LOG ID	BOOK REFERENCE	RCT FILTER	CONFIDENCE TIER
SEC 9.2	CHAPTER 9: LOVE PROTOCOL (Stateless Communication)	OFF	CONSENSUS

AUDITED CLAIM

HARDWARE BOTTLENECK & TCP/IP HANDSHAKE

SYSTEMS MODEL — AS STATED IN THE BOOK

> Clinically, neurobiological consensus universally confirms this architectural asymmetry: unconscious sensory intake handles vast, parallel streams of environmental data, whereas conscious cognition and active linguistic formulation are restricted by a severe, serial **capacity bottleneck**.

VALIDATION QUERY

Does unconscious sensory processing handle vast, parallel streams of data while conscious cognition is restricted by a severe, serial capacity bottleneck?

EMPIRICAL FINDING

Cognitive network models confirm a massive functional asymmetry in brain architecture. Early unconscious sensory intake is vast and parallel, whereas **conscious access**, decision-making, and linguistic formulation act as a severe, serial **capacity bottleneck**.

PRIMARY ANCHORS

- → **Dehaene & Changeux, 2011, Neuron**
- → **Tombu et al., 2011, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences**

ABOUT THIS RECORD

Each claim in the book is decompiled from its IT metaphor into a naked, falsifiable scientific claim, then anchored to a **primary peer-reviewed source**. Claim and anchor are queried against the Consensus academic database (200M+ papers) under a fixed protocol — top-tier **Q1/Q2 journals only**, preprints excluded, human studies only. If a hypothesis fails the audit, the build is rejected: the AI generates the syntax; the peer-reviewed grid validates the physics.

CONFIDENCE TIERS

- **CONSENSUS ◀ this log** — broadly established, highly replicated mechanics.
- **EMERGING** — plausible, actively researched; no universal consensus yet.
- **EXPERIMENTAL** — contested, extrapolated, or purely theoretical.

RCT FILTER — Controlled Studies is ON for interventions (a forced action must beat a control) and OFF for mechanisms (so foundational neuroscience isn't blocked).

THE DREAM MACHINE

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Yes, **unconscious sensory processing** is often **parallel and extensive**, while **conscious access** shows a strong serial bottleneck.

1. Introduction

The literature supports the broad claim that unconscious sensory processing can operate in parallel across multiple streams, while conscious cognition is markedly constrained by bottlenecks that limit flexible access, report, and decision-making. Foundational workspace accounts explicitly separate early parallel, nonconscious processing from later serial conscious access (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011). Behavioral bottleneck phenomena such as the attentional blink and psychological refractory period remain central evidence that conscious processing of one item temporarily impairs conscious access to another (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011; Marois & Ivanoff, 2005). Neural accounts converge on a similar architecture: early sensory processing can be preserved without awareness, whereas conscious access is associated with later recurrent amplification, global broadcasting, and flexible routing across distributed networks (Mashour et al., 2020; MacLean et al., 2023).

The evidence is not absolute. Several papers show that unconscious processing is real but narrower than older strong claims implied, and that methodology can inflate estimates of unconscious capacity if awareness is measured poorly (Fahrenfort et al., 2025; Streicher et al., 2025; Yaron et al., 2025). Other work shows that some processing limits attributed to a fixed structural serial bottleneck can shift with task structure, learned chunking, expectations, or strategic control (Miller et al., 2009; Anupindi et al., 2025; Mattes et al., 2020). The strongest synthesis is therefore not “unconscious equals unlimited parallelism and conscious equals purely seriality,” but rather that unconscious processing is typically broader, earlier, and more parallel, while conscious access is the stage most consistently associated with severe central capacity limits (Hirschhorn et al., 2021; Tombu et al., 2011).

Does unconscious sensory processing handle vast, parallel streams of data while conscious cognition is restricted by a severe, serial capacity bottleneck?
Requires at least 5 papers that directly answer your question. Try adjusting your query to find more papers.

FIGURE 1 Consensus on parallel unconscious and serial conscious processing

2. Methods

This Deep Search synthesis was run over more than 170 million research papers indexed by Consensus across Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and other scholarly sources. The workflow first searched directly for the user’s question, then expanded through targeted searches on consciousness theories, unconscious perception, serial versus parallel processing, attentional bottlenecks, multitasking, working memory, and related neural mechanisms. Citation crawling from seed papers expanded the candidate set before machine-learned relevance filtering ranked the most pertinent studies.

A total of 147,637 papers were initially identified in the direct search stream, 240 were screened closely after multi-query expansion and relevance filtering, 146 were judged eligible after deduplication and topical review, and 50 were included in the final synthesis.

Search Strategy

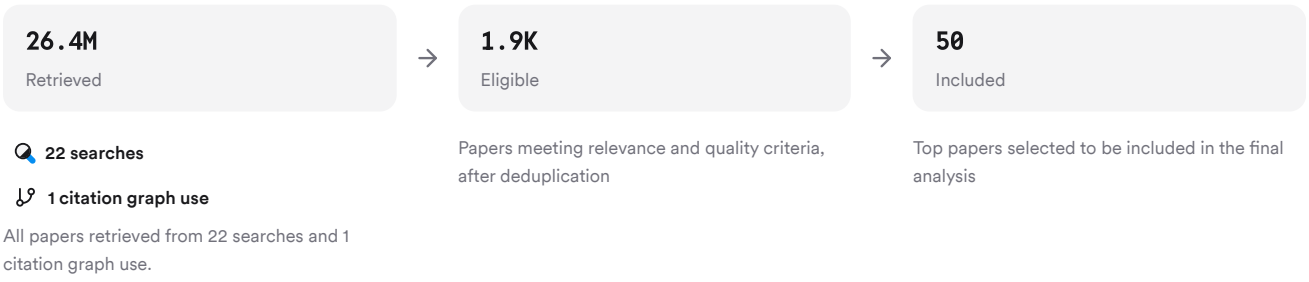

FIGURE 2 Deep search paper identification and screening flow

The search combined theory, behavior, neuroimaging, anesthesia, multitasking, and methodological critique to test both the claim and its alternatives.

3. Results

3.1 Key Papers

A small set of papers anchors the corpus because they define the architecture of conscious access, localize bottlenecks behaviorally and neurally, and test how much processing survives without awareness. Dehaene and Changeux formalize the early-parallel versus late-serial distinction (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011), Tombu and colleagues provide neural evidence for a unified attentional bottleneck (Tombu et al., 2011), and White and colleagues show parallel word processing up to a late cortical stage before convergence to a single channel (White et al., 2018).

Paper	Summary
(Marois & Ivanoff, 2005)	Early processing **parallel and nonconscious**; conscious access **serial** (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011)
(Dijkstra et al., 2021)	Prefrontal system supports **unified attentional bottleneck** (Tombu et al., 2011)
(MacLean et al., 2023)	**Parallel visual channels** converge into **single-channel word bottleneck** (White et al., 2018)

FIGURE 3 Foundational papers in the included corpus

3.2 Processing Stage Comparison

The clearest pattern across the corpus is stage-specific. Early sensory and feature-based processing can proceed without awareness and often in parallel, but later stages tied to integration, report, decision, or flexible use show sharper limits. Early activity within roughly the first 200 ms can remain intact on unseen trials (Mashour et al., 2020). Unseen stimuli can still evoke decodable or behaviorally relevant signals, including category information in visual cortex, early perceptual coding, ensemble statistics, and some working-memory-like retention (Stein et al., 2021; Esteban et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2023; Trübutschek et al., 2016).

Conscious access diverges later. Seen stimuli enter successive metastable processing stages and dynamic routing chains, whereas unseen stimuli tend to decay or remain in a more fixed state (Salti et al., 2015). Long-range feedback, integration, and global availability are repeatedly linked to conscious processing across theories and imaging studies (Mashour et al., 2020; Sikkens et al., 2019; Casali et al., 2013).

3.3 Bottlenecks Across Tasks

Dimension	Parallel / Early Stage	Bottleneck / Late Stage	Citations
Word recognition	Bilateral retinotopic channels	Anterior left word-selective single channel	(White et al., 2018)
Object recognition	Some capacity beyond simple features	Large divided-attention costs, partly serial	(Popovkina et al., 2021)
Dual-task decisions	Sensory evidence sampled continuously	Central stage competes serially	(Wyart et al., 2012)
Memory retrieval	Multiple items stored	Retrieval engages same attentional bottleneck	(Logan et al., 2023)
Mental simulation	Multiple objects represented	Imagined motion likely one-at-a-time	(Balaban & Ullman, 2025)

FIGURE 4 Parallel and serial limits across cognitive domains

These results extend the bottleneck beyond perception alone. Similar serial limits appear in response selection, memory retrieval, and mental simulation, suggesting that the strongest capacity limit sits at a central access or routing stage rather than at the earliest sensory encoding stage (Wyart et al., 2012; Logan et al., 2023; Balaban & Ullman, 2025).

3.4 Boundary Conditions and Counterevidence

The strictest version of the thesis is too strong. Some classic paradigms support genuine parallel processing for elementary perception, falsifying broad serial accounts in those settings (Townsend & Nozawa, 1995). Somatosensory systems also show both parallel and serial streams, with partially dissociable pathways for perception, action, and bodily information (Dijkerman & De Haan, 2007).

The bottleneck also appears somewhat flexible. PRP performance can shift toward more parallel modes depending on stimulus-onset distributions and time expectations (Miller et al., 2009; Mattes et al., 2020). Two words that normally show serial recognition can exceed serial-model predictions when they form a known compound, implying chunking or interactive activation can partly bypass the bottleneck (Anupindi et al., 2025). Expectations also accelerate entry into awareness, showing that top-down priors can change access timing rather than merely reflecting a fixed capacity ceiling (Pinto et al., 2015).

Results Timeline

Research has moved from broad bottleneck theories to stage-specific neural accounts.

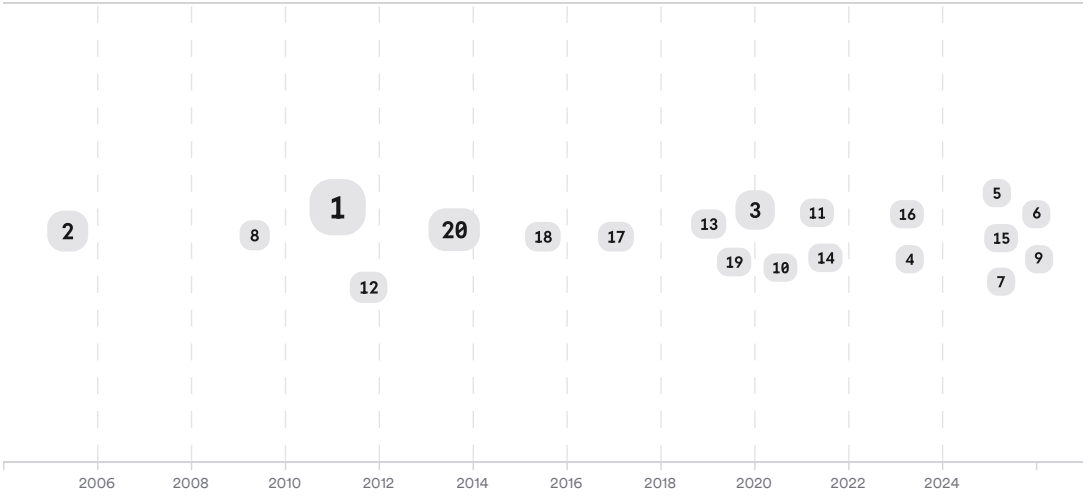

FIGURE 5 Timeline of included papers; larger markers indicate more citations

Early work established serial-versus-parallel tests and dual-task bottlenecks, while later studies localized the bottleneck neurally and separated early unconscious processing from late conscious access (Townsend & Nozawa, 1995; Marois & Ivanoff, 2005; Tombu et al., 2011). The newest papers increasingly emphasize methodological caution and graded limits rather than unlimited unconscious cognition (Fahrenfort et al., 2025; Streicher et al., 2025).

Top Contributors

Type	Name	Papers
Author	S. Dehaene	[c9c22cf09ae35f3691c016590c2e9f43][a5c9ef9cbcba5284b17d2b25870812f7] [363aee4d9fcc5aa78610eb794497d3d5][37bf43782bcf5d3a9e753e92021ac939] [2488ddf1e9af53f68619a6b8ee64f421][52f28a0c751557f39a37a2f51dcd16f8]
Author	R. Marois	[560343344c64500e8c9f3e551a33ab38][af7c89f2efd45ce1bbad97166fe2e88d]
Author	S. van Gaal	[3a008194133b5d45a02ab44219142c6f][475167907c1456cda3cff8bf4dbefb4b] [fa85917b97805e40a8e458b5f824d404][4f27bedf87205000b42cedcee3ec0736]

Type	Name	Papers
Journal	*Neuron*	[c9c22cf09ae35f3691c016590c2e9f43][a5c9ef9cbcba5284b17d2b25870812f7] [b2278a2146e855bbb16201881c644fc4]
Journal	*Trends in Cognitive Sciences*	[4a5ff1f1fa2352ed8240ac31713c223d][560343344c64500e8c9f3e551a33ab38] [f831fdbe428153e4afe97df3a14e29e4]
Journal	*NeuroImage*	[39151becdba95b239251e4eef6f5bcb6][33bb41d0b0e352eb912449df3cac23c7] [a2d2ff82e2c55fb3844f7faa019fbafb]

FIGURE 6 Authors and journals appearing most in the corpus

4. Discussion

The main consensus is moderate-to-strong, not absolute. Across theory papers, behavioral paradigms, EEG/MEG decoding, fMRI, anesthesia, and disorders-of-consciousness work, conscious access is the stage most consistently associated with limited-capacity, serial, or single-channel processing (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011; Salti et al., 2015; Tombu et al., 2011). That conclusion is especially strong when the task requires report, response selection, working-memory consolidation, or flexible routing across brain systems (Dehaene & Changeux, 2011; Tombu et al., 2011; Dehaene et al., 2017).

The evidence for unconscious processing being “vast” is weaker than the evidence for conscious bottlenecks being severe. Unseen information can survive early cortical processing, influence behavior, and sometimes be retained or integrated over surprisingly long windows (Mashour et al., 2020; Herzog et al., 2020; Vogelsang et al., 2024). But several recent critiques argue that earlier literature likely overestimated the scope and brain-wide reach of unconscious processing because direct and indirect awareness measures were not properly compared, or because response criteria distorted effect sizes (Streicher et al., 2025; Fahrenfort et al., 2025).

Another limitation is that “serial” and “parallel” are not all-or-none properties of the whole mind. Elementary perception can be parallel (Townsend & Nozawa, 1995). Local recurrent and integrative processing can survive some forms of inattention, as in attentional-blink conditions, even when global conscious access fails (Noorman et al., 2025). The most defensible model is hierarchical: parallel unconscious and preconscious analyses feed into later access mechanisms that are much more capacity-limited and often serial (Olcese et al., 2018).

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Conscious access has a **strong central bottleneck**	Strong	Replicated across AB, PRP, multitask, and neuroimaging literatures	(Dehaene & Changeux, 2011; Marois & Ivanoff, 2005; Tombu et al., 2011)
Early unconscious sensory processing is **broader and more parallel** than conscious access	Strong	Preserved early processing and parallel channels are repeatedly observed	(Mashour et al., 2020; White et al., 2018; Stein et al., 2021)
Unconscious processing can support **integration and persistence** beyond milliseconds	Moderate	Several studies show lingering or windowed processing, but scope is constrained	(Mashour et al., 2020; Vogelsang et al., 2024; Hirschhorn et al., 2021)
Unconscious processing is **vast** in a near-unlimited sense	Weak	Recent reanalyses and criterion-confound work challenge strong claims	(Streicher et al., 2025; Fahrenfort et al., 2025; Yaron et al., 2025)

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Serial bottlenecks are **fixed and universal**	Weak	Chunking, expectancy, and task structure can increase overlap or parallelism	(Miller et al., 2009; Anupindi et al., 2025; Mattes et al., 2020)

FIGURE 7 Key claims and supporting evidence in corpus

5. Conclusion

The literature supports the core asymmetry in the question: unconscious sensory processing is often richer, earlier, and more parallel than conscious cognition, and conscious access is strongly constrained by a serial or central bottleneck. The literature does not support the strongest caricature that unconscious processing is effectively unlimited or that all conscious cognition is strictly serial in every circumstance. Instead, it supports a layered architecture in which many sensory analyses proceed outside awareness, while conscious access, report, decision, and flexible control face the sharpest throughput limits.

Research Gaps

The main gaps concern where unconscious processing stops, which kinds of integration require consciousness, and how much reported bottlenecks depend on task design versus fixed neural architecture.

Topic/Outcome	Awareness methodology	Stage specificity	Naturalistic tasks	Cross-modal generalization
Scope of unconscious semantic processing	3	4	1	2
Neural locus of conscious bottleneck	6	8	2	3
Unconscious temporal integration windows	4	5	1	1
Flexibility of serial-to-parallel transitions	3	4	2	2

FIGURE 8 Research coverage gaps across major subtopics

Open Research Questions

Future work is increasingly focused on better awareness measures, stage-resolved neural markers, and ecologically valid tests of when parallel processing can bypass the conscious bottleneck.

Question	Why
Which unconscious computations remain after awareness is equated with sensitivity-matched direct measures?	Recent reanalyses suggest many classic unconscious effects weaken when awareness is measured more rigorously.
When do chunking and learned structure permit multiple items to enter conscious access together?	Compound-word and expectancy findings suggest the bottleneck is flexible under structured, familiar conditions.
Which neural stage marks the transition from local recurrent processing to globally accessible conscious	Current evidence separates feedforward, local recurrent, and global stages, but their necessity for awareness remains

Question	Why
content?	contested.

Taken together, unconscious sensory processing appears substantially more parallel than conscious cognition, but the evidence favors **constrained breadth** rather than limitless unconscious capacity.

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