Digital Autoethnography

My digital autoethnography surrounds the topic of living as a bi-racial child, how that has affected the way that I grew up and the struggle to please both my mom and dad while they have vastly different beliefs on what I should do and pursue. For this project, I wanted to incorporate my passion for Cybersecurity through hidden files and images. This project aims to use visual cryptography and steganography, which is a common topic in cybersecurity, defined as “the practice of concealing messages or information within other nonsecret text or data”. While on the surface my project is four images, these host more files within each other and present a symbolism of a continual dive further and further into my life. Starting with the top file, as I mentioned there are two images called “White.png” and “Chinese.png” which seem to just be a random mix of black and white pixels at first but using a program called stegsolve we can overlay these images to reveal a picture of my family. One image represents my Chinese side and the other image represents my white side, and when combined, that's when I am finally revealed in the picture. The next part of my project is the hidden files within these images, which I separated by the side of which that part of my culture came from. By using the command “binwalk -e -D “png picture:png file.png” the hidden files will be extracted from the picture representing my Mom’s side and put into a newly created folder. Inside this folder are a multitude of images covering her push towards getting good grades in school, strict curfews which prevented a lot of my early social life and the chase for a secure and steady job in the future. All of these pictures demonstrate the more east Asian ideology where people believe in just working hard in school with little distractions to hopefully get a stable job and support your parents. In addition to the pictures, using the binwalk command on the file “MomSpeaking.png” reveals some common quotes from my mom which talk about studying harder, not dating, and a need for a stable career. In contrast to this, the binwalk command on “White.png” displays pictures about topics such as dating, computer science, projects, and taking risks. Almost in a direct contrast to this, my dad embodies a very western approach to school and career paths. He advocates that school is important but not worth all your time, and instead you should spend time building yourself outside the classroom, whether that be with relationships, discovering yourself, and following your passion. And while he has always been very lenient with my grades, I still want to meet that standard from my mom, which unfortunately makes it harder to do the things my dad advocates for. However, it's this push towards pursuing your passion and specifically computer science that has actually led me to where I am today. As a child, I was put in a lot of programming summer camps and online courses because of my dad and at the time I found it very interesting but didn’t really see it as my future. Yet over time after constant exposure to the field I eventually grew a passion for it and decided to continue it in college. Similar to my mom’s quotes, I have some common quotes I hear from my dad listed in the “DadSpeaking.png” file. By using binwalk on this file, you can see quotes about doing more things outside of school because it is more important and about dating, which was heavily discouraged by my mom. Ultimately, this project was a fascinating way for me to implement the skills I’ve learned in Cybersecurity and demonstrate how being multicultural has put a lot of pressure on me, but also made me who I am with contributions from both sides.