Dear Dr. Allison McCulloch

I hereby submit my revised manuscript for publication in *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, titled “Israeli Immigration Policy at Odds: Emerging Jewish Communities and the 'Return' of the Converts from Latin-America.”

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to you and the reviewers for your careful review of the manuscript and the constructive comments. I modified the manuscript following your suggestions and in keeping with the reviewers’ valuable insights. As you will see, I accepted most of Reviewer 2’s suggestions and incorporated all of Reviewer 1’s comments, with the exception of comment 4, which concerns the methodological section. Pursuant to your request to strengthen the methodological discussion and following Reviewer 2’s suggestion to expand on the use of critical policy analysis, I significantly revised this section. Furthermore, I largely rewrote the abstract following Reviewer 1’s helpful insights regarding my main argument and the need to emphasize the exclusionary practice of the Israeli return policy.

In what follows, I outline the revisions made in the manuscript according to yours and the reviewers’ input.

I hope that the revised version is satisfactory, but please do not hesitate to let me know if you think there is need to for further edits. Finally, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the reviewers. I believe my paper has significantly improved thanks to the incorporation of their suggestions, and I have had the privilege to learn immensely in the process.

Your Sincerely

Renen Yezersky

Reviewer 1

I was pleased to learn that Reviewer 1 found my argument interesting. I would like to thank Reviewer 1 for their meticulous feedback and informative comments. The reviewer’s suggestions to restructure the manuscript were very helpful.

1. In accordance with the reviewer's suggestion, I added a paragraph to the introduction emphasizing the exclusionary nature of the Israeli immigration policy, which favors Western immigrants in order to avoid dealing with the complexities posed by the emergence of new Jewish communities in developing countries. I further clarified this argument following the reviewer's third comment, adding a paragraph on the selection policy toward North-African Jews (1954-1956) as an example for the state's preference for Western immigrants. As a result, pages 4-7 were collapsed into the section about ethnic immigration policy.

2. In response to the reviewer's comment, I added a justification for my case study selection at the beginning of the methodological section (page 6). As the reviewer mentioned, it was necessary to explain how the Latin American case pertains to other convert communities in Africa and Asia.

3. As mentioned in the first comment, I accepted the reviewer's suggestion without reservation, and incorporated pages 4-7 into the preceding section.

4. As opposed to Reviewer 1, the editor and Reviewer 2 suggested to expand the methodological section. Therefore, I could not incorporate this comment.

5. In response to the reviewer's comment, I added a paragraph to the methodological section as well as to the case study section on the role of NGOs that are *de facto* implementing the immigration policy.

6. As per the reviewer's suggestion, I deleted all repetitions and clarified the argument concerning the contradictory outcomes of the Israeli ethnic immigration policy. I added this clarification to the first two paragraphs of the discussion section.

7. Following the reviewer's comment, I am resubmitting the revised manuscript for a second review.

Specific comments:

* As pages 4-7 collapsed into the preceding section, I deleted this paragraph and elaborated instead on how the dynamic between exclusionary and inclusionary elements results in the constant reformulation of the Israeli ethnic immigration policy.
* The term "purity" is used by Brubaker and Yadgar. I put it in quotation marks throughout the manuscript.
* I added this paragraph to page 3, according to the reviewer's advice.
* I added a clarification to the last paragraph of the section on the different kinds of threats.
* I clarified that I am referring to people who until recently were not recognized as Jews.
* In response to the reviewer's comment, I would like to explain that my intention was to elaborate on the implementation of the immigration policy throughout the case study section. I did not find it helpful to interrupt the theoretical discussion (pages 3-6) by addressing the *de facto* implementation and privatization reforms of the Israeli immigration policy. Therefore, I have found it more reasonable to combine these issues where I explain about the Jewish Agency’s changing role.
* I put the term in quotation marks.
* The footnote section was edited.

Reviewer 2

I would like to convey my gratitude to Reviewer 2 for the thorough feedback. The reviewer’s suggestions for the methodological section and the case study analysis were very helpful.

1. In response to the reviewer's comment, I added a sentence on page 3 regarding the role of the Gathering of Israel myth. However, I did not elaborate further as suggested, because I did not wish to focus on the stated objectives of the Law of Return. My standing point is to presume that there will always be gaps between policy formulation and implementation, and that policies change constantly in response to external events and political shifts. In my research, I wished to describe how the Law of Return is applied today, and how it can be manipulated by the NGOs implementing it.

2. Following the reviewer's comment, I further emphasized the role of the Israeli government in blocking the immigration of emerging Jewish communities. Moreover, and in accordance with comment 6, I added a paragraph to the methodological section about policy as a broad and diverse arena in which non-governmental actors can be highly involved. However, I did not incorporate other suggestions made in this comment. First, I did not argue the Jewish Agency is part of the Israeli government, but instead added a clarification about its authority and position (page 15). Second, I do not believe I used misleading data regarding non-Jewish immigrants. I rechecked Asher Cohen's reference to the CBS report regarding two thirds of non-Jewish immigrants in 2003; and I corrected my data according to Netanel Fisher, who mentioned in his book that since 2002 approximately 50% of all immigrants are non-Jewish [Asher Cohen, *Non-Jewish Jews: Israeli Identity and the Challenge of Expanding the Jewish Nation*, Shalom Hartman Institute, Faculty of Law, Bar-Ilan University, 2006, 77; Netanel Fisher, *Israel*’*s Conversion Challenge: Policy Analysis and Recommendations*, The Israeli Institute for Democracy, 2015].

3. In response to the reviewer's comment on the use of strong language, I changed "threats" to "needs" or "challenges" in some places, primarily on pages 2-6. I would like to mention that the term "threat" is borrowed from the work of Yaacov Yadgar [Yaacov Yadgar, “Between ‘the Arab’ and ‘the Religious Rightist’: ‘Significant Other’ in the construction of Jewish-Israeli national identity,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9 no. 1 (2002): 52–74.]

4. Following the reviewer's comment, I referred to literature by Devorah Hacohen, Avi Pikard, and Yaron Tzur, page 3.

5. The list of quotes on page 12 is intended to demonstrate two points: the first, mentioned before the quotes, concerns the barriers put up by the established Jewry in face of the Jewish Agency’s effort to recruit emerging Jewish communities for immigration. Further explanation is provided in the discussion section, where I have argued that the allegation against the established Jewry obscures the responsibility of the Israeli government.

6. I found this comment very helpful. I edited the information on research methods and added a few paragraphs: I added an expanded definition of policy as a comprehensive arena that comprises multiple factors and participants; I explained how critical policy analysis addresses the role of NGOs as representing different ideological groups; I justified the case study selection, explaining that it reflects how policy can become a competitive sphere; and I clarified why and how I chose to focus on policy outcomes.