Domestic violence can be defined as abuse within a household; it can be physical, emotional, financial or psychological. There are various patterns which form within this type of abuse and in the following paragraphs I will be explaining them as well as the reasons potentially responsible for them.

The first distinctive pattern is that domestic abuse primarily takes place with women as the victim. This is shown through research from the likes of people such as Mirless Black who estimates that 6.6 million domestic assaults occur each year and that 99% of these are against women. This is backed up by evidence from Coleman who found that women are more likely to experience domestic violence and ‘intimate abuse’ than men are. The reasoning behind this trend has been partially explained by Dobash and Dobash who found that abuse within a household usually is resulted from ‘challenges to authority’. In many households men were the primary breadwinners, so a challenge of power from wives who were largely dependent on their husbands often resulted in abusive conflict. An example of this could be potentially seen in households in which husbands supply their wives with a monthly allowance; any demand for this allowance to be raised could be interpreted as the questioning of authority and thus met violently. This therefore links back to expressive and instrumental roles (parsons), holding them accountable for almost ‘legitimising’ domestic violence through marriage through these traditional roles.

Radical feminists however have a different explanation of the pattern towards women being victimised in the family. Millett and Firestone believe that families are patriarchal and that domestic violence is a result of this. They believe that in order for men to preserve the ‘power’ they have over women they have to result to abuse for proof of being stronger and dominant. However the flaw with this explanation is that fails to ignore the men that are not aggressive and oppose violence towards women, thus so it could be said to be biased.

Another trend that is seen within domestic abuse is that families in working class backgrounds are more likely to suffer from it. This is as a result, as Wilkinson’s studies suggest, of inequality which means that families have fewer resources, less income and poorer housing. These are contributing factors for the things people have to worry about, particularly the working class and so can lead to domestic violence as a result of stress. This explains the social differences within official statistics.

Lastly, groups of individual, such as children and alcoholics and drug abusers are also more exposed to abuse due to the fact that they are vulnerable and unable to protect themselves. For example children may see violence in the home as simply discipline for disobedience whilst alcoholics lack control due to being under the influence.

Overall I feel that the trend that stands out by far the most is that domestic violence primarily happens against women as there are official statistics supporting this view as well as reasoning and creditable explanations from various individuals and groups of sociologists.