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GUESTS: Bill Haslam, Bill Cowan, Scott Weber, Terry Holt, Lanny Davis, Jane Hall, **Robert Lichter**, Anna Robertson

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MACCALLUM: *We know you have heard a lot about the media's so-called crush on Obama, but now, look at this. According to a new study, Barack Obama has actually been getting a lot more negative TV lately than John McCain. The study says that 72 percent of what reporters say about Obama is negative compared to 57 percent negative for John McCain.*

With me now is Robert Lichter. He's the president of the Center for Media and Public Affairs which conducted this study. And also joining me is media analyst and FOX NEWS contributor, Jane Hall. Welcome to you both. Robert, let me start with you. What did this study find?

ROBERT LICHTER, PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS: *Well, the study found that while Barack Obama was getting very good press during the primaries, once Hillary Clinton dropped out in early June, his coverage became much more negative and, as you say, is now even more negative than John McCain's, who has had negative press since the New Hampshire primary.*

MACCALLUM: *Yes, I'm curious rather at how it's skewed in terms of mentions, because it seems like Barack Obama just gets a lot more press. He gets written about a lot more than John McCain, period.*

LICHTER: *Yes. He has been highly visible since the beginning. He has been more visible than John McCain all throughout the primaries. Once, the Democratic race got most of the attention; now, his trip to Europe. But the point here is there were some studies saying he's always getting so much coverage that's great. But not all coverage is good coverage. And he's getting a lot of coverage, but much of it is not the kind of coverage he'd like to get.*

MACCALLUM: *Jane, I'm curious what you think is the dynamic here. You know, a lot of the press was favorable to Barack Obama. They got put back on their heels a little bit, though, some of them.*

JANE HALL, MEDIA ANALYST: *Well, I think, Martha, what you're seeing is kind of an art of coverage that Obama got, crush coverage - swing coverage, I think, is a fair characterization in the beginning stages. Now that he has become the nominee, reporters are raising more questions about him, which by then counts as a negative as opposed to*

a positive. I will say the visuals were not counted and I think they have power. They are not the only thing that has power.

But I think the public and the media are beginning to say, "Oh, my goodness, what do we really know about Barack Obama?" He was asked some pretty tough questions during this last trip. I think you're also seeing the media responding to people saying, "Gee, guys, come on. Let's have more coverage of McCain. Let's have tougher questions of Obama." I mean, the media reads their ratings and reads their reports ...

MACCALLUM: *Right.*

HALL: *... and I think the criticism early on was fair. I really do. I think this does prove one thing that is interesting. Most of these newscasts which FOX covered, the statements were neutral. It is not as if people were in the tank totally. It is when they raised questions - whom were they raising them more about?*

MACCALLUM: *Robert, give us a sense there of what you wrote down here. How many publications - you know, what's included in this study?*

LICHTER: *This was the big three network newscasts - ABC, CBS, NBC - the evening news shows, the election newscasts and we also did the first half hour of "SPECIAL REPORT" with Brit Hume.*

MACCALLUM: *And Jane, you know, when you look back at this, it's kind of ironic because John McCain was always a candidate and a senator who had a great relationship with the press. The tables have turned on him a little bit. You know, what about that? This is a guy who used to, you know, hang out with lots of folks in the press and considered them friends?*

HALL: *Yes. Well, you know, I hope he still considers them friendly to him. There are people not in favor of McCain who saying that people haven't asked about his age or haven't asked about gaffes he has made about foreign policy. He's not getting terrible coverage. Obama has just been getting such favorable coverage that I think the contrast has been pretty striking.*

MACCALLUM: *It will be interesting to see what swing happens in the following 99 days as this gets tighter. But it's good for people to be tough and inquisitive on both parts. Jane, thank you very much. Robert, thanks very much as well.*

HALL: *Thank you.*