ed above, with one notable exception. In the regressions for children born to white women, there was a significant (1% level) negative relationship between adoption rates and abortion reforms. In the regressions for nonwhite women’s children, the negative relationship between adoption rates and abortion reforms shown in Tables 4 and 5 also became significant at the 1% level when the other covariates were not included. This difference in the results suggests that other factors in states that reformed their abortion laws also contributed to lower adoption rates in those states.

Several of the variables in the regressions might be viewed as endogenous, or associated with changes in abortion availability. In particular, marriage and divorce rates and women’s educational attainment might have been influenced by whether abortion was legal. For our second check of robustness, we therefore omitted these variables from the regressions. This modification yielded results similar to those in the tables presented here, suggesting that potentially endogenous variables did not underlie our results.

Finally, we investigated the robustness of our results to using alternate coding of when states changed their abortion laws. We classified New Jersey and Vermont as having reformed their abortion laws during 1969, using alternate coding of when states changed their abortion laws. We classified New Jersey and Vermont as having reformed their abortion laws in 1972, whereas several other studies classified these states as having legalized abortion. In particular, marriage and divorce rates and women’s educational attainment might have been influenced by whether abortion was legal. For our second check of robustness, we therefore omitted these variables from the regressions. This modification yielded results similar to those in the tables presented here, suggesting that potentially endogenous variables did not underlie our results.

DISCUSSION

Our results indicate that adoptions, particularly of children born to white women and by petitioners unrelated to the child, decreased in the 1960s and early 1970s when states repealed their laws restricting access to abortion. Roe v. Wade also may have lowered rates of adoption of children born to white women. Legal reforms allowing small increases in access to abortion, such as allowing the procedure for women who became pregnant as a result of rape or incest, did not affect adoption rates of children born to white women.

The estimated effect of abortion legalization on adoption rates is sizable and can account for much of the decline in adoptions during the early 1970s. In our sample, the number of adoptions of children born to white women was 42% lower in 1975 than in 1970.* Our estimates in Table 4 indicate that these adoptions fell by 34–37% in states that repealed abortion laws; a similar decline may have occurred in other states after Roe v. Wade, but this effect is imprecisely estimated and not statistically different from zero.† Abortion legalization therefore appears to account for much of the decline in adoptions of children born to white women between 1970 and 1975.

Our results also indicate that allowing legal abortion

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*Maaza PL. 1984 (reference 10). indicates that the total number was 26% lower in 1975 than in 1970 but does not give data by race.

†About one-fifth of women of childbearing age lived in states that repealed abortion laws prior to Roe v. Wade.