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held executive positions for several companies, but The Houston Chronicle reported that the companies did not exist. Some were company names that Mr. Sanchez had reserved the rights to use for work as a consultant.

Mr. Brown also has questioned Mr. Sanchez's record, including his opposition to the city's affirmative action program and his spotty attendance record. Last year, Mr. Sanchez attended only one of the Council's 20 budget workshops.

"The man hasn't done anything in his life," Mr. Brown said today in a short interview outside his campaign headquarters. "People don't know who he is. He has no management experience whatsoever."

Mr. Sanchez has accused the mayor of running a negative campaign out of desperation and of "running away from his record."

Technically, the mayoral election is nonpartisan, though Mr. Brown is a registered Democrat and Mr. Sanchez is a Republican. But some Democrats worry that Mr. Sanchez may benefit from not having an "R" beside his name on the ballot; some Hispanic voters who might otherwise lean Democratic may instead vote for him out of ethnic pride. Mr. Brown's supporters have sought to undercut Mr. Sanchez with Mexican-Americans by pointing out that he is Cuban-American and Republican.

"People say, 'What are you?' " Mr. Sanchez responded. "By birth, I'm Cuban. By ethnicity, I'm Hispanic. By culture, I'm Texan. By race, I'm Caucasian. You put me in any category you want to put me in."

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