Description: What makes an image “iconic?” Previous work on iconic imagery tends to take a "case-based" approach, tracing the history of images like Che Guevara, Marilyn Monroe, or Dorothea Lange’s “Migrant Woman” to explain their power. This approach has not yielded a more general theory of what makes images iconic and runs into "sampling on the dependent variable" problems. A pairwise-comparison analysis of audience responses to images of President Obama offers an alternative approach to test object- and audience-based explanations for iconicity.

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