



# Rethinking and Redefining Cults: The Sliding Scales of Cultic Behaviors

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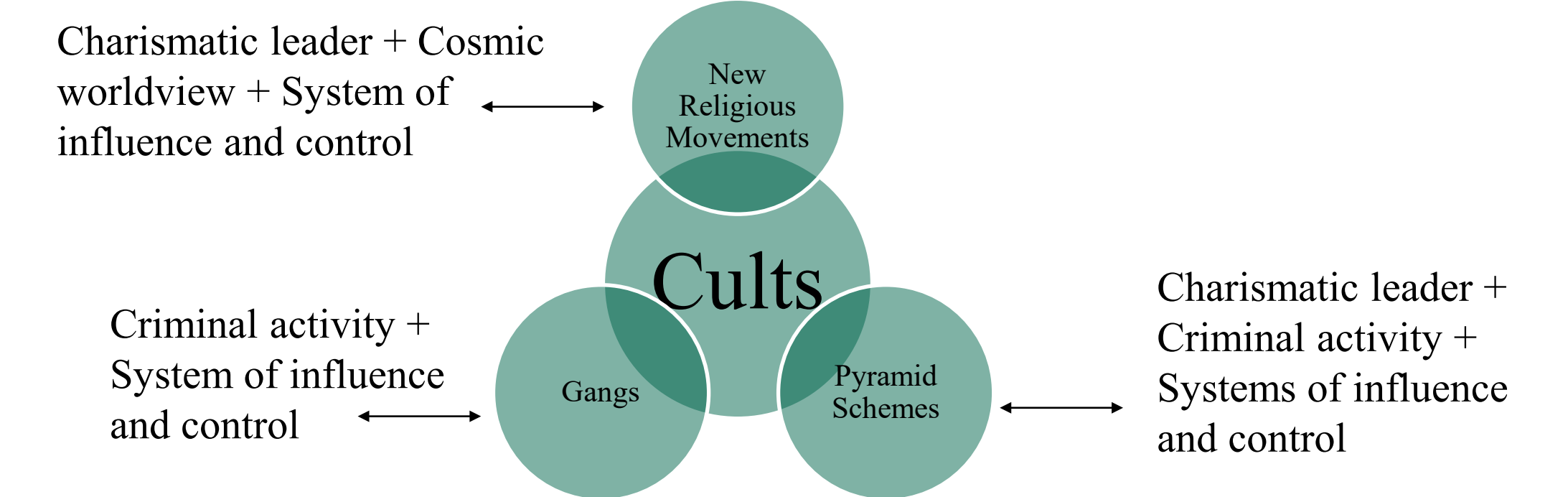
## Introduction

Due to the “popularity” of cults and the potential harm that can come from misleading and false information there is not much research deserving of academic attention on the subject. We are working to develop the key components of a cult to better aid in establishing a definition – this being an important first step in the advancement of academic research.

## Key Cult Characteristics

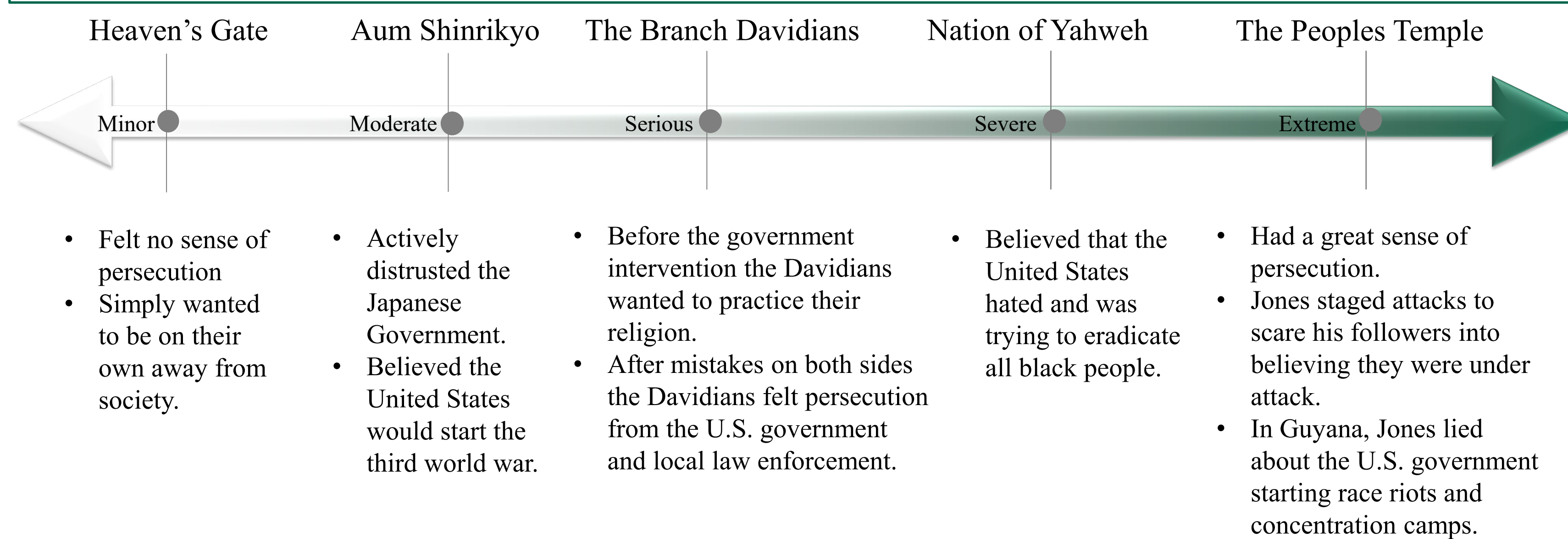
- Charismatic leader – usually one person who created the message and movement and has total control over all things inside the cult.
- Criminal activity – any crimes committed by cult members to other members or outside citizens.
- Cosmic worldview – The belief system that was created by the charismatic leader and is spread to all members as the only truth that they must adhere to.
- Systems of influence and control – How the cult leader and members gain followers, make them into devout believers, and keep them inside the confines of the cult.

## Cult Hierarchy

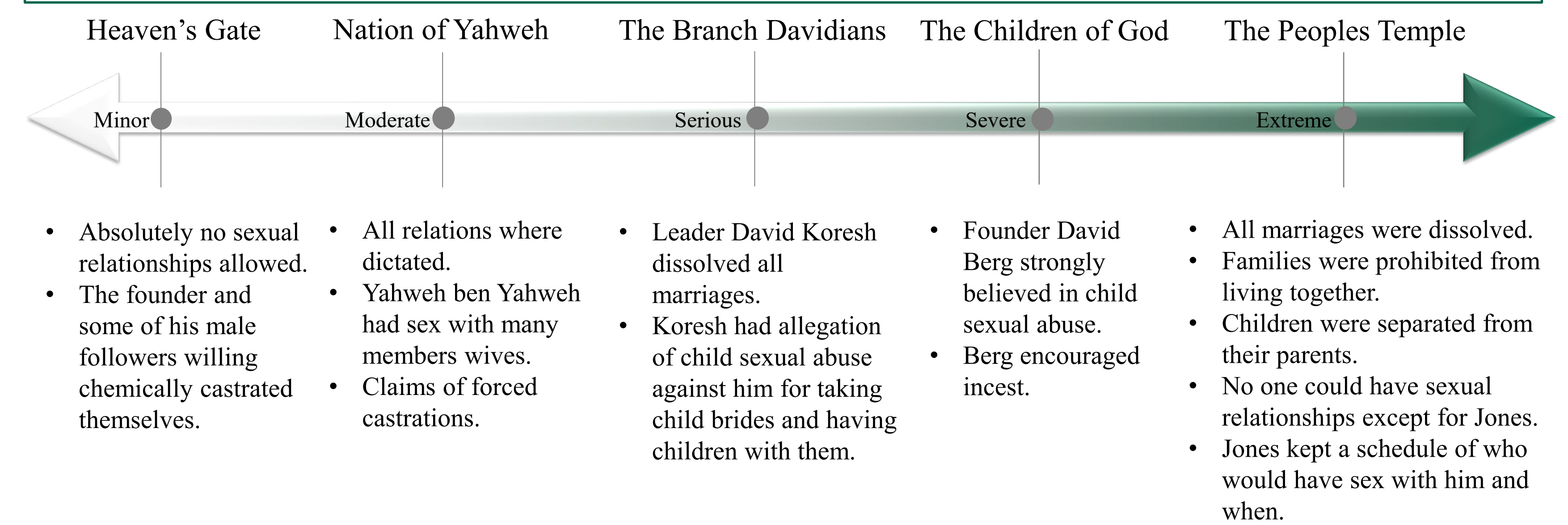


## Continuums

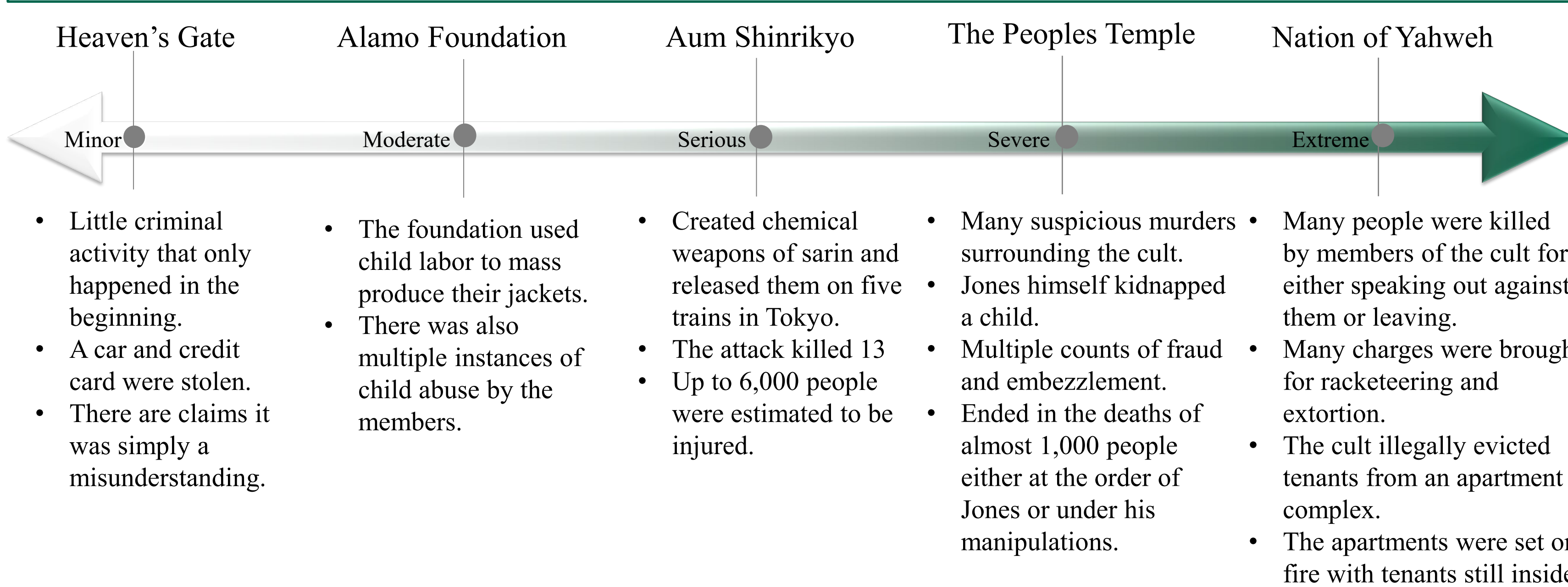
### Sense of Persecution



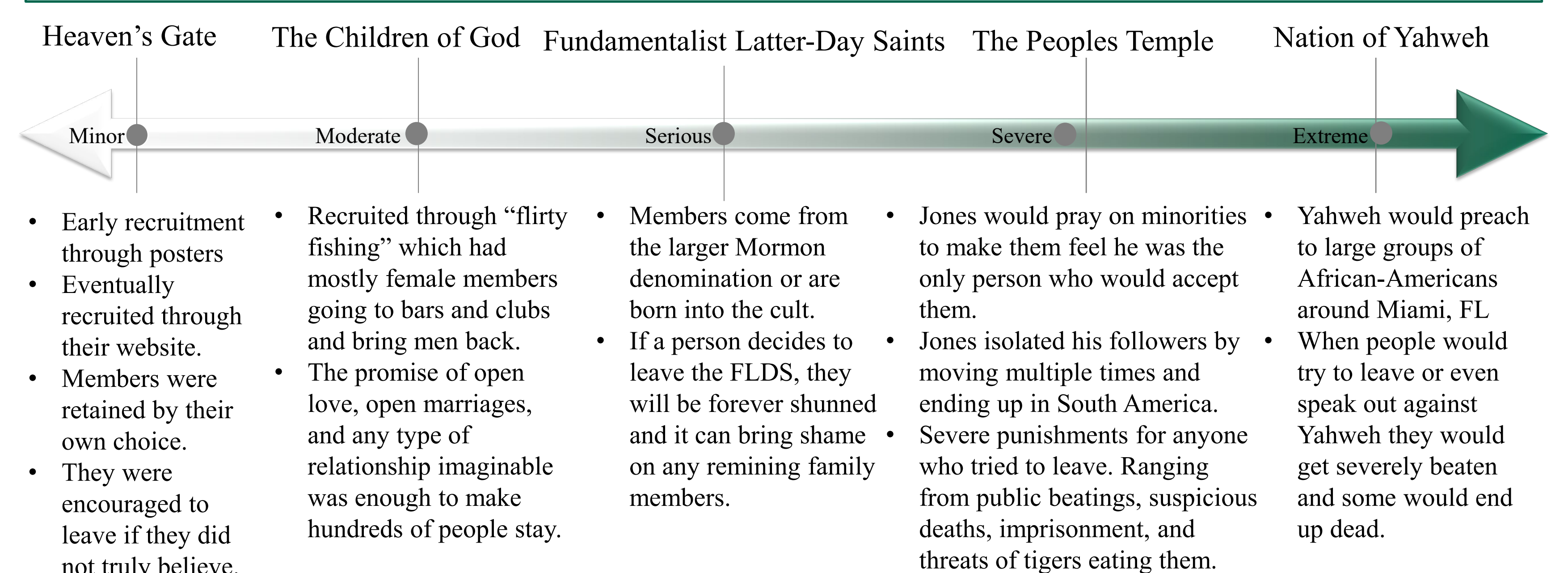
### Reproductive Control



### Criminal Engagement



### Recruitment & Retention



## Conclusions

Due to the lack of academic research most of our knowledge of these cults comes for a few select books and documentaries. Because of this it is important to understand what can and cannot be defined as a cult. Without these key components the definition is too broad and thus unreliable to help conduct proper research.

These four continuums could be used to help further identify what a cult is and distinguish those from other groups such as gangs, new religious movements, or pyramid schemes. The continuums will help to create a more simplified way to see the true dangers of cults and how far the damage can go if a cult is allowed to grow. These scales can also help to aid in the practices of how a cult, once properly identified, can be disbanded without any violence or harm to members and citizens alike.

## References

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