The problem of loss of whiteness or gaining too much whiteness, especially on wedding dresses and evening gowns, is one of the main complaints that the DIA office receives inquiries on.

The loss of optical brightening is a perennial problem that seems to occur regularly and most unfortunately on wedding dresses which complicates matters as there is so much emotion involved. The loss of whiteness is a problem that isn't visible until after cleaning which makes it even more difficult but close personal attention to the inspection of white gowns at the counter and raising it as a POTENTIAL issue with the customer will help mitigate complaints later on.

Of the several complaints that have been presented to us most have been explainable, in one case only one layer of material changed colour and was made of a different fabric. In another case the lace was the problem and was easily identified and also easily replaced to solve the problem.

In an ITAL report that the DIA helped a member obtain it was noted:

> *Fluorescent brighteners are often applied to white fabrics to make them brighter. There are various brighteners used for this purpose that vary in their degree of stability. In many cases, these brighteners breakdown and lose their whiteness from age, exposure to light, or even the heat of the drying cycle and steam from professional finishing.*
>
> *It should be pointed out that the cleaning process is a total immersion process so all components of the dress are subjected to the same treatment. The dress could not withstand the recommended care procedures thus the brightener damage is attributable to a mishap in manufacture.*

Inspection of wedding dresses at the counter with the customer present should include a discussion with the customer about the possibility of the optical brightener in a dress breaking down in the drycleaning cycle.

All DIA members have access to the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) full range of Technical Analysis Bulletins and there are three in particular that deal with optical brightener issues. The reference number for each TAB plus an excerpt is below.

The DIA recommends keeping copies of these TAB bulletins at the counter so that you have an easy reference on hand to explain this common issue to your customer.

As we all know, education about drycleaning and textile performance is the key to avoid problems at the counter with unhappy customers.

TAB No. 338 – Mysterious Lighter Areas

What is the problem?

Sometimes mysterious hard-to-explain lighter areas of discoloration appear in various places of a fabric. This
apparent loss of colour can be noticed at any time, before or after dry cleaning or washing.

What does it look like?

This discoloration looks like colour loss. Sometimes ……

TAB No. 406 – White fabric turns yellow

What is the problem?

Sometimes, white, cream and pastel fabrics will yellow on the surface in local areas for no apparent reason.

What does it look like?

In some cases, the entire fabric may begin to appear dull or yellow, but in most cases only local areas that are more exposed to light and/or atmospheric gases show discoloration. Normally it appears as angular splotches or streaks and only on the exposed surface of the fabric.

What caused it?

The fabric contained a fluorescent brightener …

TAB No. 410 – Yellowing of sequins

What is the problem?

The shiny clear sequin trim attached to wedding gowns, formal dresses, and other fancy garments can turn yellow in local areas for no apparent reason. Depending on conditions of use and storage, this yellowing of sequins can happen at any time.

What does it look like?

In most cases only local areas of sequins on a garment show discoloration, but in other instances, most or all the sequin trim may get dull or yellow. The sequins are no longer clear and lustrous, but are yellow or rust colour.

What caused it?

This discoloration is a type of oxidation ……