**Gross Domestic Product Project**

**Sample Flow of Robert Kennedy’s 1968 Speech on GNP**

This is a sample flowing of Democratic presidential candidate Robert Kennedy’s short speech (it’s actually an excerpt from a longer campaign speech) on using the Gross Domestic Product as an index of national strength. This speech is not a formal academic argument, so it cannot be flowed like one. The speech does make arguments, though, and after you take notes of what he is saying – trying to listen for those arguments, and their components (claim, evidence, reasoning, response to counter-argument) – you can identify parts of the speech that you have noted as parts of an argument. Note that this is a **model** sample flow – you do not have to get all of this detail to have a very good flow sheet. The important thing when flowing is to **listen for argument**.

**For too long we have been consumed by materialism.**

**Gross Domestic Product is now over $800 billion per year.**

**But the GDP includes**

ambulances

home locks against theft and jails for criminals

destruction of the Redwood forests and urban sprawl

Napalm [chemical used in the Vietnam War]

nuclear warheads

armored cars for police to fight race riots

rifles and knives

violent TV programs

**The GDP does not include**

health of our children

education levels

the joy of play

beauty of poetry

public debates

integrity of elected officials

wit or courage or compassion or devotion to country

**GDP measures everything except what is important to meaningful life and why we are proud to be Americans.**

Processing the Flow

This speech by Robert Kennedy, even though it is not a formal academic argument, is fairly easily assembled and understood as argumentation. Here is one way to process the flow above into formal argumentation components.

**Overall position**

The Gross Domestic Product should be rejected as the primary measurement of American strength because it is thoroughly materialistic.

**Argumentative Claim**

Gross Domestic Product “measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.” [You can paraphrase this quote: the quote, though, is spoken toward the end of the speech.]

**Evidence**

GDP includes ambulance costs.

GDP includes the production of home locks and jails for criminals.

GDP includes rifles and knives.

GDP includes violent TV programs.

GDP does not include the levels of the health of children.

GDP does not include education quality or attainment.

GDP does not include the beauty of poetry or the joy of play.

GDP does not include personal virtues like wit, courage, or compassion.

**Reasoning**

[This is all implicit. None of this reasoning is included in the speech.]

GDP includes materialistic measurements of economic output that supports activities that are associated with responding to threats against life, and the ways that we have to protect ourselves from danger, evil, and violence. And it does not measure crucial indicators of our ability to get the most out of life, such as indicators of health and education. The GDP also cannot measure the beauty that we produce to enhance life, playing (which is essential to enjoying life), or personal virtues, which our civilization believes help individuals realize the full meaning and value of life.

**Argumentative Claim**

Gross Domestic Product “can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.” [You can paraphrase this quote: the quote, though, is spoken toward the end of the speech.]

**Evidence**

GDP includes destruction of the Redwood forests and urban sprawl

GDP includes Napalm [chemical used in the Vietnam War]

GDP includes nuclear warheads

GDP includes armored cars for police to fight race riots

GDP does not include public debates

GDP does not include integrity of elected officials

GDP does not include devotion to country

**Reasoning**

[This is all implicit. None of this reasoning is included in the speech.]

GDP includes practices and development that destroys the American natural environment. It also includes war-fighting resources of the most damaging kinds, such as chemical and nuclear weapons. And it includes the law enforcement spending that has to take place to respond to race riots that have plagued the U.S. The GDP does not give any indication of the health or strength of our politics or government, nor does it reflect anything that would measure how much love for America exists among its citizens.