GUIDELINES FOR COUNTERING DISINFORMATION

From "Issues in Counter Deception," Sami Saydjari, January 2020:

DEFINITIONS

- Misinformation: unintentionally incorrect information
- **Disinformation**: intentionally incorrect information as part of deception
- Deception: actions (including spreading disinformation) taken to intentionally mislead
- Information warfare: use of information and information technology to gain an advantage (includes deception)
- Psychological Operations (PsyOps): action by psychological methods to cause a planned psychological reaction
- Influence operations: coordinated effort to alter target's attitudes, decisions and behaviors toward influencers interests

NOTE: Uncertainty and antipathy are two favored tools in the disruption warrior's toolbox.

STRATEGIES TO COUNTER DISINFORMATION:

- Repeating an idea, even to debunk it, is a bad idea
- Inoculation may work, but it must come from a trusted source:

 - ⇒ Repeat correction
- It may be better to target the credibility of the source of misinformation
 - ⇒ Plant basis of skepticism of source (e.g. conflict of interest)
- Filter small number of bad players [See David Lazer, et al: https://www.davidlazer.com/publication/science-fake-news]
 - ⇒ Filter bots and "cyborgs"
- Easier fact-checking may help, but distrust in news media is a problem
 - ⇒ News media needs to actively campaign to regain trust

From The Debunking Handbook, by John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky:

"First, the refutation must focus on core facts rather than the myth to avoid the misinformation becoming more familiar. Second, any mention of a myth should be preceded by explicit warnings to notify the reader that the upcoming information is false. Finally, the refutation should include an alternative explanation that accounts for important qualities in the original misinformation.

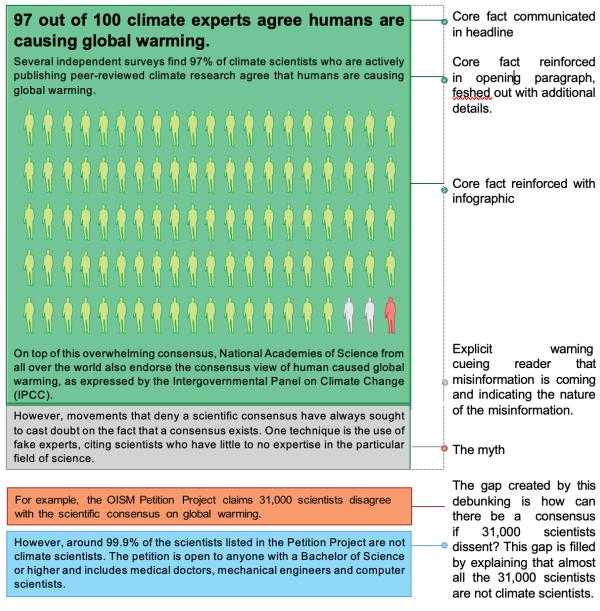
"Bringing all the different threads together, an effective debunking requires:

- **CORE FACTS:** A refutation should emphasize the facts, not the myth. Present only key facts to avoid an Overkill Backfire Effect.
- **EXPLICIT WARNINGS:** Before any mention of a myth, text or visual cues should warn that the upcoming information is false.
- ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION: Any gaps left by the debunking need to be filled. This may be achieved by providing an alternative causal explanation for why the myth is wrong and, optionally, why the misinformers promoted the myth in the first place.
- **GRAPHICS:** Core facts should be displayed graphically if possible (see next page).

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Download the Debunking Guide here:

https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:e7ce8403-7db7-4a83-8c67-1da340725cf4



See also:

- Washington Post article from 10-28-2020, "Harvard Teaches How to Detect Misinformation Campaigns": https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/10/28/new-media-manipulation-casebook-harvard-teaches-how-detect-misinformation-campaigns/
- Center for Human Technology's Ledger of Harms: https://ledger.humanetech.com
- Warped Reality, a TED Radio Hour program on disinformation and the technology: https://www.npr.org/2020/10/29/929115189/warped-reality