitive (Marshall interview):

I remember meeting Teresa in Madrid and said: ‘Teresa, we are going to open an operation on our own in Spain. And you are going to be Ms. Spain for us. We are going to give you something close to 5 cents to do it’. (...) You can’t do it anymore. We opened offices with what I would say zero capital (...). Harold Burson was stingy when opening offices, because he didn’t have the money either. So the first year we went to see our new friends at Y&R advertising agency and they said: ‘You can come in here and pay next to no rent and we’ll give you one desk (...). And they literally gave us one desk, a telephone, a place for Teresa to sit and a secretary to sit next to her. So what Teresa did was remarkable.

These were the conditions in which they began to work that first year in the Y&R offices in Madrid. Dorn recalls that her first job for BM was for a very special client:

General Motors. Teresa organised the press conference for BM which announced that the American automobile giant was finally setting up in Spain, news which the *Diario ABC* published on its front page on June 12, 1979<sup>13</sup>.

However, in spite of the fact that they had been working with Dorn in Spain since the summer of 1979, BM did not make its arrival in Spain official until early 1981. According to the data of the Commercial Registry Office in Madrid, BM began its operations on 2 February 1981 with Dorn as general manager, still from the Y&R offices, with the following objective<sup>14</sup>:

Development of all types of activities within the field of PR, such as the production of system plans for internal relationships in companies, relations with the authorities, financial services, social relations, market studies, public opinion surveys, presentation of services in the field of sales promotion, media relations.

### **Historical and professional context: the Public Relations field in the 1980s in Spain.**

The impact of the worldwide crude oil crisis, the increasing disillusionment of public opinion regarding a democracy which was advancing more slowly than had been expected and the difficulties of the Suarez government in tackling the problems of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. "The first world-class car manufacturer comes to Spain" (1979, 12 June). *ABC*, front page.

<sup>14</sup> Entry in the Commercial Register of Madrid, page 20.206. Moreover, the newspaper *ABC*, on the 18 February 1981, on page 52, published the following advertisement: "PLANNED PUBLIC RELATIONS, S.A. in accordance with Article 86 of the Law of Limited Companies, in agreement with the General Board of Shareholders of the company, a change in the company name has been agreed and it will now be called BURSON-MARSTELLER, S.A.". As it appears in the Commercial Register, BM changed the name of the PR agency which had been created by the Y&R agency in Madrid on the 20 January 1972: Planned Public Relations, founded by Marc Elie de Vos, an American publicist living in Madrid and Ramón Lladó y Fernández Urrutia, a lawyer, whose office was in the Y&R Building at Avda. Generalísimo 55, where Y&R had been operating since September 1966. For this reason, Victor Sempere, Managing Director and President of Y&R towards the end of the 70s, stated: "Y&R set up in Spain at the end of the year 1966, and I believe we were the pioneers in the diversification of specialised companies, such as direct marketing, public relations and promotional marketing (Ferrer Roselló, 1992: 66).

everyday administration plus an attempted coup d'état by the army contributed to the end of the political consensus which had marked the post-constitutional phase (Barrera, 2002: 150-153). The strengthening of the left-wing parties in the early 1980s resulted in the first wholly socialist government in the history of Spain, between 1982 and 1996 (Ibid: 150).

The historical circumstances of the 80s fostered the evolution and growth of the PR sector (Gutiérrez y Rodríguez, 2009; Rodríguez-Salcedo y Xifra, 2015; Rodríguez-Salcedo y Buil, 2015). After almost 40 years of dictatorship (1939-1975), the fledgling Spanish democracy, the establishment of the freedom of information and expression enacted in the 1978 Constitution, the deregulation of the media beginning in the mid-80s, Spain's membership of NATO in 1982 and of the European Economic Community in 1986 and, finally, the economic growth of Spain resulted in new communication needs for institutions and companies, in addition to the opening of the country to a new flow of migrants. As José Antonio Llorente, founder of Llorente y Cuenca, who began his PR career in BM under the guidance of Teresa Dorn, explains, "Public opinion became a key factor of great transcendence for the sectors that had to make both political and economic and social decisions" (Llorente, 2015: 42).

In the 1980s, two facts are of importance in the Spanish PR field (Gutiérrez y Rodríguez, 2009: 23; Rodríguez-Salcedo y Xifra, 2015): the creation of communication departments and public and private institutions which had begun with the political transition at the end of the previous decade, and the growth of the consultancy sector which was consolidated towards the end of the decade (Personal interview with Dorn, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006). The acknowledgement of the strategic value of PR came in the 1990s together with the arrival of foreign capital in the consultancies.

In fact, according to the journals of the sector, Spanish companies were not outstanding in their ability to relate with their publics, to communicate their reality, to be transparent until the 1990s (Alternativas de Marketing: 1991: 3). From the end of the dictatorship until the mid-90s (the time period covered by this article), two turning points stand out in the PR area in Spain. On the one hand, the arrival of democracy produced a social change in the 80s, more for circumstantial reasons than because of the company's convictions. On the other hand, the 90s brought a structural change which resulted in enormous growth in the PR industry, far more than that of other industries in the world of communications (Álvarez, 1991: 60): advertisers began to appreciate the organisation of their relations with their clients, the power of pressure groups, the possibility of showing an image on a worldwide stage, the prevention of crises, the proof of company responsibility, or, on occasion, simply the mimicry of their competitors (Alternativas de Marketing, 1991).

Between the 80s and 90s, we see the establishment of the first multinational PR companies in Spain, where they flocked in search of new clients on a growth market. What did the international communications consultancies offer to the Spanish sector? Methodology, professionalism, discipline, knowledge and experience (Llorente, 2015: 53). The first to arrive were Hill & Knowlton and Burson-Marsteller in 1981 (Gutierrez y Rodríguez, 2009; Rodríguez-Salcedo y Buil, 2015: 286-87). In the 90's, Ogilvy and Edelman set up new Spanish branches (1991 and 1995, respectively). Other multinationals preferred to buy Spanish agencies and thus become established in our country; this was the case for Weber Shandwick after the purchase of *S.A.E. de PR* in 1990, Ketchum with *S.E.I.S.* in 1992, and Porter Novelli with *Comunicación Empresarial* in 1995 (Rodríguez-Salcedo y Buil, 2015: 286-87).

In short, in the early 90s certain signs of maturity began to appear in the sector. Along with the growth of the volume of business, we see the creation of associations like the *Asociación de Empresas Consultoras en Comunicación* (ADECEC) in January 1991, or that of the communication executives *Dircom* in 1992 (De Uribe-Salazar y Pascual: 116, 121), the growing participation of foreign capital with the presence of multinationals or merger and purchase agreements, and the ever-growing prevalence of clients from large consumer companies, together with an average increase in gross income of 32.7% in 1990 (Alternativas de Marketing, 1991: 6-7).

### **Burson-Marsteller Spain under Teresa Dorn.**

Teresa Dorn rented the first headquarters outside the offices of Y&R at the central Madrid address, calle Zurbano 67, 1º A (19 August 1981)<sup>15</sup>. Among the first employees of BM Spain apart from Teresa, there are names that became well-known in the world of communication in Spain in later years. Although the staff at BM were young and changed frequently, we can confirm the names of some of the employees, in alphabetical order: Daniel Abad, Juan Astorqui, Víctor Ayala, Enrique Beotas, Evelyne Cieslak, Javier Curtichs, Sara Blázquez, Olga Cuenca, Mayte González (Ferrer, 2014; Martín-Barbero, 2011), José Antonio Llorente, Carlos Lareau, María Gil, Sol Nuñez, María José Olmedillas, Teresa Rincón (Dorn's personal secretary, currently Director of Communications for McDonalds Spain), María José Rubio, Lázara Sosa, Carmen Valera and Mar Velarde.

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<sup>15</sup> This would not be the only BM office in Spain, as they later moved to López de Hoyo 8 in Madrid (probably in November 1987), where up to 18 people worked; and to a third office at Basílica 19, 5ª (where they moved in January 1991 after the increase in staff due to the Expo account), and finally, to Avda. de Burgos 21 (where it is thought that the American company has been working in 1994).



Meanwhile, the first socialist government of Spain represented the rise of the new middle-class. The average age of the new ministers was less than 40, and they had to take measures for economic reform due to the crisis, the errors in foreign policy made by the previous governments, against terrorism and the mistrust and challenges presented by the left-wing unions (Barrera, 2002: 177, 199). Llorente rightly alludes to controversy as a democratic symbol of public opinion, as the promoter of new projects and communication challenges which gave work the PR professionals at the time (Llorente, 2015: 52).

In 1983, Burson-Marsteller held the fourth position in the ranking of PR consultancies in Spain by revenue, behind two Spanish agencies and the international company, Hill and Knowlton (“Economía: Relaciones Públicas”, 1983). Two years later, Víctor Ayala moved to Barcelona to manage the new BM branch there. At the end of the 1980s, having won the account for the Universal Exposition of Seville (Expo '92) there were 38 people working for BM in their Madrid and Barcelona offices; in 1990 the number had risen to 49, thus becoming the agency with the highest number of employees in Spain, far more than S.A.E. de RP, which has a staff of 27 (Josephs and Josephs, 1992: 20; Alternativas de Marketing, 1991: 19). In addition, its revenue in Europe had risen by 67% compared to 1988 (“Empresas: Burson Marsteller”, 1989).

***Spain’s leading consultancy, team building and the ‘golden years’.***

In 1990, BM came top of the list of PR agencies, by revenue and employees, “far ahead of the rest” (Alternativas de Marketing, 1991: 6). The Expo 92 account catapulted BM to first place in the agency rankings in Spain (reports available in 1991), with double the income of the second Spanish agency, which at the time was Ulled y Asociados. BM’s market leadership was then “undeniable” (Alternativas de Marketing,

1991: 7). These were the golden years for BM in Spain and a half-dozen professionals made up the BM Spain “dream team” (Dorn interview, 2016). Dorn created a great team. She built a horizontal structure, in which she was the CEO and had account managers in areas which had never before been included in PR. She found talents for the areas where they wanted to be: media relations (Juan Astorqui), corporate and finance communications (Juan Astorqui, José A. Llorente), public affairs (Daniel Abad), crisis communications (José A. Llorente and Sara Blázquez after handling matters for the Expo), Carlos Lareau –bilingual, pragmatic and to the point– and absolutely perfect to deal with multinationals and multicultural marketing communications (Teresa García and Mayte García), health communications (Olga Cuenca, a psychiatrist who was fascinated by communications), and, of course, the chief financial officer who was her right-hand man (Enrique González). The key was not only the fact of having good clients but making strategic decisions as a team: “We weren’t friends, but we danced together very well professionally” (Dorn interview, 2016). Dorn directed BM Spain until it became the second largest market for BM Europe.

She managed this because her life challenge at the time was to increase the status of PR by making BM the best agency. Dorn herself considers that the enterprising, hard-working character which led her to show such determination, together with her love of challenges, stems from her childhood: “Nobody believed that I would go to the University of Madison. Nobody believed that I would sell all the corn from the truck at the roadside. My father said that it couldn’t be done, but I could see that it was the easiest way to do it. I like challenges and BM has offered me all the challenges one could imagine”.

From the very moment she returned to Spain to work with Joaquín Maestre, she found a country which offered her an intellectual and social challenge, and so is she

became totally engaged. “At that time I was very involved in neighbourhood associations, I was very aware of what was happening in Spain. I lived in the centre and it was a wonderful time, a time of great changes, for instance, movements to obtain public parks”.

In the world of work, the challenge was enormous, as Valera acknowledges (Personal interview with Carmen Varela, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016): “Teresa not only brought BM to Spain, but she also formed a team which changed PR in Spain”. She accepted the challenge of starting an agency from zero, and also accepted a profession which, previously, had been based on cordial relations with the media.

According to her co-workers, there is no doubt that “Dorn professionalized PR in Spain” (Personal interview with Carlos Lareau, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016). “Teresa knew what she was doing. She gave me convincing explanations about an activity with an intellectually interesting content. She brought the know-how from America and Europe to Spain. She offered me another kind of personal gratification. Those of us who came at that time were already ‘stuck in our ways’ and we needed professional, intellectual stimulus” (interview with Lareau). Juan Astorqui is of the same opinion (Personal interview with Juan Astorqui, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016): “It was no longer a question of making friends with the journalists, of having lunch with them, but rather a question of handling information”. Carmen Valera agrees (Valera interview): “It was she taught me that there are 360 PR, which is what everyone says nowadays”.

Lareau also recalls that Dorn instituted a “team of rivals” in the “Lincoln style”, “If there was rivalry, it was under control and always had a common objective: collaboration with others for the good of BM” (Lareau interview). As Leaf sums it up (Leaf interview): “She knew how to hire and how to fit within our total organization”. Her faith in team formation even led her to leave her ego to one side: “I have signed up

people who earned more than I did. But I didn't mind, because they suited me" (Dorn interview, 2016).

For Teresa Dorn, that was the best time in her working life. She is indebted to Larry E. Snoddon and Jim Dowling for giving her the opportunity to create the "dream team" which "made BM rise to the level of a consultancy and allowed PR to go from being an art to a science". "We created a multi-market, multidisciplinary work commission in order to construct a methodology: perception management". They had brilliant advisers from different fields reflecting on how to apply the perception management model so that it would be understood and offer tangible results. Dorn "thoroughly enjoyed" working at these meetings or training employees. "I worked with the best group in the world on communication subjects when we were creating the methodology" (Dorn interview, 2016).

This great intellectual challenge is at the basis of her loyalty to BM, a company from which she has never disassociated herself: "I must be quite a loyal person; what's more I have always thought that the BM methodology was the best on the market. I couldn't have learnt more anywhere else". She is also very appreciative of BM's network: resources, persons, experts, cases. "I don't believe that I have created anything new, but I'm very good at adapting ideas. And BM offered great independence. You could do things your way, as long as you reached the minimum objectives" (Ibid.).

Her way of doing things has always been based on her great intelligence, a characteristic that all the BM executives who worked with her emphasize: "She radiated both confidence and intelligence" (Leaf); "She was and is a smart woman (Marshall); "She has charm, humor, intelligence and much greater sensitivity than she is willing to admit" (Fisher). Dorn also admits that she likes being surrounded by intelligent people

(interview, 2016): “I enjoyed sitting down with sociologists, psychologists... For me, that was the best time”.

***Management: learning by doing.***

In order to reach this level of professional success, Teresa Dorn has always shown the highest professional attitude and dedication, and has always demanded the most of people. “I worked every hour of every day”, she admits, because “if you are passionate about a subject, time doesn’t matter. In my professional life I have been very enterprising. I don’t need a boss, I am my own worst boss” (Dorn interview, 2016).

She found it difficult to disconnect because she was involved “in body and soul. I was lucky enough to be able to sleep when I needed it. I could close my office door, lie down on the floor and sleep 20 minutes” (Ibid.). This work ethic also placed a lot of demands on other people. “Teresa was a hard boss. She wanted everything to be perfect. She checked everything; there couldn’t even be a typo. She was familiar with all the programs we carried out. She checked all the bills and orders, the employees expenses, everything; she didn’t miss anything” (Personal interview with Lázara Sosa, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

Chris Fisher, another of the BM executives who had known her from the beginning, sums up her abilities in this way: “She was good at multi-tasking, outstanding at client relations, excellent at team building and getting people focused on the key issues, tough, intolerant, demanding and impatient, good business/money sense, with a well hidden ability to be chillingly, Ivan-the-Terrible ruthless, very dedicated and hard-working. Also realistic, clear-headed, determined, perspicacious, pugnacious, nobody’s fool, well-honed ambition, quick to cut through the bullshit” (Fisher interview).

The foremost point that all the interviewees underline is her strategic business perspective and her capacity to deal with the clients, to understand them and to offer them what they really needed, whether they liked it or not. “Teresa is 100% trustworthy. With Teresa you have what you saw and heard. She had a management skill that was innate. In PR you have to be intelligent enough to prepare and carry out a good program, and then you have to know how to deal with the clients, which is not so easy. External consultancy companies like BM are there to tell the corporations what they don’t want to hear and what the employees in the communications department don’t dare to say. And Teresa did this very well. She would sit down with a client and tell them that what they intended to do wouldn’t work or she would find faults.” (Marshall interview).

This attitude gave her plausibility, according to García, because, in addition, “Teresa has very clear ideas and presents them very well. She is very analytical, very strategic. She always turned everything up a notch” (Personal interview with Teresa García, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016). But this attitude also showed “a character that was sometimes bitter, harsh, not at all sweet”. Astorqui says, “She was the anti-Spanish-style PR expert. She wasn’t agreeable. She was very professional. She didn’t try to sell you *a pig in a poke*, but told you the truth with brutal sincerity” (Astorqui interview).

Regarding her dealings with the employees, Dorn herself –who also admits to being shy- is most critical of her management skills. “Being an executive is often an uncomfortable role, and was difficult to learn”, but she accepted it because it is what she had to do (on being asked what she considered her characteristics as a worker were, she says: “As myself or as an executive?”). She became an executive when she was very young, and in the first few years there was a lot of “Because I say so”, as she was not prepared. “When I was promoted I hadn’t a clue, and learning from one’s mistakes is

not the best way of learning”, she admits. “I was very demanding, had very little empathy, I didn’t care about people’s personal lives. It didn’t matter to me if they were married or single. I didn’t accept mistakes<sup>16</sup>. I suppose I was under a lot of stress and passed it on to everyone else, because I was always exploring new fields in communication that no one else had explored”.

Dorn recalls with amusement that Enrique Beotas said that she was the harshest boss he had ever had. “And this from a guy who had worked for Fraga<sup>17</sup>, which is saying something”.

However, everyone agrees that, in spite of being very direct, she was never “a bad person”. According to Llorente, she was “a trustworthy, open, direct professional, with a great sense of fair play” (Personal interview with José A. Llorente, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016) and Sosa recalls that “She was a very good boss who treated her employees very well” (Sosa interview).

To a great extent, Dorn ascribes her improvement as an executive to the opportunity BM offered her to get training. “In the golden years for BM in the 80s, we got a lot of training in Europe. We called it the ‘Burson University in Brussels’ (...). For a week, 50 or 60 people from all over Europe presented and discussed cases, problems, practical exercises. They had a management program that saved me. Weekend courses, a day or two, with people from outside who gave us executive

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<sup>16</sup> Carmen Valera recalls that in her first week's work she gave Dorn a communications program “about 500 sheets long; because I had no clue and I wanted to do it right; I wanted to impress her”, and that Dorn called her into her office said: “I am usually more diplomatic, but I have to say that this is bullshit”.

<sup>17</sup> Manuel Fraga (1912-2012) was a key Spanish politician that was known for his strong character and (sometimes) stubbornness. He served as minister of Information and Tourism (1962-1969) under Franco’s dictatorship and later as an important political actor in the subsequent transition to democracy. In 1966, after American accidentally dropped a hydrogen bomb near a place called Palomares, he went swimming in the contaminated water with the American amabassador to dispel the fear among the local population and future tourists. “I am not bad-tempered, I just have a strong personality, which is completely different”, Cf. Interview with Manuel Fraga (2008, June 1). *Sur* [South]. Retrieved from <http://www.diariosur.es/20080601/sociedad/manuel-fraga-tengo-genio-20080601.html>.

training in 360 (...). They taught her to use psychological tests to understand how people worked and to adapt the executive styles to individuals. “What I had been doing in practice before, and had been doing disastrously” (Dorn interview, 2016).

However, she did not need to learn these psychological tools to deal with the clients, as everyone agrees that she managed them with great empathy. “Teresa’s great emotional intelligence was outstanding when applied to business. In spite of her harsh character, she was very flexible with ideas and adapted very well to the clients’ needs (Valera interview). And according to Llorente, “She involved people in decision-making because you could say anything to her, you could contradict her. She held up well in debate” (Llorente interview).

She also managed the clients’ emotions creatively: “Jacinto Pellón [director of Expo 92] was the most hard-working man I have ever met in my life. He had four secretaries who couldn’t keep up with him and his diary was full, impossible. If I wanted to talk to him for more than four minutes, if I wanted him to pay attention to me and talk things over with him, I would take him to a hardware store in Madrid. There, he relaxed. And in half an hour with Jacinto Pellón in a hardware store I managed to propose different solutions”.

### ***Clients and recognition.***

Which of the main BM Spain clients made Dorn’s leadership possible and made a professional mark on her? Apart from the first of them, General Motors (1979), it was not long until other important clients arrived, for example, Dow Chemical (who she had already worked with at Jennings Public Relations as it was a BM international client); Kimberly-Clark, for their Salamanca plant when a group of striking employees kidnapped their boss for a few hours (a crisis communication); the German company



Milupa (summer 1981); Laboratorios Abelló, a family-run Spanish pharmaceutical company; Explosivos Río Tinto [Rio Tinto Explosives] (1983), the biggest industrial group in the country which was in an awkward situation due to its corporate restructuring, and had a new communications manager, Ladislao de Arriba Azcona, with whom BM worked to train spokespersons and on crisis communications; Levi-Strauss & Co., the inauguration of a factory in Girona (September 1983); Unilever; Union Carbide; Enpetrol (now Repsol), a crisis communication after the ETA terrorist attack on the Tarragona rack in June 1987; the Dirección General de Protección Civil, for whose director, Pilar Brabo Castells (from the Socialist Government Ministry of the Interior) they produced all kinds of civil protection manuals from scratch; FEIQUE (Federación Empresarial de la Industria Química Española) in 1986; crisis communication plans for Cepsa; the hostile takeover bid that Torras made for the Ebro company in 1987; Grupo Torras; Farmaindustria and KIO (Kuwait Investment Office, which managed the Kuwaiti sovereign funds overseas). These were, in fact, unrepeatable historical moments for PR in Spain, and those who worked for BM at the time were fully aware of how important they were (Llorente, 2015: 58). They helped companies to adapt to the new democratic setting which was sometimes hostile, either because of labour movements and tensions or because of terrorism or economic crisis. Outstanding amongst all these was the account that led BM to reach the top place in the national consultancy PR rankings: Expo 92 in Seville.

After making an agency tender, in July 1988, (Florencio, 1990) Burson-Marsteller Spain secured the account for “Universal Exposition” or “World’s Fair” of Seville (Expo '92). For three and a half years they coordinated the BM administrative work in 12 countries until the closure of the Expo in October 1992. BM had to contract more staff and finally had between 120 and 130 employees. BM asked a versatile Chris Fisher

to move to Seville to assist colleagues in the agency (Burson, 2004: 64). There was a lot of highly controversial work during those years as the account was handled internationally and it was thought that the agency showed little sensitivity towards the local area (Dorn interview); this was reflected in the press at the time. Moreover, it was difficult to produce content for an event which had little to offer except its architecture, and even more so to keep it in the news for two years (Dorn interview).

Dorn's professional worth was reflected in her career in BM after 1992. On 26 January 1994 she became the CEO of Europe BM. Her progress towards that post had begun in 1992, when she took her place on BM's International Board of Directors. A year later (October 1993) she was appointed "vice-chairman" and managing director of BM ("Appointments and Recruitment", 1993). Amongst her roles was in-depth knowledge of the main European branches, so she spent the months of October to December 1993 in Milan. When she was about to go to Frankfurt, there were changes in BM and she was promoted directly to the position of European CEO in January. At times when there was a great deal of work, when she was the CEO of BM Europe, she made appointments in airports so as to see people face-to-face, to look them in the eye: "I went so far as to be in four countries in a single day. Departure from Madrid, airport in Paris, lunch in Frankfurt and back home to London" (Dorn interview, 2016).

These were also tough years for the company, as some European offices had to be closed and budgets had to be tightened. She didn't enjoy the work, as it meant closer relationships with BM New York, leaving behind her European colleagues and the multiculturalism that she liked so much; in short, it meant going back to what she called management and an "old-boys" school of thought with very few women and focusing on finance (Dorn interview). Therefore, when she was asked to dispense with her creative and intellectual talents and to dedicate herself completely to management as the

CEO for Europe, she lost interest. “It meant once again taking up a position I knew nothing about. It implied interacting much more with New York and I didn’t fancy the idea. I loved my European colleagues; I loved multiculturalism, new ideas...” Another challenge was awaiting. On 30 May 1995, she resigned to devote herself to a project that she had been mulling over for two years with her husband, Francisco Sánchez Rico: a rural hotel that they had planned from scratch in Hoyos del Espino (Avila).

### **MANAGER OF HER OWN STORY**

As we stated in the introduction, we have deliberately left the fact that Dorn is a woman until the end, because she herself has never thought that this fact was decisive in her career. Or not at least in the sense that is normally given in the history of women’s lives, as a vindication of its importance or complaint about discrimination. However, it is important to emphasise the role of women in the public area in Spain during the time period covered by this study in order to set in context the fact that Dorn is a woman and to underline her achievements.

So, although Spain was one of the first European countries to give women the right to vote in 1931, during the dictatorship there was a period when women practically disappeared from public life and the political area. The role of women was relegated to house work, motherhood and bringing up children until democracy was reinstated in 1975 (Institut Catalá, 1999: 212). Then women began to participate in politics and join the labour market. In the early years of democracy, the percentage of women employed in 1976 was 28%, and there was no significant increase until 1987, when the figure rose slightly to 31% and to 35% in 1994 (Martín López, 2000:13).

At the time when Dorn began to manage BM, only 3.1% of women held managerial positions, whereas in 1993, when she was appointed to positions of

responsibility in Europe, this figure had increased fourfold in Spain and women held 12 of every hundred executive positions (Institut Catalá, 1999: 212-213). The profile of a woman executive in Spain in the early 90s was as follows: between 30 and 40 years old; university education; speaking at least one (foreign) language; most married women executives worked in private companies, while in the public area most of them were single and in multinational corporations most women executives were separated or divorced; one child or none; their immediate superiors were usually men; they worked in the service industry and commercial sectors but there were very few in sectors like farming and fishing, communications and the financial sector (Sánchez-Apellániz, 1997: 64).

Thus, Dorn was part of the three per cent of women who held executive positions in the early 80s; moreover, it was in the communications sector, she fitted into the 30 to 40-year-old age group, held a university degree, spoke two languages and was married with no children. Together with these more or less statistical traits, we must add that Dorn has a temperament, characteristics, virtues and defects, but not because she is a woman, rather because she is a person. As we have seen, she has built the life she wanted through her decisions and character, and obviously, due to certain circumstances. And it is only in these circumstances (we must not forget that she came to Spain in the 70s) and for a few specific people, that being a woman was a strange or discriminatory trait, however Dorn remembers them as amusing anecdotes, she doesn't see herself as a victim. As Fisher points out with good humour: "It's the Ginger Rogers thing: she had to and could do everything Fred Astaire did but in high heels and backwards. But I also would not paint her career as a triumph of feminism over male chauvinist pigs; she was recognized as good at her job and rose to her level of competence" (Fisher interview).

“I do not want to insist on issues of discrimination against women because I don’t believe it has happened to me, or my attitude didn’t allow it to happen, but there are two or three examples which show prejudice” (Dorn interview). Nevertheless, she still remembers when she first came to Spain, Maestre asked her to make contacts. In Madrid there was an American club for businessmen but she wanted to join, but this was not allowed. “I was to go to the women’s one, where there were knitting classes and flower arranging. Later, when I was the director of BM they invited me many times and I always said, No way!!!” (Ibid.).

Although at a job fair in Madison at BM employee strangely told her that they really did not contract women, at BM she ran into no problems (Ibid.): I cannot say that I was discriminated against for being a woman in BM”. According to Fisher, this is so (Fisher interview):

Because the growth of the PR profession through the second half of the twentieth century (...) matched the huge rise in the number of women in the workforce. Women encountered hostility or glass ceilings in many lines of work, but not in PR because, being relatively unknown, it did not have broad appeal, so that women faced less competition from men in getting hired. *Smarts* [sic] writing skills, ability to listen, creativity and the willingness to deliver were what PR firms needed; sex was not an issue until, curiously, the dominance of female employees made the need for a few males to balance the team an imperative (because some clients could be hidebound, prejudiced or whatever without necessarily being sexist).

However, despite the large number of women in this sector, it was not at all common for a woman to be an executive. “At that time there were junior women and executives, but no women in charge” (Lareau interview). Dorn also worked in other areas such as the chemical industry, which were eminently male. As Lareau remembers: “There were a pile of men and Teresa” (Ibid.).

Really, the problems that Dorn came up against were not so much caused by her sex as by her age (“I was discriminated against more for being young than for being a woman”) and because of a lack of experience, because she didn’t know how to impose herself in a male work setting: “I have been discriminated against for being stupid. Because, for example, as women we do not demand the salaries demanded by men. I’m sure that when I was presiding over Europe I was a bargain. The salary seemed interesting to me, but when I realised what the people before me and after me had earned, I said to myself: ‘You’re a fool’. But that is our problem, it’s not discrimination. Salaries are not given freely. You have to fight for them” (Dorn interview, 2016). And she won the fight due to the excellence of her work. “I was not being discriminated against as a woman when I had an amazing income from Europe” (Ibid.).

The women who have worked and still work with her also see it like that: “No man could discriminate against a woman like Teresa” (Personal interview to Sánchez Veneros, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016); “Teresa is not a feminist nor has she felt mistreated for being a woman” (Valera interview).

A point where her gender may have been of influence was the complete separation she established between her working life and her private life. This division, according to Dorn, “was a personal question. If you are so involved in a profession, you need to have elements of your own. It may also be due to my timid character or perhaps it has to do with the fact of being a woman. We always have to be very professional, our personal life cannot be there because men do not talk about their personal lives; they talk about football or politics” (Dorn interview, 2016).

Her professionalism could also be seen in her appearance: “The way I dressed was completely different in my private life and at work. There, I looked very professional [according to Sosa “Teresa dressed very like Angela Merkel”]. I always

wore a skirt, never pants, or very rarely. And outside work I never wore a skirt. I went through college in jeans and I've always been very comfortable like that. Your attire screens your emotions. As the boss you frequently have to hide your emotions, because you are making decisions about people" (Ibid.).

That professional screen reached its apogee on the day of her wedding (March 12th, 1985), held in a registry office in the morning so that they could both go back to work after lunch. Sosa remembers that, when they realised, they all got together and presented them with some flowers, "but she didn't want to talk about personal issues" (Sosa interview).

So much so that no-one knew about the most important decision in her working life, that is, to leave BM and set up a rural hotel. "My personal life was very different from my professional life (...). Even those who thought they knew me best believed that I wouldn't last more than six months here. They had that idea because they didn't know this side of my character, they didn't know that I like the countryside, that I was born on a pig farm and had sold corn on the roadside. They didn't understand that there were many things here to satisfy me" (Dorn interview, 2016).

In fact, Teresa Ann Dorn Stecker was born in 1951 in New Holstein<sup>18</sup>, Wisconsin, in the rural American Midwest. She was brought up as the eldest of four siblings in our "very Catholic" family, on a pig farm "in an area where there are nothing but cattle farms" (Ibid.). For her, "contact with nature is fundamental", always. As a matter of fact, at the hotel Dorn looked after both the orchard and the garden. She has reared pigs and chickens, which she herself has slaughtered. As her husband points out, for some months before she left BM, "Teresa was a high executive who came to the hotel to work as a waitress and to feed the pigs" (Ibid.).

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<sup>18</sup> Census of population in 1950: 1.831. Cf. <http://newholsteinhistory.info/new-holstein-history>.

And she was truly both: an executive and farmer. At the hotel an annual business plan was (and is) used, the employees receive special training and are frequently taken abroad as an incentive. “The truth is that this is a business, not a bucolic dream. Sometimes we have sold the media the idea that we were stressed executives who wanted to escape from the city, but this is not so” (Sánchez Rico interview). They wanted to set up a profitable business and work with the same professionalism, dedication and planning as in their multinationals, but now they would do it for themselves.

Thus the hotel, “El Milano Real”, was an opportunity to bring together the CEO Dorn, who managed teams, strategic plans and astronomical budgets, and the Dorn who bred pigs, enjoyed getting her hands dirty and watching the plants grow. And this merger, this life story coherence, was totally mindful and planned. The circle is closed; the challenge has been completed.

When Teresa left the company in 1995, BM was in the top position in the world rankings for PR companies with the growth rate of 10% compared to the previous year (“Empresas: Burson Marsteller”, 1996). Despite her change of course, Dorn is still working for BM as an outside consultant. “Not for the money, but because I enjoy the profession” (Dorn interview, 2016). But with one proviso: “Monthly revision of the agreement to ensure how competent I still am” (Ibid.).

## **DISCUSSION**

The general purpose and research question of this research was why BM became such a prominent multinational company in the country between 1980 and 1995 under the leadership of Dorn. On the one hand, our journey through the historical context has allowed us to have a general vision of the evolution of BM in Spain. On the other, the



results of the interviews and the composition of the life history have generated descriptive elements that offer details and experiences of Dorn's work in charge of BM that allow us, thanks to her perspective, to interpret certain events which are linked to the entrepreneurial success of the company. These elements and interpretations seem to be essential in the case study of a consultancy company like BM with no historical archives. The interviews are the perfect complement to other historical sources such as newspapers, journals, commercial registers and the historical archives of the first PR agency in Spain.

It seems that the historical situation facing the young Teresa Dorn when she was establishing herself professionally in Spain –the transition from a dictatorial regime to a democratic one- was a challenge that stimulated her intellectually and professionally. In addition, this situation permitted the development and great growth of the consultancy sector in Spain thanks to the recent newly-gained political freedom, freedom of speech and expression, media deregulation, entrepreneurial growth, the emergence of labour movements, the political change in the country's government from centre-right to socialism (80s), the expansion and international recognition of the country.

Dorn officially established the first BM branch office in Madrid in 1981 and in Barcelona in 1985, although the American corporation had already operated in Spain: first with the American Bernard Jennings who ran an affiliate branch of the American parent company and, after the purchase of BM by Y&R, with the services of Dorn herself from June 1979. In the company Teresa Dorn held the posts of Managing Director (from its foundation in 1981), CEO of the BM group in Spain (1985), member of the BM International Board of Management (1992) and later, vice-chairman (1993) and CEO Europe (1994-1995). At present, her role is that of an outside consultant to the company.

In contrast to what was thought until now, BM was not officially the first consultancy to penetrate the Spanish market, as it did so in the same year (1981) as another international American consultancy agency which always fought BM for the top place in the national and international rankings in the 1980s and 90s: Hill and Knowlton. Like BM, Hill and Knowlton had also had affiliate branches in Spain. This suggests a future line of research to find the other precedents in the history of the multinational corporations and their role in the professional and political context of the times.

From the moment of BM's arrival in Spain, despite being a multinational company in a foreign country, it was always among the first four by revenue in the PR agencies rankings thanks to Dorn's knowledge of the country, her work methodology, her discipline, instinct for business and for contracting the best professionals and, in short, her excellent professional know-how. 10 years later (1991), BM reached the top position (which it held until the early 2000s).

Dorn's character traits and *modus operandi* left their mark, not only on the clients, but also all the professionals who worked with her and consider her their mentor. BM became the best school/training centre for the PR professionals who worked there during the 80s and 90s. In this way, BM contributed to the development of the profession in Spain, not merely because of the increase in business it contributed to the sector, not merely from the perspective of the creation of income, but also due to the training of its professionals.

From Dorn's life history the next conclusion can be drawn: her character is marked by intelligence and intellectual curiosity, which means that her passion, the driving force of her life history, is her love of challenge. Her first challenge was to lead PR in Spain to its highest professional development with BM, and the second was the

application of all that knowledge and ability in order to get the best out of her personal life. As a woman she has overcome the prejudices and obstacles of the times due to her intellectual capacity, her work ethic and her coherence. On occasion, her foreign nationality has given her a certain advantage in a country that was traditionally sexist. She has never felt conditioned by or a victim of a system because, as a perpetual foreigner, she always knew who she was and she has always been certain of herself.

On the positive side, the biographical method and the life history allow us to understand the challenges and difficulties a female PR professional had to face, together with the work methods and attitudes which made her successful, and this enriches the so-called “great man/woman approach”. In contrast, fragile memories mean that all of the data obtained, particularly dates and names, must be double-checked. The results for Teresa Dorn and Burson-Marsteller not only “record the interplays of people and their effects on their place and time” (Lamme, 2015: 53), but also open gateway to comparison with other PR female practitioners’ experiences. As Robert Leaf points out, “personality and character are an important factor for anyone in any business and Teresa was far beyond any single example” (Leaf interview).

From the methodological perspective, the oral history offers great advantages, as this research has shown, and allows us to understand people, to affirm that character traits condition professional development and therefore the history of PR, to offer a historical perspective which is neither progressive nor lineal, to explain why things happened and to reproduce moments in history which would be lost in the mists of time.

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### **Interviews**

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