

# The Whites of Our Eyes

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## *The New York Times:*

SEVERAL years ago, while browsing the campus bookstore, one of us, Professor Segal, encountered a display table filled with Squirtles. A Squirtle is a plush-toy turtle manufactured by the company Russ Berrie. They were adorable and she couldn't wait to take one home.

Afterward, Professor Segal began wondering why this toy was so attractive and suspected that its large, round eyes played a major role. It's well known that a preference for large eyes emerges in humans by 5 months of age. But the Squirtle was even more appealing than many of its big-eyed competitors. Was there something else about its eyes?

Professor Segal consulted one of us, Professor Goetz, a colleague in evolutionary psychology, who suggested that because the Squirtle's eyes were bordered in white, the cooperative eye hypothesis might have answers. This hypothesis, developed by the Japanese researchers Hiromi Kobayashi and Shiro Kohshima, holds that the opaque white outer coating of the human eye, or sclera, evolved to assist communication between people by signaling the direction of their gaze.

Read the whole story: [The New York Times](#)