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Projections of Ocneanu traces are Kazhdan-Lusztig R -polynomials.

We generalize Deodhar's concept of distinguished subexpressions to Artin's braid group, and show that the resulting notion of R -polynomial is well-defined, and is a projection of the Ocneanu trace. This gives a novel algorithm to compute R -polynomials over intervals in symmetric groups, and a natural generalization of the Ocneanu trace to arbitrary Weyl groups. (Received September 09, 2009)