

Introduction

The ability to imagine alternative outcomes to an event is called *counterfactual thinking* (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Counterfactual (contrary to fact) thoughts are usually conditional propositions that embrace both an antecedent (e.g., "If I hadn't overslept") and a consequence (e.g., "I would have been on time for work"), and are usually expressed in an "if only" form (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). They serve two distinct functions: they prepare individuals to perform better in the future and allow them to feel better about their current performances (Roese, 1994). The former is referred to as *preparative*, the latter as *affective*. These functions complement the functions served by achievement orientations in achievement settings. *Achievement orientations*, how individuals approach achievement settings, help individuals determine competence (Nicholls, 1984). Achievement orientations are an important part of athletics (Duda, 1993a), and have affective and preparative aspects (Duda, 1993b; Grieve, Whelan, Kottke, & Meyers, 1995), yet no research to date has compared how achievement orientations and counterfactual production interact. It is expected that individuals who adopt different achievement orientations will create different types of counterfactuals.

Counterfactual Production

While individuals may adopt a complex set of goals under achievement conditions (Nicholls, 1984), the research on achievement motivation has focused primarily on two potentially conflicting orientations: mastery orientation and outcome orientation. A *mastery orientation* involves perceptions of competence which are self-referenced, where competence is demonstrated by the subjective experience of improving performance or