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Contents; I. Introduction; Figures; 1. House Price Volatility and Evangelical Population; 2. Average House Price Growth; II. Evangelicals and House Price Volatility; A. Empirical Specification and Results; Tables; 1. Descriptive Statistics; B. Discussion; 2. Regression Results; III. 9/11 Event Study; IV. Panel Study; A. Model and Predictions; 3. Quarterly House Price Growth and Share of Evangelicals; 4. The Rapture Index and Subcategories; B. Data and Empirical Strategy; 5. The Rapture Index; C. Results and Discussion; 3. Descriptive Statistics; 4. Regression Results  
V. End Times Beliefs and Asset Holdings5. Counterfactual Exercise; 6. Regression Results; VI. Conclusions; References; Appendix I. Data Descriptions and Sources

Sommario/riassunto

The recent housing bust has reignited interest in psychological theories of speculative excess (Shiller, 2007). I investigate this issue by identifying a segment of the U.S. population-evangelical protestants-that may be less prone to speculative motives, and uncover a significant negative relationship between their population share and house price volatility. Evangelicals' focus on Biblical prophecy could account for this difference, since it may enable them to interpret otherwise negative events as containing positive news, dampening the response of house prices to shocks. I provide evidence for this channel using a popular internet measure of "prophetic activity" and a 9/11 event study. I also analyze survey data covering religious beliefs and asset holding, and find that 'end times' beliefs are associated with a one-third decline in net worth, consistent with these beliefs providing a form of psychic insurance (Scheve and Stasavage, 2006a and 2006b) that reduces asset demand.