In his article "It’s Time for ‘They’", Farhad Manjoo presents a persuasive argument for the universal adoption of the singular pronoun "they" as a gender-neutral option. His argument is framed within a broader conversation about gender identities and how our evolving language should reflect a diverse society. In his article, Manjoo supports his position with examples of the increasing acceptance of "they" in daily language use. He connects this linguistic change to a wider goal: the dismantling of oppressive gender norms. Near the end of his piece, he addresses the doubts traditional grammarians have about this major language shift. Despite the compelling nature of his argument, Manjoo's argument has significant shortcomings as it fails to address the wider implications and resistance to this shift, overstates the potential of the singular "they" to uproot deeply ingrained gender norms, and undermines the possibility of engaging constructively with traditional grammarians.

Manjoo begins his argument by highlighting the increasing acceptance of the singular "they". He emphasizes this fact by using examples from daily life, specifically the language used in notifications from apps like Uber and Lyft. He argues that the prevalence of this use indicates the capability for adaptability in the modern English language. His argument also mentions the evolution of language as a natural process, and in this case, he argues that the singular "they" is gaining popularity without any significant pushback. However, despite these compelling points, there are some notable deficiencies in his argument. He doesn’t delve into the broader implications of this linguistic shift or the potential resistance it might face, particularly from demographics that might have more conservative linguistic leanings or might not be as open to such a change. Furthermore, the evidence he presents in favor of the acceptance of the singular "they" are mostly anecdotal observations. While these examples from specific platforms like Uber and Lyft do indicate a shift, they are not certainly representative of a wider societal acceptance of the singular "they”.

Manjoo's assertion that the adoption of the singular "they" could serve as a potent tool in dismantling oppressive gender norms is a somewhat oversimplified perspective on a more complex issue. He argues that by changing our everyday jargon, we could effectively challenge and potentially uproot the deeply ingrained gender norms in our society. His perspective inaccurately reduces the larger issue of gender norms in our society to merely just linguistic expression. The reality is that these norms are a product of a complex network of societal, cultural, and institutional structures that enforce and perpetuate these norms. Language is indeed a powerful tool that both reflects and shapes societal attitudes, but it is only one part of a larger system. By suggesting that the eradication of gendered pronouns alone can lead to the dismantling of these deeply ingrained norms, Manjoo's argument fails to tackle the complexity of the issue and as such, seems overly optimistic and lacking in depth and nuance.

Finally, Manjoo dismisses the concerns of traditional grammarians, which further weakens his argument. He trivializes the apprehensions raised by this group, who express skepticism towards the adoption of the singular "they" and the implications this might have on established grammatical rules. This approach not only undermines the validity of his argument but also fails to foster a productive and respectful discourse around the issue. Had Manjoo approached these concerns with more empathy and receptivity, he could have added depth to his argument and potentially paved the way for a more constructive dialogue about the evolution of language. Dismissing the concerns of this group may ironically hinder the very change Manjoo advocates for. Doing so risks alienating a significant group of people who, being experts in language, could play a crucial role in facilitating the desired shift. By not engaging with their concerns, Manjoo reduces the potential for consensus and collaboration, which are key factors in achieving lasting change.

After a closer examination of these points, it becomes evident that while Manjoo successfully raises the issue of gender neutrality in language use, he doesn't adequately address the complexity and multifaceted nature of the subject. The successful implementation of the singular "they" requires a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond the surface to challenge the societal, cultural, and institutional structures that influence and uphold gender norms. By overlooking these complexities, Manjoo's argument, while well-intentioned, falls short of presenting a robustly convincing case for the adoption of the singular "they".